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# The Florida Architect

Volume 24 Number 1 January/February 1974

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MAR 27 1974

MIAMI-DADE COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
MIAMI, FLORIDA

COVER: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings home in Cross Creek.  
Photo by Wade Swicord.

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Tour of the Orange Lake District  
and Cracker Florida.  
Richard C. Crisson

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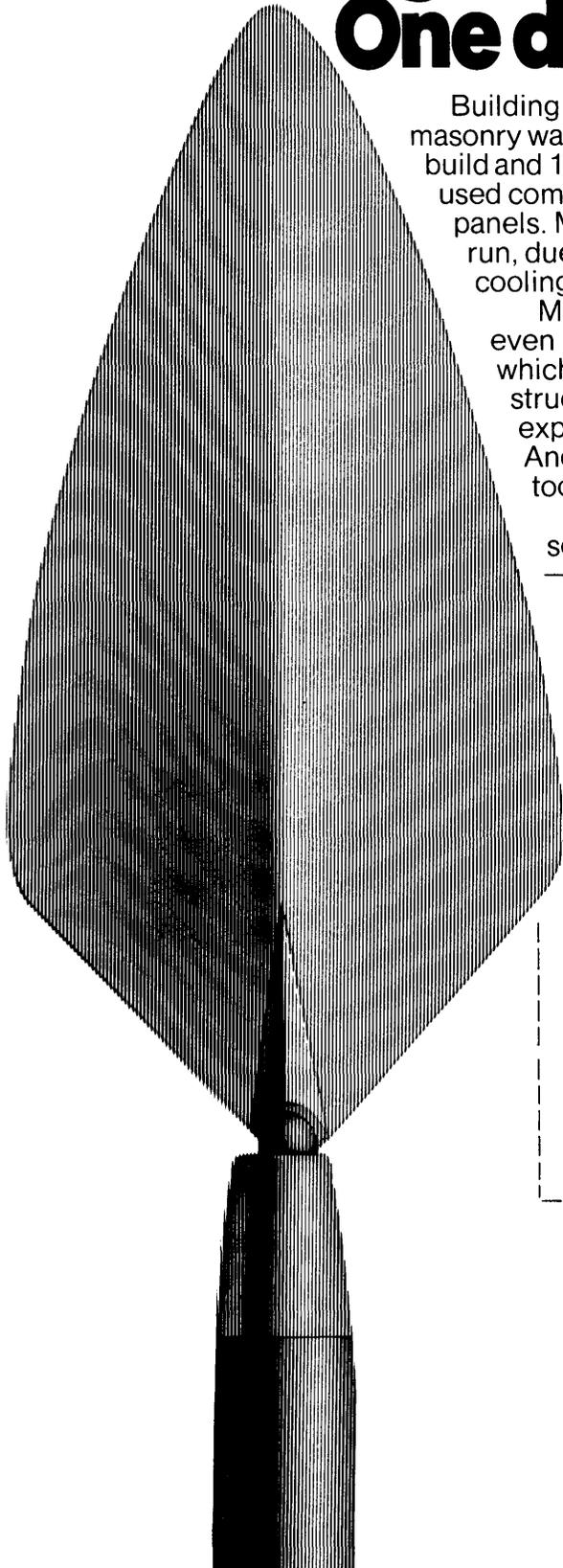
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# Tour of the Orange Lake District and Cracker Florida

By Richard C. Crisson



The scope of this survey includes the southern portion of Alachua County and the northern portion of Marion County; an area that may be called 'Orange Lake District' or 'Cracker Florida'. This area to the south and east of Gainesville portrays the frontier character of how Florida once looked. At the time of the Spanish arrival in St. Augustine in 1565, when they encountered the peaceful Timucuan Indians of Northern Florida, Spain started colonizing the area with a series of missions to the west and north of St. Augustine. These missions were destroyed in the early 1700's by the South Carolina British and Creek Indians.

