

# **LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL & GATEWAYS COMMITTEE**

## **AGENDA**

Hybrid Virtual In-Person Workshop

Friday, May 3, 2024, at 1:00 PM

### **MEMBERS:**

Shawana Brooks, Chair

Carol Alexander

Ayesha Covington

Mamie Davis

Dr. Tim Gilmore

Allen Marshal/George Greenhill

Mitch Hemann

Rodney Hurst

Marsha Phelts

Suzanne Pickett

Adrian Swanigan

Adonnica Toler

Genaro Urso

Lloyd Washington

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. PUBLIC COMMENTS**
- III. LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL FINAL DESIGN PRESENTATION: *MARKERS***
- IV. LAVILLA HERTIAGE TRAIL FINAL DESIGN PRESENTATION: *WALLS***
- V. LIFT EV'RY VOICE & SING PARK INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE UPDATE**
- VI. OTHER MATTERS TO BE ADDED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR**
- VII. ADJOURN**

**TAB III**

**LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL FINAL DESIGN PRESENTATION: MARKERS**



## The LaVilla Neighborhood



The LaVilla: Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing Trail highlights the legacy of this culturally significant community and pays homage to the instrumental role it has contributed to the physical, cultural, and social development of Jacksonville and the nation as a whole.

**1801** - John Jones obtained a 350-acre Spanish land grant.

**1842** - Rev. James McDonald acquired a plantation on the north side of the St. Johns River, beginning at the mouth of McCoy's Creek and lying north of it.

**1851** - Rev. Joseph S. Baker acquires the McDonald plantation. Son, J. McRobert Baker renamed the plantation LaVilla.

**1861** - Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina, marking the beginning of the American Civil War on April 12, 1861.

**1863** - In March 1863, the 32nd U.S. Colored Troops regiment was assigned to the occupation of Jacksonville. This expedition was intended to secure Unionist sentiment in the area and attract escaped enslaved, who could then be recruited as soldiers. Renowned abolitionist Harriet Tubman and Susie King Taylor, the country's first Black Army nurse, arrive in LaVilla with the 32nd U.S. Colored Troops regiment.

**1865** - Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders, effectively ending the American Civil War on April 9, 1865.

**1865** - Emancipation proclaimed in Tallahassee on May 20, 1865.

**1866** - Attorney Francis F. L'Engle platts the community of LaVilla.

**1868** - Stanton, Florida's first official school for African Americans opens.

**1869** - The Town of LaVilla is incorporated. L'Engle becomes LaVilla's first mayor.

**1870** - Seventy percent of LaVilla's population was African American, many of whom worked in the city's booming hotel, lumber, port, building, and railroad industries.

**1887** - LaVilla, then Jacksonville's largest suburb with 3,000 residents, is annexed by the City of Jacksonville.

*"I got my first line: Lift ev'ry voice and sing."*  
-James Weldon Johnson, 1900

**1900** - James Weldon and John Rosamond Johnson write and compose "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing." The Song becomes unofficially known as the "Black National Anthem."

**1908** - Film companies build production facilities in the region to take advantage of its sunshine, tropical location, and cheap labor. Early theaters in LaVilla, including the Globe Theater, are constructed as a result.

**1910** - The first published account of blues singing on a public stage in the United States, occurs at LaVilla's Colored Airdome on April 16, 1910.

**1918** - Written by Jacksonville's Matthew Ward, the poem "Bound for the Promised Land," is originally published in the Chicago Defender. Poem influences a significant movement of the African American southern population to northern cities. Movement became known as the Great Migration, leading to the development of neighborhoods like Harlem (New York City), Bronzeville (Chicago), Black Bottom (Detroit) in northern and midwestern cities. More than 16,000 African Americans left Jacksonville between 1916 and 1917 due to economic conditions, white militancy, and Jim Crow laws.

**1919** - The Jacksonville Terminal opens. Modeled after NYC's Penn Station, the train station is the largest south of Washington, DC.

**1945** - Ray Charles moves to LaVilla, where he began his professional career at age fifteen.

**1958** - The Jacksonville Expressway (Interstate 95) is completed through the heart of the LaVilla community.

**1993** - The \$235 million River City Renaissance urban renewal plan destroys significant portions of LaVilla, east of Interstate 95.

**2013** - DIA completes the LaVilla Neighborhood Development Strategy plan.

**2024** - The LaVilla Heritage Trail is completed.



## The LaVilla Neighborhood

Historically, the land we refer to today as Jacksonville is on the traditional homeland and territories of the Timucua people. After forced removal of the Indigenous people, the land was portioned off by the Spanish government to various plantation owners through a series of land grants in the early nineteenth century.



**LAVILLA WAS PLATTED IN 1866 BY FRANCIS F. L'ENGLE AND SETTLED BY UNITED STATES COLORED TROOPS; GULLAH GEECHEE FREEDMEN AND FREEDWOMEN.**

Anchored by Henry Flagler's Jacksonville Terminal railroad station, LaVilla became a transportation hub and emerged as a major epicenter for ragtime, jazz, and blues during the early twentieth century. Ma Rainey, Ray Charles, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Cab Calloway performed in various concert halls in LaVilla.



LaVilla played a transformative role in what would become known as the Great Migration and became one of several southern communities recognized as a Harlem of the South during the 1940s and 50s. An influential community in the fight for Civil Rights, LaVilla was negatively impacted by the construction of Interstate 95 and urban renewal during the late 20th century.

**TODAY, LAVILLA IS IN A PERIOD OF REBIRTH AND REVITALIZATION.**

FRONT

BACK

**Marker #1 | LaVilla Timeline**

## Broad Street



**AT ITS HEIGHT** Broad Street's Black-owned banks, insurance companies, restaurants, theaters, mutual aid societies, boarding houses, seafood markets, grocery stores, hotels, furniture stores, and professional offices were a major focal point of African American life, culture, and Civil Rights resistance in Florida.



Originally named Bridge Street, it was renamed Broad Street during the 1920s. At 132 Broad Street in 1898, Patrick Henry Chappelle opened the south's first Black-owned theater, Excelsior Concert Hall. In 1900, he launched the Rabbit's Foot Company. The Rabbit's Foot Company, also known as "The Foots," was a long-running minstrel and variety troupe that toured as a tent show in the American South between 1900 and the late 1950s. Headquartered in LaVilla prior to World War I, it was the leading traveling vaudeville show with Chappelle being called "the Black P.T. Barnum and one of the biggest employers of African Americans in the entertainment industry." Entertainers who started their careers through "The Foots" include: Ma Rainey, Ida Cox, Bessie Smith, Louis Jordan, and comedians Tim Moore and Butterbeans and Susie.



JACKSONVILLE'S BLACK WALL STREET



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

A STEADY BEAT

FRONT

## Broad Street



"sell goods that won't come back, to customers that will"  
—Broad Street business owner  
Charles H. Anderson, 1896



South of Adams Street, businesses catered to LaVilla's red light district and the Greek and Syrian communities. Along the corridor, Jacksonville's Orthodox Jewish community established kosher meat markets, clothing trades, and dry goods businesses. At a time when African Americans were not allowed in Downtown Jacksonville, many businesses catered to the Black community. Black restaurant operators along Ashley and Davis Streets were the principal customers for many markets on Broad Street.

Long-time businesses included:

PIERCE-WALL FURNITURE COMPANY  
WORMAN'S BAKERY & DELICATESSEN  
PEDRO MENDEZ CUBAN TAILOR  
THE FLORIDA STAR  
DELOACH FURNITURE COMPANY  
THE BLUE SHIP HOTEL  
IMPERIAL PHARMACY  
ATLANTA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
CENTRAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY  
DUCK INN RESTAURANT  
WALKER'S BUSINESS COLLEGE  
ELLIE WEEMS PHOTOGRAPHY  
NEW DEAL CAB COMPANY  
BROADWAY DEPARTMENT STORE  
PROGRESS FURNITURE  
SINGLETON'S SUPERIOR BAR-B-Q



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

A STEADY BEAT

BACK

Marker #5 | Broad Street



## Residential LaVilla



LaVilla was once home to many of Jacksonville's old families and most distinguished citizens. Many stately residences were built for and occupied by African American professionals, doctors, attorneys, business owners, and community leaders. Once characterized by elaborate two-story dwellings, West Monroe Street was an area of the neighborhood where affluent homeowners lived. The houses on this block are representative of LaVilla's original residential density, scale, and architectural character.



725 West Monroe Street is a seven-bedroom house that was built for liquor company owner Solomon Shad in 1909. Shad was known as "The Whiskey Man."



THE HOUSES ON THIS BLOCK ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF LAVILLA'S ORIGINAL RESIDENTIAL DENSITY, SCALE, AND ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER.

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND

FRONT

## Residential LaVilla



The Neo-Classical Revival house was restored by **PEDRO MENDEZ, Sr.** in 1946. Mendez was a Cuban-born tailor who opened P. Mendez Cuban Tailor at 408 Broad Street in 1927. To protect it from demolition, his daughter Padrica Mendez successfully worked to have the residence designated as a local historic landmark in 1995.



"My father worked and he paid for that house with every stitch that he made. They might want it, but I want it more."  
-PADRICA MENDEZ, 1995



The Queen Anne dwellings on Jefferson Street were built between 1901 and 1903. They were once home to the family of Benjamin Safer. Safer arrived in Jacksonville around the turn of the century and was the first to open a kosher meat market in the city. Safer was also very instrumental in establishing the Orthodox Congregation B'nai Israel and LaVilla's Jewish enclave that developed around it.



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND

BACK

**Marker #7 | Residential LaVilla**

## Maceo Elks Lodge



The Maceo Elks Lodge #8 at 712 West Duval Street, is the last surviving institutional building in LaVilla associated with its early Jewish community. During the 1880s, Yiddish speaking Jewish immigrants from Russia and Romania arrived in Jacksonville, primarily living and working in this area of LaVilla. In 1901 they established an Orthodox temple named B'nai Israel at the intersection of Duval and Jefferson Streets.



**"LaVilla ... became the central area for the Orthodox community.**

Merchants, tailors, shoe repair shops, stores and markets sprang up on Broad Street, and in 1901 they formed the nucleus for an Orthodox congregation, B'nai Israel."

—Natalie M. Olickstein

In 1910, the Young Men's Hebrew Association was proposed to perpetuate Judaism as a positive aspect in community life through health, education, recreation, democratic training, and information education in the Jewish tradition. Building plans were drafted by local architects J.H.W. Hawkins, Talley and Summer, and Benjamin and Ball.



The YMHA held a bazaar to open its doors to the public on February 8, 1915. Jacksonville mayor, Jac Swearingen, addressed the large gathering on the opening night. By 1928, the Jewish population of LaVilla began moving into suburban neighborhoods. The YMHA relocated to Springfield in 1932.



Portrait of Mayor Jac Swearingen, 1915. Photo courtesy of the Jacksonville Historical Society.

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

FRONT

## Maceo Elks Lodge



TODAY, THE LODGE IS THE SEVENTH OLDEST IMPROVED BENEVOLENT PROTECTIVE ORDER OF ELKS OF THE WORLD (IBPOEW) LODGE IN THE COUNTRY.



In 1945, the building was sold to Maceo Elk Lodge #8. Approved on December 7, 1898, Maceo Elks Lodge #8 is the seventh oldest Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World (IBPOEW) lodge in the country. Incorporated in 1898, the IBPOEW is the largest Black fraternal organization in the world. African American fraternal organizations have played a vital role in the African American lives by providing financial, spiritual, and emotional aid to the members and communities they serve. Locally, the Elks assisted the Jacksonville community in hosting workshops, feeding the elderly, hosting community dances, talent shows, and other positive activities. The YMHA / Maceo Elks Lodge #8 building was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 29, 1992.



**OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST**  
Read More at  
www.jacksonvillehistory.com



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

TIL NOW WE STAND

BACK

**Marker #8 | Maceo Elks Lodge**



## Masonic Temple



"ONE OF THE FINEST  
BUILDINGS OWNED BY  
NEGROES IN THE WORLD."

— NEGRO BLUE BOOK, 1929



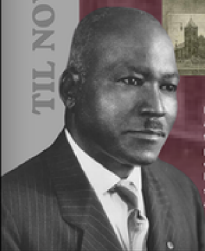
LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

TIL NOW WE STAND

Completed in 1916, the Masonic Temple has served as the focal point for Jacksonville's Black community's commercial and fraternal activities for decades. The building was designed by local architects Victor E. Mark and Leeroy Sheffall with John Anderson Lanford consulting. Known as the "Dean of Black architecture," Lanford was the first professionally-licensed Black architect in Washington, D.C. who specialized in church, fraternal, and school designs along with residential commissions in Black communities throughout the country and South Africa.



Designed as a mix of Prairie and Chicago School architectural styles, the Masonic Temple was partially financed by the National Negro Businessmen League to provide office space for Black insurance agents, dentists, doctors, attorneys, newspapers, and other businesses in the city. The building featured retail at street level, office space on the second and third floors, and the top floors were occupied by the Grand Lodge.



FRONT

## Masonic Temple



Ground floor tenants included: Anderson Tucker & Company, Jacksonville's second Black-owned bank in 1914, Pedro Mendez Cuban Tailor Shop, and the law office of Leander Shaw, Jr. Shaw became the first Black chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court in 1990. Second floor tenants included Daniel Webster Perkins, Esq. and Viola Muse. D.W. Perkins, also known as "The Colonel," successfully argued the landmark case before the Florida Supreme Court that allowed African Americans

to serve on juries. His nephew, Paul C. Perkins, Sr. Esq., served as co-counsel with Thurgood Marshall and Jack Greenberg of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, representing the Groveland Four case in Lake County in 1951. A hairdresser, Viola Muse also worked with Zora Neale Hurston for the Negro Writers Unit of the Federal Writers Project in 1936 and 1937. Tenants on the third floor included the Jacksonville branch offices of the Atlanta Life and North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance companies prior to World War II.



### THE THIRD, FOURTH, AND FIFTH FLOORS

housed the most important Masonic offices and Grand East, a 900-seat auditorium where the community met for events and to discuss various business and political issues. This included nightly sermons during the 1920s by Princess Laura Adorkor Kofi, then associated with Marcus Garvey's pan-African movement, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porter (BSCP) meetings led by labor union leader Asa Philip Randolph, and Civil Rights Movement meetings by the NAACP during the 1960s.



The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida was established June 17th, 1870 during Reconstruction. Founding members were free people of color, former enslaved people and veterans of the United States Colored Troops. Over 1000 of those members held political office shaping the social construct in Florida. The building was designated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

TIL NOW WE STAND

BACK

**Marker #9 | Masonic Temple**

## Richmond Hotel



THERE WILL BE A DAY SOMETIME IN THE NEAR FUTURE  
WHEN THIS GUIDE WILL NOT HAVE  
TO BE PUBLISHED. THAT IS WHEN WE AS A RACE  
WILL HAVE **EQUAL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES**  
IN THE UNITED STATES.

—VICTOR GREEN, 1936

First published in 1936 by Victor Green, the Negro Motorist Green Book was a compilation of restaurants, over-night accommodations, gas stations, and other public services for people of color traversing a white-only landscape during segregation. LaVilla was a major Florida destination featured in the document.

Owned and operated by Alice Kirkpatrick, the Richmond Hotel was Jacksonville's finest Green Book hotel. Built in 1909, the Richmond featured 48 upper floor rooms and a 65-seat restaurant.



Alice Kirkpatrick, Richmond Hotel owner.  
The Negro Motorist



Richmond Hotel, Jacksonville, Florida. The Negro Motorist



Richmond Hotel, Jacksonville, Florida. The Negro Motorist

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

LIFT EV'RY VOICE

FRONT

## Richmond Hotel



James "Charlie Edd" Craddock's Little Blue Chip Club operated on the first floor. Craddock's clubs, bars, and taverns were said to be protected by the local police and were hotbeds for bolita. Bolita (Spanish for "little ball") was a type of illegal lottery popular in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Cuba and among Florida's working-class Hispanic, Italian, and black populations.

Many musicians would stand on the hotel's balcony to woo the crowds that came to see their performances.



MAIN DINING ROOM, HOTEL RICHMOND  
127 Broad Street, Jacksonville, Florida

Photo: Map of the Richmond Hotel, The Negro Motorist

Famous guests included **CHITLIN CIRCUIT**-era musicians:

DUKE ELLINGTON,  
CAB CALLOWAY,  
ELLA FITZGERALD,  
AND BILLIE HOLIDAY.



Other surviving LaVilla Green Book sites include: the Fiesta Hotel, Sunrise Restaurant (Odd Fellows Hall), and Hotel Sanders (Wynn Hotel).

Photo: Map of the Richmond Hotel, The Negro Motorist

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

LIFT EV'RY VOICE

BACK

**Marker #10 | Richmond Hotel**



## Ray Charles



American musical icon Ray Charles launched his career as a pianist, singer, composer, and bandleader while residing on this block of West Church Street.

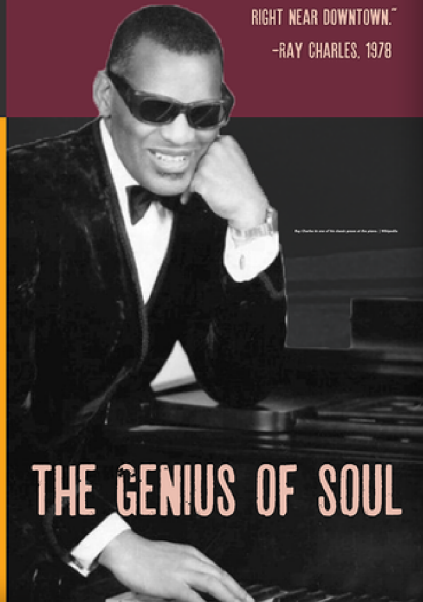
Ray Charles Robinson was born in Albany, Georgia on September 23, 1930. His parents were Bailey Robinson and Aretha (or Reatha) Robinson. Known by his friends as R.C., he lost his sight by the age of seven, while growing up in Greenville, Florida. He attended the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind in St. Augustine from 1937 to 1945.



"IT WAS THE FIRST BIG CITY I EVER LIVED IN. I WAS PRETTY CLOSE TO THE CENTER OF THINGS, STAYING WITH FRED AND LENA MAE THOMPSON AT 752 WEST CHURCH STREET.

RIGHT NEAR DOWNTOWN."

-RAY CHARLES, 1978



SING A SONG

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

FRONT

## Ray Charles



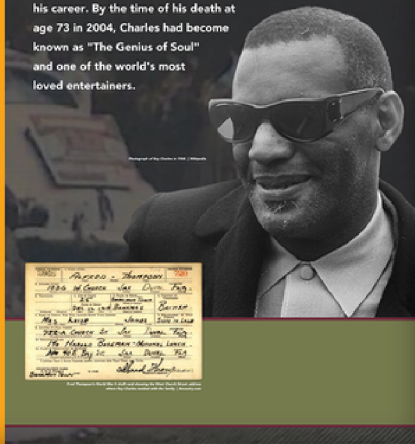
FOLLOWING HIS MOTHER'S DEATH IN SPRING 1945, HE QUIT SCHOOL AND MOVED TO JACKSONVILLE AT THE AGE OF 15 to gain professional music experience in the big city.

Living in LaVilla with Alfred and Lena Mae Thompson, R.C. memorized his way around town without using a cane or guide dog and would jam at any gig he could get.



**SING A SONG**  
Entertainment, Music, Performance, Community, Culture, Events

His reputation as a talented musician grew after he began visiting the office of the Jacksonville Local 632 of the American Federation of Musicians, which was in the Clara White Mission. Occasionally playing with bands at the Lenape and famous Two Spot club, he eventually changed his name to Ray Charles to avoid confusion with boxing champion "Sugar Ray" Robinson. In 1945, Charles left Jacksonville to continue his career. By the time of his death at age 73 in 2004, Charles had become known as "The Genius of Soul" and one of the world's most loved entertainers.



SING A SONG

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

BACK

**Marker #11 | Ray Charles**

## Chitlin' Circuit



A major center of focus during the formative years of vaudeville, ragtime, jazz, and blues, LaVilla emerged as Florida's premier Chitlin' Circuit destination during the early 20th century. The Chitlin' Circuit was the collective name given to a series of Black-owned nightclubs, dance halls, juke joints, and theaters that Black entertainers performed in during segregation. Notable LaVilla venues on the Chitlin' Circuit were the Lenape Bar, Manuel's Tap Room, Knights of Pythias Hall, and the Strand Theatre.



SING A SONG

THE TELEPHONE LINES STARTED BOZZING, TAXIS  
STARTED RUNNING, THE TAILORS, THE RESTAURANTS,  
AND IN FACT, THE WHOLE STROLL TURNED OUT ON  
WEST ASHLEY STREET IN THIS CITY'S YOUNG HARLEM.  
ALL IN ALL, JACKSONVILLE IS A VERY FLY TOWN.  
—Bandleader WALTER BARNES, 1938



FRONT

## Chitlin' Circuit



Chitlins are a dish made from pig intestines that date back to slavery, when the enslaved were forced to nurture themselves with the less desirable parts of animals. What was originally provided in a demeaning manner was turned into a soul food delicacy that remains popular in African American communities throughout the country today. Like chitlins, the circuit was established to nurture African American performers during a time when they were not allowed in most white-owned venues.



WALTER BARNES, A CHICAGO JAZZ MUSICIAN BORN IN VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI, IS CREDITED AS BEING AN EARLY ORIGINATOR OF THE CHITLIN' CIRCUIT.

Following the collapse of the Theatre Owners Booking Association (T.O.B.A.), a vaudeville circuit for African American performers, Barnes successfully established a network of venues across the American South during the 1930s where African American entertainers could perform. Barnes' had his winter headquarters in LaVilla, to conduct annual late-fall-to-spring Southern tours. Contracts and routes created and promoted through Barnes' position at the Chicago Defender became the Chitlin' Circuit. Despite Barnes' death in 1940, his success in touring across the South encouraged numerous acts to follow the Circuit throughout segregation.



SING A SONG



BACK

# Marker #12 | Chitlin' Circuit



## Hansontown



"THERE WERE HOUSES OVER THERE, BUILDINGS OVER THERE. THEY DEMOLISHED IT IN ORDER TO RESELL IT. THEY WANTED TO 'UPGRADE' THE ENTIRE AREA TO MAKE IT MORE COMPATIBLE TO DOWNTOWN."

—WALTER WHETSTONE, 2005



The original settlement of Hansontown was the brainchild of Daniel Dustin Hanson, a surgeon with the 34th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry. Hanson acquired a large tract of land northwest of Jacksonville in 1866 where he intended to develop a communal farming community for Black Civil War veterans and the formerly enslaved. Here, they would grow and sell crops, allowing them to pool their earnings towards land purchases. Hanson's dream never materialized but a community was born.



Hansontown was a working-class African American community characterized by small frame shotgun-style housing and unpaved streets. It quickly became an easy target for the city's early urban renewal programs. The neighborhood was largely erased in 1974, when plans were approved to replace 21 acres of the community acquired with local and federal urban renewal funds, with the present-day downtown campus of Florida State College of Jacksonville. The \$11 million campus was officially dedicated on August 15, 1977.

Historic buildings north of Union Street, including the Whetstonian, Fraternal Order of Odd Fellows Hall, and St. Philips Episcopal Church are remnants of one of Jacksonville's earliest **QUILLAN OVERSEER** communities.

### THE WHETSTONIAN

Located at 801 North Jefferson Street, the Whetstonian was built in 1927. Featuring two apartment units, the ground level storefronts were occupied by a variety of businesses, including The Apothecary Shop by Theo M. Christopher and Chatty's Cigars. It was later owned by Walter Whetstone. Whetstone spent a lifetime collecting and storing artifacts from LaVilla's past on the property. According to Whetstone, "If Smithson can have his Smithsonian, then Whetstone can have the Whetstonian."



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

FRONT

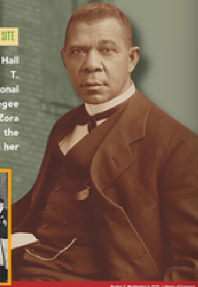
## Hansontown



According to James Weldon Johnson, Odd Fellows lodges were made up of white-collar workers, in contrast to the local Masonic lodges, which recruited largely from stewards, hod carriers, lumber mill workers, and brickyard hands. In Hansontown, the Odd Fellows Hall was located on the southeast corner of State and Pearl Streets. At Odd Fellows, a young Cookman Institute class valedictorian, A. Philip Randolph, gave a speech he called "The Man of the Hour" in 1907. Randolph would later organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first predominantly African American labor union, as well as the March on Washington in 1963.

### ODD FELLOWS HALL **GREEN BOOK SITE**

In March 1912, the Odd Fellows Hall hosted a banquet for Booker T. Washington, co-founder of the National Negro Business League and Tuskegee Institute. Noted anthropologist Zora Neale Hurston also performed at the Fraternal Order of Odd Fellows during her time in Jacksonville.



### ST. PHILIPS EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Nearby, St. Philips Episcopal Church was organized in 1882 to accommodate the growth of Black Episcopalians in the area. The mission was named for Saint Philip who, according to the Acts of the Apostles, was a Black man called by Jesus to follow him.

The sanctuary at the intersection of Union and Pearl Streets, was designed by Henrietta Cuttino Dozier (1872-1947). Dozier is recognized as the first woman architect in Florida and Georgia. To overcome discrimination, she was known to disguise her gender with various male-sounding or gender-neutral names such as Cousin Harry and H.C. Dozier. Under the supervision of William S. Sumter and Dennis Taylor, church members provided free construction labor to complete the church building in 1914.



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

BACK

Marker #16 | Hansontown

## Great Fire of 1901



Around noon on May 3, 1901, a spark from a kitchen fire ignited piles of moss that lay drying outside of the Cleveland Fibre Company at Davis and Beaver Streets. The fire spread throughout the densely-populated area and quickly destroyed most of the buildings in LaVilla and Downtown. The fire was contained after about eight hours and caused over \$15 million in property damage over 148 city blocks.



Around 90% of Jacksonville was in the fire, 2,300 buildings, including the original Stanton School, 23 churches, 10 hotels, including the St. James and Windsor, and almost all public buildings, including the Duval County Courthouse, burned down. Seven people died and 8,677 people were left homeless. The Great Fire of 1901 is the third largest urban fire in American history behind the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and Chicago Fire of 1871. The fire started 3 blocks away from the Nurse Training School, which eventually became Brewster Hospital, where nursing students cared for the wounded. It only took the city two years to rebuild Downtown, ushering in a new era of growth and opportunity.

THE GREAT FIRE OF 1901 IS THE THIRD LARGEST URBAN FIRE IN AMERICAN HISTORY BEHIND THE 1906 SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE AND CHICAGO FIRE OF 1871.

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

FRONT

## Great Fire of 1901



148 CITY BLOCKS



"THE BREEZE INCREASES TO A HIGH WIND THE FIRE IS NOW BEYOND CONTROL JACKSONVILLE IS DOOMED."

-JAMES WELDON JOHNSON, 1901 (1933)



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

BACK

**Marker #17 | Great Fire of 1901**



## Ritz Theatre & Museum



"I'LL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY. PEOPLE WERE EXCITED, HAPPY, THERE WAS A LINE ALL AROUND THE BLOCK, DOWN DAYS STREET, ON UNION TO MADISON. FOLKS WAITING TO GET INTO THE TALK OF THE TOWN, TO LOOK AT THE AREA'S FIRST NEON SIGN, TO FIGURE OUT HOW IT WORKED, TO GO TO THE MOVIE."  
—Ritz usher Theodore Sherman, 1987

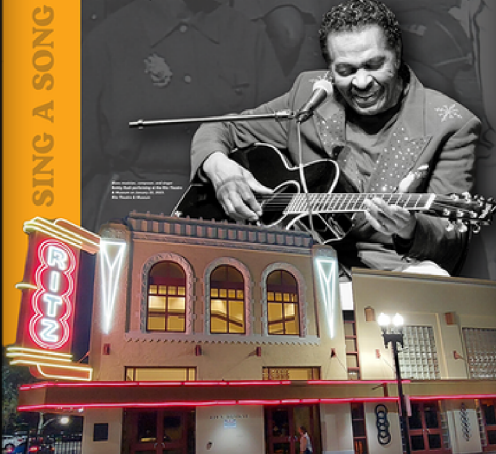
LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

The Ritz Theatre opened to a massive crowd in September 1929. It was designed by architect Jefferson Powell with a blend of Art Deco, Mediterranean Revival, and Egyptian Revival architectural styles.



The Ritz was built by Neil Witchen, Sr. for a group of local theater investors: Lionel D. Joel, Joseph Hackel, Raymond Yockey, Sr. and Dave P. Myerson. From 1929 to 1954, Joseph Hackel was the sole owner-operator.

SING A SONG



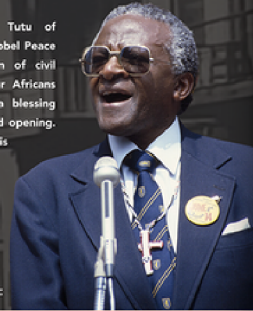
FRONT

## Ritz Theatre & Museum



Closed in 1971, the theater was partially demolished and renovated into an African American cultural center as a part of the River City Renaissance urban renewal plan. The \$4.2 million project included a 426-seat theater and museum that housed both a permanent exhibit dedicated to African American history and life in Northeast Florida as well as a series of traveling exhibits.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, a 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner and icon of civil rights and freedom for Africans the world over, led a blessing ceremony for the grand opening. Today, the Ritz Theater is LaVilla's primary performance venue.



THE 32,000-SQUARE-FOOT RITZ THEATRE & MUSEUM OPENED ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1999.

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL



SING A SONG



The Ritz Theater and Museum is one location along the trail that is currently open and functioning as part of its original intent. It continues to launch black artists of today.

SING A SONG



BACK

**Marker #18 | Ritz Theatre & Museum**

## The Black Church



The Black Church is the longstanding institutional backbone of the African American community and represents the collective culture interwoven into the fabric of Black life. Black churches were the first institutions built by Black people that ran independent of white society and served as the foundation for community, education, and culture. The Civil Rights Movement, gospel, blues, jazz, and R&B music genres, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were influenced by the Black church.

"One can see in the Negro church today, reproduced in microcosm, all the great world from which the Negro is cut off by color-prejudice and social condition...Practically, a proscribed people must have a social Centre, and that Centre for this people is the Negro church."

-W. E. B. DU BOIS, 1903



As the largest city in the Gullah Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor, the Jacksonville we know today has been greatly impacted by the Black church. LaVilla's churches played a critical role in the establishment of Edward Waters University (Florida's first Historically Black College or University), Brewster Hospital (Florida's first Black hospital), and the Afro-American Life Insurance Company (Florida's first insurance company).



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

LET OUR REJOICING RISE

FRONT

## The Black Church



Many places of worship in LaVilla, like St. Matthews Methodist Episcopal Church, Second Missionary Baptist Church, and Zion Hope Church, were designed and built by James Edward Hutchins (1890-1970). Born in Blakely, GA, Hutchins was employed as a carpenter several years before establishing his own construction company in the 1930s. Hutchins was one of the few local African American contractors who also designed their buildings. He also worked with the Veterans Administration to train African Americans as carpenters, brick masons, and architects after World War II.



LET OUR REJOICING RISE



SAFE HAVEN

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL

LET OUR REJOICING RISE

BACK

**Marker #20 | The Black Church**

**TAB IV.**

**LAVILLA HERITAGE TRAIL FINAL DESIGN PRESENTATION: WALLS**



## Jacksonville Terminal

The Jacksonville Terminal, which opened on November 17, 1919, was organized by Henry Flagler in the 1890s to accommodate the volume of visitors brought to Florida through Jacksonville. The terminal was designed by New York architect Kenneth M. Murchison, whose Neoclassical Revival-style design featured a 180-foot long facade of 42-foot tall Doric columns. [The main waiting room contained 75-foot cathedral-like vaulted ceilings and the black waiting room had a lower, more detailed coffered ceiling.] Over 2,000 people were employed to operate the large facility, making it the city's second-largest employer at the time.



"President Truman always came into the trainmaster's office and shook hands all around. Then there was John D. Rockefeller. He passed out dimes to everyone in the terminal."

— JACKSONVILLE TERMINAL COMPANY RAILROAD EMPLOYEE THOMAS BIDDY, 1974



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
TREADING OUR PATH

## Jacksonville Terminal

On opening day, the terminal handled more than 110 trains and 20,000 passengers. Traffic peaked in 1944 when 40,000 trains passed through the terminal, carrying nearly 10 million passengers. The subway became the "Gateway to Florida" for millions of passengers, including the Duke and Duchess of Windsor in 1941 and every US president from 1921 until the terminal's closure in 1974. The terminal was closed in 1974 due to high maintenance costs, low rail travel, and in 1976, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. On November 23, 1983, the Jacksonville City Council approved \$37.2 million to convert the terminal into the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, named for the former CSX chairman who worked to rescue the terminal from demolition.



TREADING OUR PATH  
Transportation, Migration, Labor Union,  
Working Class



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
TREADING OUR PATH

FRONT

BACK

# Wall #2 | Jacksonville Terminal



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

## Union Occupation of 1863

**JACKSONVILLE** was under Union control four times during the Civil War. In March 1863, Jacksonville was placed under Union control for the third time. The occupation included two of the first Black regiments organized in the Union Army.

Described by a New York Tribune reporter as comparable with the best fortifications of that kind, he had seen erected anywhere by the Union Army, two earthwork forts were built for protection in present day LaVilla.

Fort Higginson, named for Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, commander of the First South Carolina Volunteers, was near the intersection of what is now Broad and Bay Streets. Fort Montgomery, named for Colonel James Montgomery, Second South Carolina Volunteers, was farther northwest.