When the Seminole started arriving around 1800, they brought terror to the early settlers; but after the Seminole War of 1842, the Seminoles were finally moved to reservations. By 1850, with no more Indian threats, pioneer settlements start appearing in this part of Florida.

The railroad was a prime force in this growth, especially upon the completion of the Fernandina-Gainesville-Cedar Key railroad in 1860. Thus the Atlantic Gulf and West Indies Transatlantic Railroad promoted the growth of the citrus industry with easy access to northern markets. The other important railroad was the narrow gauge Florida Southern Railroad (FSR), completed in 1882 from Palatka-Gainesville-Ocala. It changed names successively from the Plant System, to the Atlantic Coastline Railroad in 1902, to the present Seaboard Coastline Railroad.

The history of the citrus industry in northern Florida actually began when it was introduced by the Spanish in 1579. By 1773, the naturalist, William Bartram, made note of the oranges as he travelled through Paynes Prairie. The good soil and plentiful water made it a desirable area in which to settle. One problem which the early settlers did not anticipate was frost damage. This became evident with the Great Freeze of 1894-95 and a subsequent freeze in 1899 which completely wiped out the citrus industry.

Orange Lake was an exception since the Lake had a moderating effect on cold temperature. One advantage is that oranges grown this far north are associated with superior quality, which offsets the higher prices caused by having to fire (local name for lighting smudge pots to produce smoke and raise the temperature), or to replant the groves.

Water transportation was also used, as evidenced in the 1880's when steamboats navigated the St. John's River, its tributaries, and navigable lakes, to carry citrus, lumber and even tourists. Numerous books were written to advertise the natural attractions of this area.

Land not used for citrus was taken by pioneer farmers who relied upon the forests and prairies for subsistence agriculture. Later, cotton and corn become important, as well as tobacco farther north.

According to Dr. Clark Gross, "Cracker Florida is one of the areas of the state where the past is young and the pioneering spirits seems strong. Its people, shaped by their near self-sufficient life have a distinctive character . . . which sets them apart. There are a number of areas in Florida which are equally entitled to be classified as 'Cracker Florida'. The one selected for this tour is particularly interesting because one of America's best writers, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, described life in this area when it was less affected by change."

## GAINESVILLE

Depart from corner of University Avenue and 13th Street, (US 441); proceed south on US 441.

Bivens Arm to the west; a small lake which is part of Paynes Prairie. New developments are rapidly encroaching upon the once peaceful shore.

## PAYNES PRAIRIE

Paynes Prairie is a large flat marshy plain covered by grass and small stands of scrubby trees. It is 8 mi. long by 1½ to 4 mi. wide, and the highly soluble underlying rock is Ocala limestone, which acts as a funnel for the runoff water. The dissolution of the limestone has caused the Prairie to become lower than the surrounding area.