"Relying upon your military skill and judgment. I shall give you no special directions as to your procedure after you leave Fernandina. I expect, however, that you will occupy Jacksonville, Florida, and intrench yourselves there."  
- Union Army brigadier general Rufus Saxton, 1863



**MEN OF COLOR  
TO ARMS! TO ARMS!  
NOW OR NEVER  
Three Years' Service!**

**FAIL NOW. & OUR RACE IS DOOMED**

**ARE FREEDMEN LESS BRAVE THAN SLAVES**

Al. R. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams
Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams	Ben. A. Adams

And will be followed by  
100,000 more



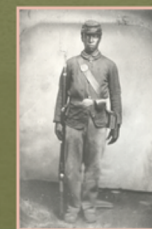
LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST

## Union Occupation of 1863

**HARRIET TUBMAN** participated in the expedition as a guide. Often called the "Moses of Her People," for her work as a conductor on the Underground Railroad, Tubman led a team of African American scouts and spies that provided key intelligence for the Union's capture of Jacksonville. During Jacksonville's occupation, the Union raided several St. Johns River plantations in Mandarin, Orange Mills, Palatka, and Doctors Lake.



The March 1863 occupation convinced the Union that the use of Black soldiers and other extensive guerilla operations were feasible. Later, Tubman became the first woman to lead a major military operation in the United States when she conducted the Raid on Combahee Ferry in South Carolina on June 2, 1863.



Susie King Taylor also participated in the 1863 occupation of Jacksonville. Taylor was the first Black nurse during the Civil War and later became the first Black woman to self-publish her memoirs. During off duty hours, Taylor taught many Union soldiers how to read and write.

In 1864, the First and Second South Carolina regiments were re-designated as the 33rd and 34th United States Colored Infantry Regiments. Several veterans that served with Tubman and Taylor became the original settlers of LaVilla.

In 2016, the President Obama administration selected Tubman to replace Andrew Jackson, the nation's seventh president, on the \$20 bill.

**OUT OF OUR GLOOMY PAST**  
Great First of 1961

Trail Map

LaVilla

FRONT

BACK

# Wall #3 | Union Occupation of 1863



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
TREADING OUR PATH

## El Modelo Block

Built in 1886, the El Modelo Block contains the largest buildings in the city that survived the Great Fire of 1901 and is significant for its link to Jacksonville's early Cuban immigrant community.

Seeking to market authentic Cuban cigars in America, while avoiding high tariffs from Havana and Spanish trade restrictions, Cuban cigar makers found Jacksonville as an attractive location to process Havana tobacco following the American Civil War.

Considered the American gateway to Florida, Cuba and the Bahamas, most cigar factories were located along or near Bay Street. By 1895, cigar manufacturing was the second largest industry in the city. In addition, Jacksonville had become home to fifteen cigar manufacturing companies and thousands of Cuban immigrants.



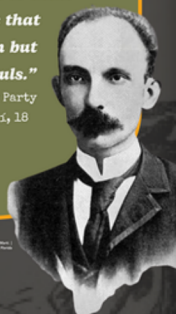
The El Modelo Block, built in 1886, was the largest building in Jacksonville to survive the Great Fire of 1901. It was the headquarters of the El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company, one of the many cigar factories that operated in the area.



The El Modelo Block, built in 1886, was the largest building in Jacksonville to survive the Great Fire of 1901. It was the headquarters of the El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company, one of the many cigar factories that operated in the area.

*"...the Cubans from 'El Modelo', Gato's cigar factory, rewarded with applause of an unaccustomed warmth, the delegate who spoke to them about those things that irritate selfish men but please generous souls."*

—Cuban Revolutionary Party  
founder José Martí, 18



The El Modelo Block, built in 1886, was the largest building in Jacksonville to survive the Great Fire of 1901. It was the headquarters of the El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company, one of the many cigar factories that operated in the area.

FRONT



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
TREADING OUR PATH

## El Modelo Block

Local factory wages ranged from \$9.00 to \$35.00 per week, depending on the skill of the worker. Local cigar factories included J. Dzialynski, El Perfecto, M. Fritot, I. Hernandez, M. Hirschman, and H.R. Lohmeyer. The El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company was the largest of these factories. Owned by Gabriel Hidalgo-Gato, El Modelo employed 225 and produced more than six million hand rolled cigars annually, with such brand names as El Modelo, La Tropicana, Hamlet, La Capitollio, El Deleite and Florida Alligator.

With the assistance of José Alejandro Huau, owner of the El Esmero Cigar Manufacturing Company,

### CUBAN REVOLUTIONARY PARTY FOUNDER JOSÉ MARTÍ

visited Jacksonville eight times between 1891 and 1898, including a December 23, 1898 speech at El Modelo to encourage support for Cuba's freedom movement.

LaVilla's days as a cigar making community declined after Cuba obtained its independence in 1898, when many Cuban immigrants living in Jacksonville returned to the island. The El Modelo Block was added to the National Register of Historic Places on October 16, 1980.



TREADING OUR PATH  
Walking Tour  
El Modelo Block  
El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company  
El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company  
El Modelo Cigar Manufacturing Company



BACK

Wall #4 | El Modelo Block



## Jacksonville Civil Rights Timeline

Council President Anna Broache introduced legislation to the Jacksonville City Council to appoint a Task Force on Civil Rights History in February 2018, which was passed unanimously upon introduction. The Task Force undertook an in-depth review of Jacksonville's history with regard to events, persons, places, themes and causes related to America's civil rights movement and suggest ways that persons, places and events important to the national movement to Jacksonville can be properly recognized and explained for the education and benefit of all our local citizens and for visitors to Jacksonville who may be unaware of the City's important role in the civil rights movement. This Task Force timeline is a narrative chronology of significant racial milestones and organized civil rights efforts led in Jacksonville to significantly end racism, racial discrimination based on skin color, and gain equal rights under the law for Jacksonville's Black citizens.



LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LET OUR REJOICING RISE

- 1865** Emancipation was proclaimed in Jacksonville on May 25, 1865, 11 days after the end of the Civil War. For this reason, Emancipation Day is traditionally celebrated on May 30 in Florida.
- 1868** Bethel Baptist Institutional Church upstarts along racial lines. Whites leave, intending to take the name, but courts rule in favor of Bethel's Black members.
- 1868** The African Methodist Episcopal Church founded Edward Waters University, the oldest historically Black college in Florida.
- 1869** Stanton Normal School, named for Edward McClintock Stanton, the second Secretary of War under Lincoln, opens its doors. It's the first public school for Black children in Florida.
- 1869** William T. Glavin and Cataline B. Simmons become the first Black city council members for Jacksonville, between 1869 and 1907, 110 African American men served in public office in the Town of L.V.I.V.I.L.L.A. City of Jacksonville, and Duval County.
- 1872** Joseph E. Lee moves to Jacksonville where he's admitted to the Florida Bar to become the first Black attorney in Jacksonville. Lee served in the Florida House of Representatives from 1875 to 1879 and the Florida Senate from 1881 to 1882.
- 1885-1901** Black businessmen Charles Montgault, John Wetmore, and George Ross are elected as the last Black Jacksonville City Council members until the 1960s.
- 1900** Manhattan Beach opens. It is considered Florida's first African American beach resort, and the only beach open to Black patrons until the 1930s.
- 1900** JAMES WILSON JOHNSON WRITES "LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING," WHICH HIS DAUGHTER ANN RECORDED. JOHNSON SETS TO MUSIC THE SONG LATER BECAMES KNOWN AS THE NEGRO NATIONAL ANTHEM.
- 1901** Reverend E.J. Gregg, E.W. Letson, Abraham Lincoln Lewis, A.W. Price, Dr. Arthur W. Smith, J.A. Valentine and Reverend John Milton establish the Afro-American Life Insurance Company ("the Afro"), to provide affordable health insurance and death benefits for the Black community.
- 1901** After the Great Fire of 1901, the Duval County School Board hires Richard Lewis Brown, the city's first Black architect. In the next decade, he constructs several new schools for which no architect is credited.
- 1902** Sylvanus H. Hart opens Jacksonville's first Black-owned bank, the Central Trust and Investment Company.
- 1906** Black Jacksonville attorney Judson Douglas Wetmore challenges the city's ordinance mandating racial separation on streets. The Florida Supreme Court upholds Wetmore's legal victory, but the city soon modifies the ordinance to overcome the legal hole for Wetmore's suit and reimplements street segregation.
- 1915** May Lofton Kennedy becomes the first Black public librarian in Jacksonville. In 1918, Kennedy becomes the first Black librarian in the Library of Congress.
- 1916** Round for the Promised Land by Jacksonville poet Matthew Ward originally published in the Chicago Defender leading to the Great Migration. One of the largest movements of people in United States history, approximately 6 million Black people move from the American South to Northern, Midwestern, and Western states between World War I and the 1970s.
- 1917** Under the leadership of Eartha M.M. White, Oakland Playground, the first city park opened specifically for Black citizens.
- 1918** Florida Drought is appointed the city's Supervisor of Recreation for Negroes and becomes a champion of Jacksonville's youth.
- 1918** Eartha White leads voter registration drives to register Black women, the faces resistance from the Ku Klux Klan, and based on election-day counts, estimates that 3,000 to 4,000 Black voters were turned away from their chance to vote. Two years later, she becomes the Florida director of the National Anti-Lynching Committee and pushes for anti-lynching legislation.
- 1918** Norman Studios begins operation, making feature-length films and shorts in which Black actors star in roles that depict real stereotypes instead of stereotyped minstrel characters.
- 1927** South Jacksonville Grammar School opens for Black children in the Southside neighborhood. Douglas Anderson leads the school's free bus transportation service. In 1945, the school board renames it the Douglas Anderson School.
- 1929** A. Philip Randolph, organizes the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the first Black labor union, and seeks a labor contract with the Pullman Company. His later earns the moniker "Father of the Modern Civil Rights Movement."
- 1929** A. L. Lewis builds Lincoln Golf and Country Club in Northwest Jacksonville for Blacks.
- 1929** E. L. Weems, first licensed Black photographer in Jacksonville, opens his first studio, designing his own method of coloration before color film was invented. In business for nearly 50 years, Weems becomes the primary photographic chronicler of Black life in Jacksonville.
- 1930** A. L. Lewis develops American Beach, in Nassau County, the only beach for Black people in the Jacksonville area.
- 1931** Mary White Blacker files suit against the Duval County Board of Public Instruction for equal salaries for Black teachers. The court's 1942 ruling reads "The defendants, the Board of Public Instruction of Duval County Florida and W. Daniel Boyd as the superintendent, shall apply a single salary schedule without distinction because of race or color."
- 1934** Reverend Dallas Graham attempts to register as a Democrat, though the Democratic Party in Jacksonville accepts only white voters. Black attorney D.W. Perkins challenges the party, and U.S. Circuit Judge Raymond B. Shields rules that in Graham's favor. The Democratic Party files an appeal, but the decision is upheld by Judge Miles W. Leahy.
- 1947** The Jacksonville Urban League is founded.
- 1951** Eric O. Simpson founds The Florida Star, now Northeast Florida's oldest Black newspaper.
- 1951** Statton Kennedy and other writers release "We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government against the Negro People" at U.N. meetings in Paris on behalf of the Civil Rights Congress.
- 1951** Marian Anderson sings to a racially integrated audience at the Old Duval County Armory after refusing to sing to segregated audiences. Anderson's Jacksonville and Miami shows are the first integrated concerts in Florida since Reconstruction.
- 1953** Henry "Hotk" Aaron, Horace Gator, and Felix Manilla integrate Jacksonville's Minor League when signed to the Jacksonville Braves, who played at Durbin Field.

## Jacksonville Civil Rights Timeline



LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LET OUR REJOICING RISE

- 1956** Postal clerk Rudolph Daniels initiates a United States Postal Service inspection of Jacksonville's segregated facilities and orders all US Postal facilities desegregated.
- 1960** Jacksonville Youth Council NAACP members, led by Rodney L. Hurst, Allen Yates, and Margerie Brooks and more than 80 mostly high school students, conduct non-violent sit-in demonstrations to protest segregated lunch counters. The advisor of the Youth Council is Rutledge Pearson who would later become president of the Jacksonville Branch NAACP, the President of the Florida State Conference of Branches of the NAACP, and a member of the NAACP's National Board of Directors. After demonstrating for two weeks, on August 27, 1960 more than 200 White men attacked the students with as handles and baseball bats. As a result of brutal committee meetings, an agreement is made to integrate downtown lunch counters in 1961.
- 1961** The Ku Klux Klan bombs the home of Iona Goffney, mother of Duval Goffney, a Black first grader, for attending previously all-white Luskness Elementary School. There are no injuries. One Klansman is sentenced to seven years, one acquitted, and four other Klansmen released due to a mistrial.
- 1961** Frustrated with the School Board's slow pace in following the desegregation order, the NAACP requests Black students to strike for three days, beginning on December 7, 1964. On the first day, 17,000 Black students stayed home from school. Within three days, 31,000 students participated in the strike.
- 1961** Johnnie Mae Chappell, a mother of 10, is shot and murdered as she walks along New Kings Road by four white men. Of the four men in the car, only J.W. Rich is charged. He serves three years.
- 1961** Five days before the Beatles are to play Jacksonville, they release a statement protesting segregation in the city's municipal facilities and refuse to play unless the audience is desegregated. John Lennon says, "I'd sooner lose our appearance money" than play to a segregated audience. The City relents and opens the concert to all.
- 1961** Attorney Earl Johnson, Sally Mathis, Mary Singleton, and Oscar Taylor are the first Black City Council members since 1907. Sally Mathis and Mary Singleton are also the first women ever elected to City Council. Charles E. Simmons, Jr. is elected to the City Civil Service Board after having been appointed to the position in 1964.
- 1962** 1967 Attorney Earl Johnson, Sally Mathis, Mary Singleton, and Oscar Taylor are the first Black City Council members since Reconstruction is elected to the Florida House of Representatives, becoming the first Black legislator from North Florida since Reconstruction.
- 1967** Dr. Arnett Girardeau is elected to the Florida House of Representatives where he advocates for prison reform and social service issues and leads the State of Florida to withdraw investments from South Africa in protest against Apartheid. In 1982, he becomes the first Black person to serve in the Florida Senate from Northeast Florida since Reconstruction.
- 1969** A white diabetic salesman shoots at a group of young Black men who are near his truck on Florida Avenue, hitting Black Ray in the leg. The incident leads to riots and Dr. Arnett E. Girardeau, Chairman of the Community Urban Development Council, requests Mayor Hans Tandler to have the Jacksonville Community Relations Commission investigate. A special committee is formed, but suggestions from the special committee's report are never implemented.
- 1969** Wendell P. Holmes, Jr. is elected to the Duval County School Board, becoming the first Black school board member in Florida.
- 1971** A police officer shoots and kills Black teenager Dennis Ray Hall, on suspicion of stealing an automobile. 300 Black demonstrators under the local NAACP chapter picket the Duval County Courthouse and then small groups loot and burn buildings along Florida Avenue for several days. The Community Urban Development Council, under Dr. Girardeau, documents cases of police brutality and harassment and provide this information to Governor Reubin Askew. After a police officer was shot and killed with another one wounded, a grand jury investigated the recent incidents, concluding that the Sheriff's Office demonstrated proper restraint, but recommended better communication between the police and Black community.
- 1971** Eddie Mae Steward, on behalf of her daughter, Alta Oretta Mills, successfully uses the Duval County School Board over continued segregation. Mills v. Duval County School Board alleges the county maintains 113 totally segregated schools—89 white and 24 Black—and that the white schools are staffed by white personnel and Black schools are staffed by Black personnel. Steward becomes president of the Jacksonville NAACP in 1972.
- 1972** Mary L. Singleton, one of the first Black City Council members since Reconstruction is elected to the Florida House of Representatives, becoming the first Black legislator from North Florida since Reconstruction.
- 1976** Dr. Arnett Girardeau is elected to the Florida House of Representatives where he advocates for prison reform and social service issues and leads the State of Florida to withdraw investments from South Africa in protest against Apartheid. In 1982, he becomes the first Black person to serve in the Florida Senate from Northeast Florida since Reconstruction.
- 1989** The Jacksonville Black History Calendar is created under the leadership of Dr. Brenda Robinson Simmons and Mrs. Chris Russell. The typesetting was done by Mrs. Yvonne Jones. The calendar chronicles Black life, history, culture and contributions. The publication was the Jacksonville Historic Commission's Historic Preservation Award in 2016 and is digitized in the Jacksonville Public Library.
- 1990** Attorney Leader Shaw becomes the first Black chief justice of the Florida Supreme Court. Shaw had been appointed a judge of the Florida Industrial Relations Commission in 1972 and appointed to the First District Court of Appeal in 1979.
- 2011** ALVIN ROBINSON IS ELECTED MAYOR, THE FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN MAYOR OF JACKSONVILLE.
- 2013** The Duval County School Board votes to support the renaming of Nathan Bedford Forrest High School, named in 1959 for a Confederate general and first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. After Forrest students voted to change the name, the students selected to rename Forrest High School to Westside High School and select the Westside as the mascot. The school board ratified their choice.
- 2014-2017** James Weldon Johnson, A. Philip Randolph, Sally B. Mathis, Rutledge Pearson, Earl B. Johnson and Arnett Girardeau are inducted into the Florida Civil Rights Hall of Fame.

FRONT

BACK

# Wall#6 | Jacksonville Civil Rights Timeline



## Clara White Mission

Frank Crowd opened the Bijou Theatre on July 19, 1908. The 218-seat theater featured silent films and vaudeville shows as its primary attraction. In 1910 Crowd renovated the Bijou theater and reopened it as the Globe Theatre. An "anchor to southern road shows," its Russell-Owens theatre company was one of the most influential pioneering African American theatrical stock companies in the country. Gertrude Pridgett Rainey performed three or four encores every night. By the end of her career, Ma Rainey had become billed as "The Mother of the Blues."

## Globe Theatre!

Open Now and Will be Later  
If you are funny, write  
Globe Theatre, Jacksonville, Florida  
Frank Crowd, Owner and Manager.

IN 1932, THE BUILDING BECAME THE PERMANENT HOME TO THE CLARA WHITE MISSION, THE OLDEST BLACK NONPROFIT IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

The Mission was founded in 1904 by nationally-recognized humanitarian, philanthropist, and businesswoman Dr. Eartha Mary Magdalene White (1876-1974). Dedicated to the memory of her mother, Clara White, and to serving the needs of the community, Eartha directed her many activities from the Mission. The Mission also served as a headquarters for the Works Progress Administration's arts and sewing projects. Renowned architect Henry Klutho ventured briefly from retirement to direct the renovation of the Mission as a personal favor to Eartha White.

In addition to her charitable work, Eartha had careers as an opera singer, a schoolteacher, and an entrepreneur. She operated a laundry company, a mercantile, a restaurant, a janitorial service, a taxi service, and an employment bureau. She was Jacksonville's first female realtor, the first professional social worker hired by the city, the first black census taker in Florida, and the first female employee of the Afro American Life Insurance Company. Eartha White's charter memberships included the National Business League, the Community Chest (United Way), the Jacksonville Historical Society, and the Jacksonville Humane Society.

Eartha White had many well-known and influential friends who were visitors to the Mission, including Mr. and Mrs. Booker T. Washington, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, James Weldon Johnson and his brother John Rosamond Johnson, first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Zora Neale Hurston, and Ray Charles. Eartha White lived on the second floor of the Mission for 42 years. Dr. Eartha M.M. White Historical Museum is a continuing memorial to both Clara White and her daughter, Dr. Eartha White. The Clara White Mission building was designated as a local historic landmark in 1993.

"I was hungered and ye gave me meat  
I was thirsty and ye gave me drink  
I was a stranger and ye took me in  
Naked and ye clothed me  
I was sick and ye visited me  
I was in prison and ye came unto me."  
Clara White Mission, 1971

FRONT

## Dining in LaVilla



Jacksonville's unique history has given the city a richly varied – if often slept-on – food scene. LaVilla's commercial districts, Ashley, Broad, and Davis Streets, have contributed significantly to the city's distinctive and authentic cuisine from Gullah Geechee specialties like garlic crabs to Arab American camel rider sandwich to a homegrown style of barbecue.

THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN BARBECUE CAN BE TRACED TO THE GULLAH-GEECHEE CULTURAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR, WHICH STRETCHES ALONG THE EASTERN COASTLINE FROM NORTH FLORIDA TO NORTH CAROLINA. Barbecue has its roots in Native American, Spanish, and African culinary heritage. The word "barbecue" comes from "barbakoa," a term for open-fire grilling used by the Taino people of the Caribbean. Southeastern Native Americans also used the technique, with Mocama Timucua among the first people whose barbecue traditions were documented. Later, Spanish colonists and enslaved West Africans brought Old World animals, sauces, and flavors into the mix.

Prior to desegregation, West Ashley Street was a bustling African American nightlife district. Many businesses featured barbecue on their menu.

A popular menu item just after World War II was the rib sandwich, which consisted of three or four ribs served between slices of bread with slaw and a little barbecue sauce. Served with the bones in, the sandwich was meant to be pulled apart with the fingers and eaten.

The rib sandwich is a popular menu item at legacy African American barbecue restaurants, including Jenkins Quality Barbecue. Jenkins Barbecue was opened by Melton Jenkins, Jr., in 1957 and was known for its savory mustard-based barbecue sauce. The 830 North Pearl Street restaurant was located on West Ashley Street during the 1960s. Surviving urban renewal, it was crowned the best barbecue restaurant in Florida by the Food Network in 2023.



"On Saturdays, concerts were held across the street from Stanton High School. On Fridays, musicians strutted the streets, playing guitars. The aromas of barbecue, fish, and crab were in the air."  
Richard McIsaac, 1986



BACK

Wall #13 | Clara White Mission/Dining In LaVilla





LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LET OUR REJOICING RISE

## Old Stanton School

An academically renowned public high school, Stanton is consistently rated as one of the top high schools in the nation. Financed through the aid of the Freedmen's Bureau and constructed on property once owned by Governor Osian B. Hart, Stanton was the first school for Black children in the State of Florida when it opened on April 10, 1869. The school was named in honor of General Edwin McMasters Stanton, President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War. Stanton was an ardent champion of human rights and an advocate of free formal education for African American children.

In 1877, President Ulysses Grant visited the school during a tour of Florida. During the visit a six-year-old student named James Weldon Johnson raised his hand from the crowd and Grant shook it. Johnson would go on to become the school's principal in 1894, expanding it to become the only high school for African Americans in the city.



"At the close of my first year, twenty-six were ready to be graduated from the eighth grade. This was all the education the city of Jacksonville gave me, and it was all it was giving them. I had been thinking about them for some time — They are entitled to as much as others — Why shouldn't they get it? — But how? — Well, that sounds like a feasible plan — Can I carry it through? — I think I can — I'll try it — I'll do it, I did do it, I made Stanton a high school." James Weldon Johnson, 1935



The original Stanton school was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1901 and its replacement was very shoddy. In 1915 the Duval County School Board planned to destroy the Stanton school and replace it with smaller schools throughout the city. The Stanton Board of Trustees filed an injunction, which resulted in one of the first civil rights litigation cases in Jacksonville. The Stanton school was rebuilt and opened its doors in 1917.