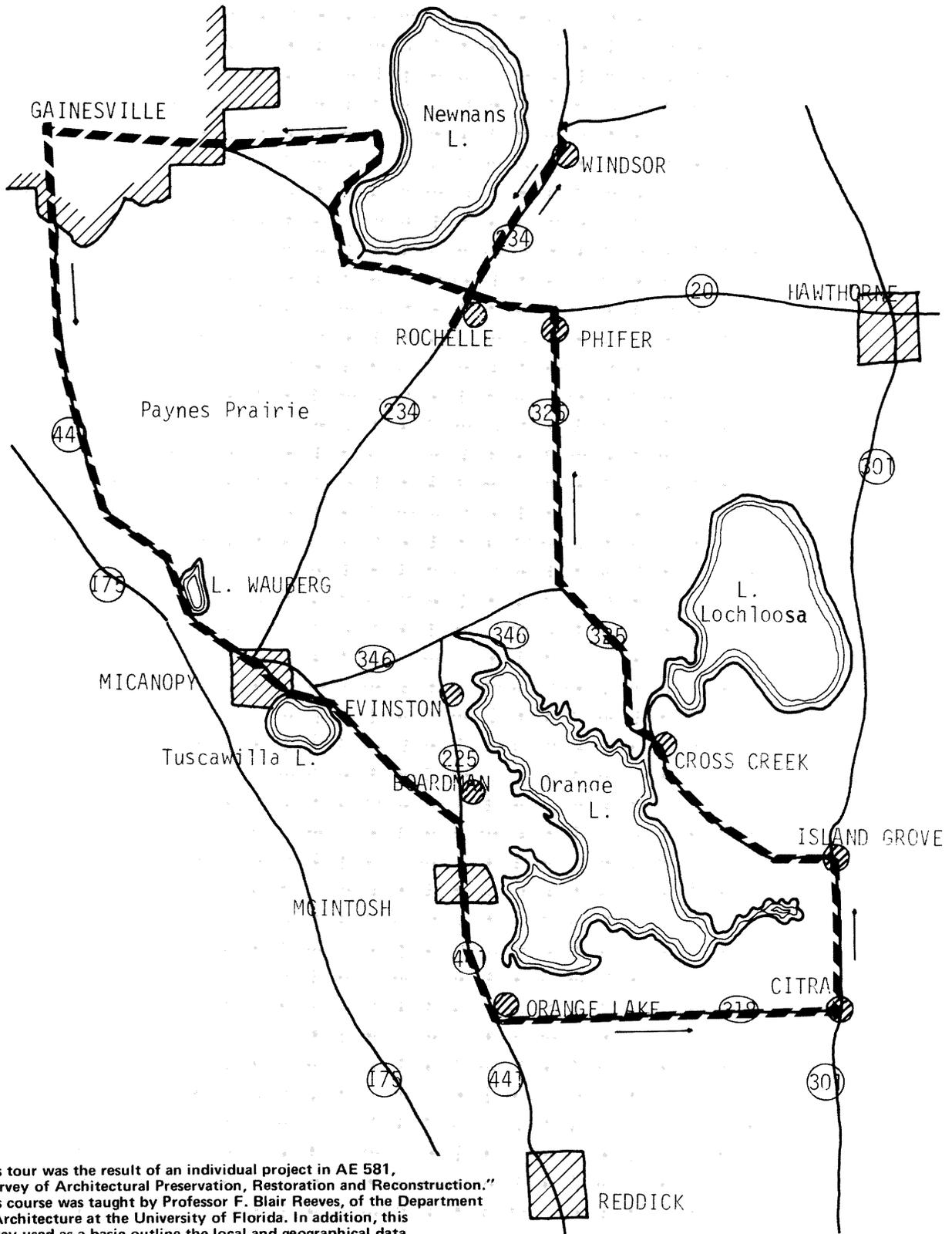
Historically, Paynes Prairie was a broad body of water known as Alachua Lake from 1871-1892. The Prairie has periodically filled or emptied depending upon the underground passages and sinkholes. A low-draft steamboat, 'The Cicola', plied the 3 to 5 ft. waters of the Lake from 1883-1892. The steamboat was used to ship mostly citrus from Rochelle and Micanopy to Rocky Point and Sweetwater Branch, in southeast Gainesville.

At present, the Prairie is in the process of being purchased by the State of Florida as a wildlife refuge to serve as habitat for the common Cattle Egret, Herons, Florida Gallinules, and the not so common, Sandhill Cranes.

To the west is a natural history information signboard.

Bolen Bluff, a steep bank at the southern edge of the Prairie. The road was cut through the location of an Indian site, which was excavated by the Florida State Museum. In 1958 the results were published in a pamphlet, "Bolen Bluff on Paynes Prairie", by Ripley Bullen.

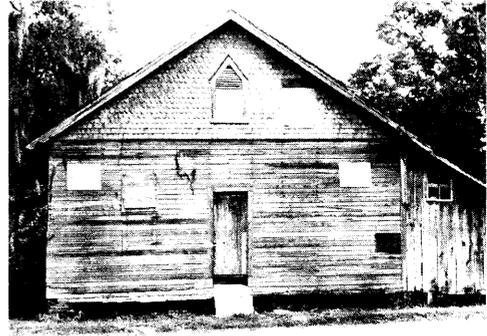
Camp Wauberg to the east; a private recreation park owned by the University of Florida student body.