This structure was used as a junior high school in 1953-1954. In August 1954, it was converted into Stanton Vocational High School and functioned as a vocational center until 1971. Civil Rights leaders Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, Eartha M.M. White, Rutledge Pearson, and Sallye Brooks Mathis are a few of the many important individuals associated with the building.



On February 12, 1900, "LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING" was first performed at five hundred children at Stanton for Booker T. Washington in celebration of President Abraham Lincoln's Birthday. Written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson and composed by John Rosamond Johnson, the song was later adopted by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People as the Black National Anthem.



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
A STEADY BEAT

## West Ashley Street



Locally known as **UPTOWN**, the length of West Ashley Street between Broad and Davis Streets was the major entertainment mecca for Florida's Black community before desegregation. Built on the northwest corner of this intersection in 1909, the Colored Airdome was said to have been the largest theater exclusively for Black people in the South. The first published account of blues on a public stage occurred at the Airdome on April 16, 1910 by John W. F. Woods, a ventriloquist-comedian-turned-singer. The Indianapolis Freeman wrote of Woods's ventriloquism performance where his dummy, "Little Henry," sang the blues in a drunken act.

"Ashley Street was once the hub of Black business activity. You could come here for everything. There were hotels, boarding houses and cafes. All types of activity went on. You put on your Sunday-go-to-meeting best to come out here." Richard McKinnick, 2000

New venues opened during the 1920s and '30s: the Knights of Pythias Hall, Frolic, Roosevelt, and Strand Theatres. National touring acts Walter Barnes, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Erskine Hawkins performed at the Knights of Pythias during the 1930s.

By the 1940s, West Ashley Street was one of the most developed Black entertainment districts in the country, leading to its nickname, "Harlem of the South." Popular destinations included: the Lenape Bar, Wynn Hotel, Manuel's Tap Room, El Chico, and Hollywood Music Store. West Ashley Street played a significant role in the careers of many jazz and blues musicians, including: Ma Rainey, Jelly Roll Morton, Blind Blake, Walter Barnes, Ray Charles, James Brown, Charlie Hoss Singleton, and Teddy Washington.



Even after the Civil Rights Act in 1964, Ashley Street continued to remain a popular entertainment destination until the mid-1970s. West Ashley Street was a target of the City of Jacksonville's River City Renaissance urban renewal program and most buildings were razed during the 1990s. However, West Ashley Street's musical and cultural contributions survive.



FRONT

BACK

# Wall #14 | Old Stanton School/West Ashley Street



## Central Hotel

605 West Beaver Street is a space with a rich multicultural and Civil Rights Movement past. It was designed by architect Mellen C. Greeley and built for the Ames Realty Company in 1912.

In 1919, the storefronts were filled with a variety of businesses, including a dressmaker, grocery store, and two confectioneries. By 1921, the Central Hotel was open and a variety of businesses catered to the black population who was prevented from shopping in Downtown Jacksonville during segregation.



During the 1920s, Cuban immigrants Julio C. Pulgaron and Carlos Ortega operated the Lolita Cigar Company and Charles "Charley" Jacob Hazouri (1897-1969) ran a market. Hazouri, a Lebanese immigrant, originally settled in LaVilla with his father, Jacob Nadir Hazouri. In 1904 and is an ancestor of Jacksonville mayors Donna Deegan and Tommy Hazouri.

The building's longest operating business, the Central Hotel, provided lodging for African American visitors during segregation. In 1947, the Central Hotel came under the ownership of Julius and Vandora Jackson. The Jacksons also operated the Vandoria Waldorf Cafeteria, a restaurant and bakery, on the ground floor.



WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO.  
BUT WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY TOO.  
-EARL M. JOHNSON, 1971



Another tenant, the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League, provided counseling and referrals for African American veterans returning from World War II for employment, housing, education, and training benefits. The Negro Welfare League merged with a new Jacksonville branch of the National Urban League to create the Jacksonville Urban League in August 1947.

NAACP attorney Earl M. Johnson, Sr. (1928-1988) had space in the building during the 1960s. The first Black person to be elected to an at-large seat on the Jacksonville City Council, Johnson represented numerous civil rights activists during his tenure, including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rutledge Pearson, and the St. Augustine Four to desegregate public places in Florida. The Central Hotel was designated as a local historic landmark in 1995.

FRONT



## Lawton Pratt Funeral Home

The Hillman-Pratt Funeral Home is considered the oldest extant African American funeral home in Jacksonville. Completed in 1916, the building may be one of the last surviving commercial structures designed and built by noted early 20th century Black architect Joseph Haywood Blodgett (1858-1934).

Born into slavery in 1858 in Augusta, GA, Blodgett moved to Jacksonville during the 1890s with one paper dollar and one thin dime. Initially working for the railroad for a dollar a day, Blodgett went on to launch various businesses before becoming a building contractor around 1898. Following the Great Fire of 1901, Blodgett built 258 houses, keeping 199 to rent, eventually becoming one of the first Black millionaires in Florida. Blodgett Villa, his own residence in Sugar Hill where famed guests such as Booker T. Washington visited, was said to be one of the finest owned by an African American anywhere. Most of Blodgett's work was situated in the Sugar Hill neighborhood and largely lost to urban renewal efforts that included the creation of Interstate 95 and the expansion of UF Health Jacksonville's medical campus.

"If having a dollar was so vitally essential to keeping my liberty, and 'remaining at large,' if having something in the world was so necessary in getting the respect of one's fellows, I made up my mind that if it was the dollar that makes Americans recognize your manhood, shake your hand, and call you 'Brother,' then said I to myself, 'I will get some dollars!'" - Joseph H. Blodgett, 1913

The Hillman-Pratt Funeral Home serves as an early example of a purpose-built mortuary building in the early 20th century, built in the Gothic Revival and Richardsonian Romanesque styles. LAWTON LEWIS PRATT (1880-1943) WAS THE SECOND LICENSED BLACK MORTICUARIAN IN FLORIDA AND FOUNDED MEMBER OF THE FLORIDA NEGRO FUNERAL DIRECTORS & CREMATORIUM'S ASSOCIATION, which worked to open the field of funeral services to women. Pratt's slogan was "the funeral home of the community." Here he restored renowned African American aviator and stunt pilot Bessie Coleman, after she died in a Jacksonville plane crash in 1926.

After Pratt's death, the business was operated by Oscar Irving (1908-1978) and Evelyn J. Hillman as the Hillman-Pratt Funeral Home until 2002. The business then became known as Hillman-Pratt & Walton following its acquisition by Anthony Walton. In 2023, the property was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2023.



BACK

Wall #15 | Central Hotel/Lawton Pratt Funeral Home





LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
A STEADY BEAT

## Davis Street

Known as Second Street prior to LaVilla's 1887 annexation into Jacksonville, Davis Street developed into an important corridor lined with hotels, restaurants, theaters, and retail businesses following the Great Fire of 1901.

In 1902, the North Jacksonville Street Company began operating a streetcar line on Davis Street. The Black-owned streetcar line became known as

### THE COLORED MAN'S RAILROAD.

Connected by streetcar, the African American neighborhoods of **SUGAR HILL, MONGRIEF PARK, AND DURKEEVILLE** were established along the Davis Street corridor. Today, this early 20th century expansion of LaVilla is now recognized as the neighborhoods of Northwest Jacksonville.



"That was these people's homes.  
The next thing I knew, it was all gone."  
-Robert Graham, 2008



LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
A STEADY BEAT

## Davis Street

Businesses and institutions operating on Davis Street included:  
**NICK'S POOL PARLOR, FLAGLER HOTEL, BOSTON CHOP HOUSE,  
RITZ THEATRE, AND THE COOKMAN INSTITUTE.**

In 1923, the Cookman Institute merged with Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune's Daytona Literary and Industrial Training School for Negro Girls to become Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach. After 1950, Davis Street declined as it became a central target of local urban renewal efforts, which included the construction of Interstate 95 and the urban renewal of the nearby Sugar Hill and Hansontown neighborhoods during the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1993, the City of Jacksonville approved the River City Renaissance urban renewal program, which resulted in the wholesale demolition of a 50-block area of LaVilla bounded by Interstate 95 and State, Broad, and Forsyth Streets. Most current structures located on this stretch of Davis Street, including the LaVilla School of the Arts, were built as part of the River City Renaissance project.



FRONT

BACK

Wall #19 | Davis Street



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LIFT EV'RY VOICE

## Brewster Hospital

Brewster Hospital opened in this structure in 1901 as part of the Methodist Episcopal Church's mission to provide education and vocational training for African Americans at the end of the Civil War. The hospital was constructed with donations from Matilda Brewster of Connecticut and was named for her late husband, minister George A. Brewster.



### Brewster Hospital and Nurse Training School grew out of the Boylan Industrial Home and School's nurse-training courses.

With 2 cots, a table, and a few chairs, 18 young women who paid \$0.50 tuition were taught by Miss Iowa Benson and volunteer physicians. Some students traveled from as far away as New York to attend because there were so few vocational schools for Black students. While students received hands-on training with home visits, their value was realized with the Great Fire of 1901. The school was three blocks from the source of the fire and became a makeshift hospital that held 75 patients, all treated by nursing students. Brewster Hospital outgrew this structure and relocated in 1910. This structure was added to the National Register of Historic Places on May 13, 1976.



Two young boys, George and Brewster, in 1901. Photo by George A. Brewster.

Nurse attending to patient in hospital bed. Photo by George A. Brewster.

Patients in hospital room. Photo by George A. Brewster.

FRONT



LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LIFT EV'RY VOICE

## Brewster Hospital

Brewster Hospital was Florida's first all-Black hospital and was the only hospital in Jacksonville that treated African Americans until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Brewster Hospital closed in September of 1966 due to the rising costs of medical care and patients seeking more modern care from integrated hospitals.



Brewster Hospital building. Photo by George A. Brewster.

Interior of Brewster Hospital. Photo by George A. Brewster.

Brewster Hospital building. Photo by George A. Brewster.

"O Brewster House of Healing  
Where love doth conquer ill  
We yield our hearts devotion  
Thy vision to fulfill  
Wherever duty calls us  
If need be far or near  
To Brewster lessons loyal  
We'll comfort, heal, and cheer.

Brewster, Brewster, be a cheering light,  
Glowing, gleaming, beautiful, and bright  
Like a beacon burning in the night  
Glowing, gleaming, beautiful and bright."

-Brewster and Community Nurses Alumni Association



LIFT EV'RY VOICE  
Jacksonville, Daytona, Miami, Orlando, Tallahassee  
The African American Heritage Trail is a project of the Jacksonville African American Heritage Foundation.



Floor plan of Brewster Hospital. Photo by George A. Brewster.

Nurse attending to patient in hospital bed. Photo by George A. Brewster.

BACK

Wall #21 | Brewster Hospital



## Boylan School for Girls

The Boylan Industrial School and Home for Negro Girls opened in April 1886 as part of the Methodist Episcopal Church's mission to provide education and vocational training for newly freed African Americans after the Civil War. The School and Home began as a six-room cottage at the corner of Davis and Duval Streets. Missionary Hattie E. Emerson of Manchester, New York was the school principal. The school housed seven women the first year and then expanded the following year, housing 18. Young women were taught needlework, dressmaking, housekeeping, and cooking. While some women lived in the home, many attended during the day and, eventually, night classes were added.

The school was expanded to include nurse training and, in 1901, the Nurse Training School opened. The Nurse Training School eventually became the Brewster Hospital and Nurse Training School.

*In 1910 the School and Home moved to Jacksonville's Eastside and in 1932 it merged with Haven Home, becoming the Boylan-Haven School.*

It remained in the Eastside until 1959 when it merged with Mather Academy and relocated to Camden, South Carolina.

Boylan Industrial School and Home for Negro Girls, Jacksonville, Florida. Photographed by Hattie E. Emerson, 1886. Original in the collection of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.



LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LIFT EVERY VOICE



FRONT

## Boylan School for Girls

*"Boylan-Haven throughout the years has provided a place, and the necessary atmosphere, for the meeting of the minds and the sharing of ideals and ideas among the concerned people of both Negro and the white groups of the city of Jacksonville."*

—BOYLAN-HAVEN SUPERINTENDENT  
PRINCIPAL MRS. EDITH M. CARTER, 1959



*Edith M. Carter, 1959. Original in the collection of the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.*



LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING HERITAGE TRAIL  
LIFT EVERY VOICE



BACK

**Wall #22 | Boylan School for Girls**

**TAB V.**  
**LIFT EV'RY VOICE & SING PARK INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE UPDATE**



# Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing Interpretive Marker Draft Narratives

## (1) Southern Architecture: Shotgun Homes

*"I was born June 17, 1871, in the old house on the corner; but I have no recollection of having lived in it. Before I could be aware of such a thing my father had built a new house near the middle of his lot. In this new house was formed my first consciousness of home. My childish idea of it was that it was a great mansion." James Weldon Johnson*

The Johnson family resided in a two-story frame house on this lot at 138 Lee Street. Demolished in the 1920s, the house was representative of two-story residential dwellings that dominated the LaVilla neighborhood.

Unrelated to the Johnson family, this shotgun home was originally located on the 600 block of Lee Street. Shotgun homes are a style of building associated with African, Caribbean, and American culture. Shotguns are connected to a combination of West Indian and West African architectural styles. Shotgun houses were designed to be narrow across the front in order to maximize the number of units on each residential lot. Rooms were typically arranged one behind the other connected by a long hallway.

Because this long hall usually ran the entire length of the house, the name derived from the possibility of firing a round from the front door through the back door without hitting any part of the house.

Shotguns were the most popular style of affordable housing in the American South from the end of the American Civil War through the 1920s. Historic shotguns can still be found in Jacksonville neighborhoods like Outeast and North Riverside.

*189 words without intro quote. 260 with quote.*

## **(2) The Black National Anthem: Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing**

*"Shortly afterwards my brother and I moved from Jacksonville to New York, and the song passed out of our minds. But the school children of Jacksonville kept singing it, they went off to other schools and sang it, they became teachers and taught it to other children. Within twenty years it was being sung over the South and in some other parts of the country." James Weldon Johnson*

James Weldon Johnson wrote Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing as a poem in 1900. Johnson's brother John Rosamund set the poem to music. It was first performed that year by five hundred Black students at LaVilla's Stanton Institute. It is a hymn that has themes of thanksgiving, faithfulness, and freedom. In 1919, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) named the song the "Negro National Anthem." Kim Weston, Melba Moore, Rene Marie, Denyce Graves, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Vanessa Williams, Alicia Keys, and Beyonce are notable singers who have performed the song. The song continues to have a significant impact in the United States. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, the song gained more attention when it was used during protests and demonstrations. The song features in celebrations of Florida's May 20th Emancipation Day and Juneteenth, especially after it was made a federal holiday in 2021.

*153 words without intro quote. 221 with quote. NPS guide recommends using quotes.*

## **(3) Songwriter, Author, Poet, Diplomat, Activist: James Weldon Johnson**

*“Nothing I have done has paid me back so fully in satisfaction as being part creator of [Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing]. I am always thrilled deeply when I hear it sung by Negro children. I am lifted up on their voices, and I am also carried back and enabled to live through again the exquisite emotions I felt at the birth of the song.” James Weldon Johnson*

James Weldon Johnson was a nationally famous songwriter, author, poet, diplomat, and civil rights activist. He was born on this site on June 17, 1871. His early life was strongly influenced by his mother, an educator and a musician, and his father, a preacher. He attended the Stanton Institute in LaVilla. He went to college at Atlanta University. He returned to teach at Stanton and became principal. Johnson became the first African-American in Florida to pass the State Bar Exam in 1898.

Johnson moved to New York City with his brother John Rosamund Johnson after Jacksonville’s Great Fire of 1901. He and his brother had great songwriting success, partnered with Bob Cole. Johnson’s most famous song is “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing.” In New York, Johnson became involved in politics. Theodore Roosevelt appointed him as a diplomat to Venezuela and Nicaragua. When Johnson returned to New York, he got a job with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He worked at the NAACP until 1930. He worked on anti-lynching laws and spoke up on civil rights for African Americans. Johnson was the first Black professor at New York University and also taught at Fisk University. He was married to Grace Nail Johnson. Johnson died in 1938 and is buried in New York.

*216 words without intro quote. 284 with quote.*

#### **(4) Composer, Educator, Actor: John Rosamond Johnson**

John Rosamond Johnson was a nationally famous music composer, educator, and actor. He was born on August 11, 1873 on this site. His early life was strongly influenced by his mother, an educator and a musician, and his father, a preacher. He attended the Stanton Institute in LaVilla. He went to college at the New England Conservatory. He returned to Jacksonville after college to offer private music lessons, serve as choirmaster and organist for Bethel Institutional Baptist Church in Hansontown, and teach music at the Florida Baptist Academy in the Eastside neighborhood.

Johnson's most famous song is "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing." He wrote the music and his brother James Weldon Johnson wrote the lyrics in 1900. Johnson moved to New York City with his brother James Weldon Johnson after Jacksonville's Great Fire of 1901. He and his brother had great songwriting success, partnered with Bob Cole. In New York, Johnson wrote music for and performed as an actor on Broadway at a time when it was rare for African Americans to do so. Johnson spent time in London as the musical director of Oscar Hammerstein's Grand Opera House. John Rosamond Johnson was later director of the Music School Settlement for Colored People in Harlem. He was married to Nora Floyd. Johnson died in 1954 and is buried in New York.

221 words

## **(5) Growing Up in LaVilla: The Johnson Family**

James Weldon and John Rosamond Johnson were greatly influenced by their family. Their father James Johnson was born a free person of color in Richmond, VA in 1830. He later moved to New York City. Their mother, Helen Dillet, was born in 1842 in Nassau, Bahamas. She and her mother Mary moved to New York. James and Helen met there. As a young family, the Johnsons settled in LaVilla in 1869.

The Johnsons lived on this site at 138 Lee Street. Helen was a musician, artist, poet, and avid reader. She was the first person to teach James Weldon and John Rosamond music. Helen became the first Black public school teacher in Florida, and was later the principal of Stanton Institute. James was the head waiter at the St. James Hotel, a winter-resort destination in Jacksonville. He later served as pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church. Helen's mother Mary lived nearby and was a large part of family life. Born in 1869, Agnes Marion Edwards, their adopted sister, was employed as a teacher at Stanton Institute.

James Weldon Johnson reflected on his childhood as a happy time. At the time the Johnson family was settling into LaVilla (1870s-80s), Jacksonville was known as a good place to live for Black people. There were Black police, city councilmen, firemen, and justices of the peace. This came to an end with the creation of Jim Crow laws. Johnson and his brother left for New York in part because of the changes they saw in Jacksonville.

251 words

## Visual Examples of 24" x 36" Interpretive Markers





PROPOSED MARKER LOCATIONS

James Weldon Johnson



John Rosamond Johnson



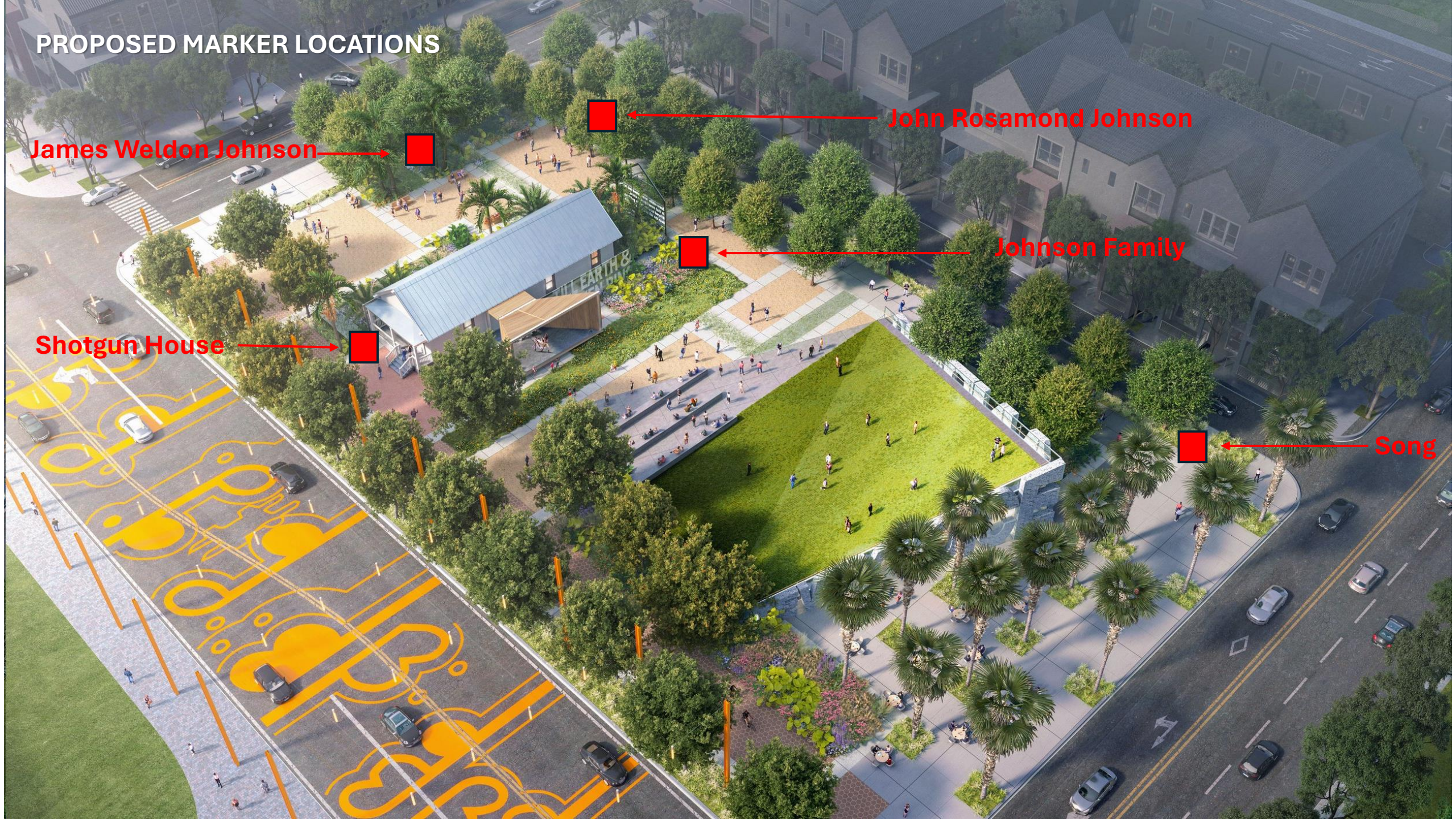
Shotgun House



Johnson Family

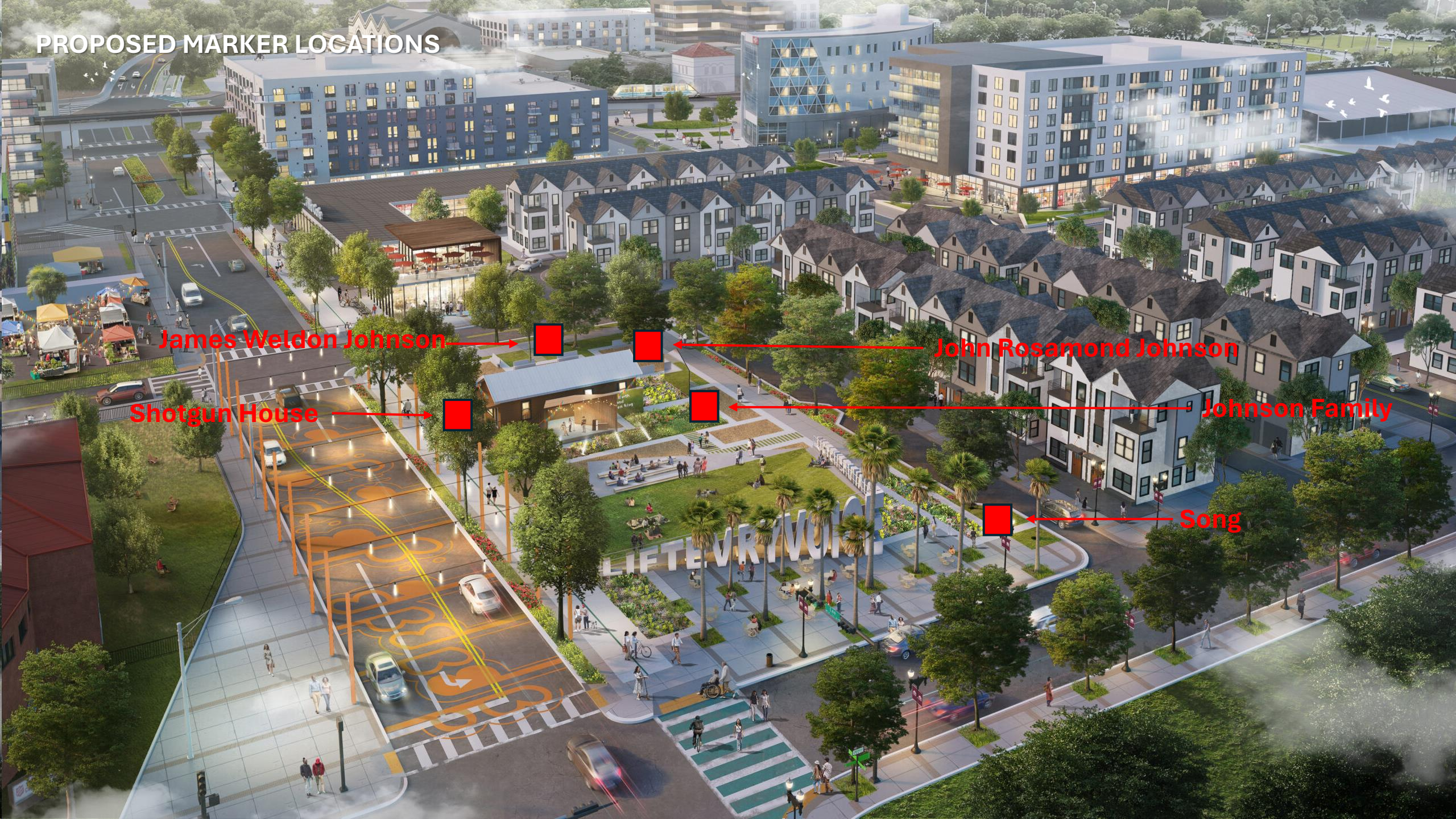


Song





PROPOSED MARKER LOCATIONS



James Weldon Johnson



John Rosamond Johnson

Shotgun House



Johnson Family



Song



PROPOSED MARKER LOCATIONS



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Hanson Professional Services Inc.  
8075 Gate Parkway, W  
Jacksonville, FL 32216  
Phone: 904-737-0090  
Fax: 904-737-0040  
Offices Nationwide  
www.hanson-inc.com

CONSULTANTS



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT  
Hood Design Studio, Inc.  
3015 Filbert St. #2  
Oakland, CA 94611  
United States  
Tel: 510.595.0688

CITY OF  
JACKSONVILLE

LIFT EV'RY  
VOICE AND  
SING PARK

			</		

SHEET TITLE  
ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN

L0-05

SHEET .6. OF 28

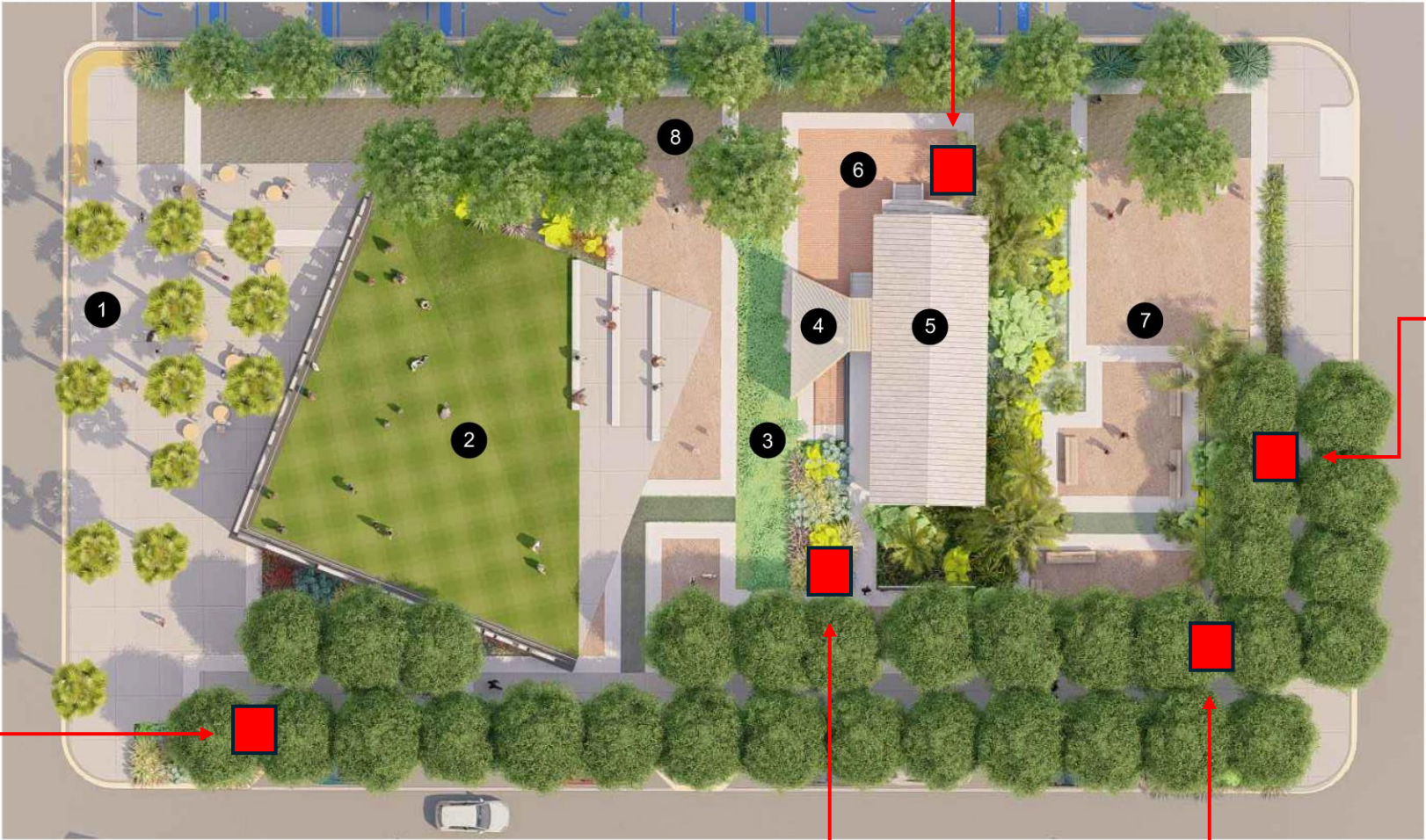
Shotgun House

James Weldon Johnson

Johnson Family

John Rosamond Johnson

Song



PLAN LEGEND

- |                |                             |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| ① NORTH PLAZA  | ⑤ SHOTGUN HOUSE (BY OTHERS) |
| ② LIFTED LAWN  | ⑥ SHOTGUN PLAZA             |
| ③ CENTRAL LAWN | ⑦ SOUTHERN GARDENS          |
| ④ STAGE        | ⑧ EMERALD TRAIL PASS        |

01 ILLUSTRATIVE PLAN  
SCALE: 1"=10'-0"





# THE SEMINOLE CLUB

The Seminole Club was organized in 1887 with F.R. Osborne, J.M. Barrs, A.C. Cowan and W.R. Hunter as the organizing officers. Named in honor of Florida's Native American Seminole tribe, the club was Jacksonville's oldest social club for men and the seventh oldest of its type in the country. Jacksonville architects Rutledge Holmes and Arthur Burton Gilkes designed this Colonial revival building and in 1903 construction was completed by the Halsema-Woodcock Construction Company at a cost of \$25,000. Originally built as a two-story, red brick structure, a third floor was added to accommodate fifteen bachelor apartments in 1907 at a cost of \$5,000.

The club's first event was the Patriarch's Ball held on April 20, 1903, followed by a Seminole Cotillion and the official opening on New Year's Day 1904. In 1905, introduced by Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, President Theodore Roosevelt gave a speech to local citizens from the club's second floor balcony with the purpose of helping heal the nation's sectional division still lingering forty years after the Civil War. At its peak, the club's roster consisted of more than 1,000 members, including leading figures in business, politics and law, including Louis Hampton "Lou" Ritter. A former club president and the last mayor in Jacksonville before Consolidation, Ritter was credited for supporting the Civil Rights Movement, integrating the Jacksonville Police Department and initiating the development of the Jacksonville International Airport.

Despite the Seminole Club's racially segregated atmosphere, Oscar C. Carter made national news in 1917. A food inventor and Black head waiter of the Seminole Club, Carter created a sauce that was favored by the famous Wall Street speculator Jessie L. Livermore. At a Seminole Club luncheon, Livermore issued Carter a significant check to market the product known as the Oscar Carter Sauce. Also gender segregated, another inclusionary barrier was broken in 1988 when Nancy Seely, the daughter of the former mayor and club president Lou Ritter, became the first woman to be admitted as a member.

The Seminole Club is a contributing structure to the Downtown Jacksonville Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2016.



An early unbuilt conceptual elevation for the Seminole Club  
(Snelling and Potter Architects)



The Seminole Club originally opened as a 2-story Colonial Revival-style brick structure in 1903  
(State Archives of Florida)



President Theodore Roosevelt at the Seminole Club  
on October 21, 1905  
(University Of North Florida)

For more information visit  
[dia.coj.net](http://dia.coj.net)