This tour was the result of an individual project in AE 581, "Survey of Architectural Preservation, Restoration and Reconstruction." This course was taught by Professor F. Blair Reeves, of the Department of Architecture at the University of Florida. In addition, this survey used as a basic outline the local and geographical data gathered in a tour by Dr. Clark Cross, of the Geography Department at the University of Florida.



City Hall, built in 1895 as a school house and remodelled several times. Large simple brick structure with hipped roof, it has several modern additions to the east. Building appears structurally sound, although it is poorly maintained.



Thrasher Warehouse, owned by Thrasher family of Micanopy. Wood frame building with horizontal siding and pattern shingle design; roof shows wood shingles under a more recent metal roof. No established date, but probably from before 1900.



Thrasher Building, a brick masonry building used as a general merchandise store, and owned by Mr. J. E. Thrasher. Building dates from c. 1892.



Martin E. Uhl residence; built in the 1920's and originally owned by Z. C. Herlong. Wood and brick house with 4 columns in front and a second story porch. This a grandiose house of very massive proportions.

## Micanopy

Enter Micanopy to the west of US 441. It is probably the oldest settlement in Alachua County since it was an Indian settlement long ago. When William Bartram visited the area in 1773, Indians had a village called Cuscowilla. It was the capital of the Timucuan Indians, and later, the Village of the Seminoles under Secoffee, King Payne, Bolect, John Hicks, and Micanope.

In 1817 during the second Spanish period, the King of Spain gave a large tract of land to Don Fernando de la Maza Arredondo and his son, merchants of Havana, Cuba. Micanopy was the center of this grant.

In 1820, Moses Levy bought 20,000 acres of this land just south of Micanopy, forming a partnership with Frederick Warburg, of Hamburg, Germany. In 1821 twenty-two persons arrived, including a man named Edward Wanton. The settlement was called "Wanton" until it was changed to Micanopy in 1834.

Prof. F.W. Buchholz says that by 1823 there were possibly twenty-five houses and a powered sawmill. In 1824, a mail route was established from Picolata, on the St. John's River, via Orange Springs to Micanopy. The Micanopy Post Office was established in 1831, and it is one of the

oldest authenticated post offices with the present boundaries of Alachua County.

Micanopy was destined to become the wealthy center of the citrus producing section of Alachua and Marion counties. Dr. George Payne was one of the early citrus growers, and by 1883, with 150 groves within a 3 mi. radius, oranges were being shipped regularly across Alachua Lake to Gainesville.

At its peak around 1885, Micanopy was a town of six hundred with aspirations of becoming the county seat. However, it

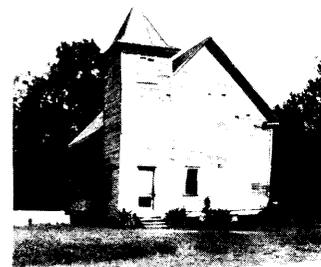
Feaster Building is now the Center of Modern Art. The building was built c. 1903 and its original use included a general store and drugstore on the ground floor; town council room and dentist office on the second floor; and a third floor for visiting opera companies, etc. This is a brick building but unfortunately the ground floor exterior has been sheathed in vertical boarding of very recent origins. The Center of Modern Art opens from Oct. through May, Thursdays through Sundays, from 1:30 PM. to 5:30 PM. The center has frequently changing exhibits and provides a worthwhile stop.



Episcopal Church (originally Presbyterian), a simple wood frame building built in 1858. It was bought by the Episcopal Church in 1970-71.



Baptist Church (no longer used as a church). A simple wood frame building with a steeple; date unknown.



African Episcopal Methodist Church; to the left on S 25. This old wood frame building belongs to a black denomination, but soon it will be torn down when the new church building is completed. The old church is in very deteriorated condition; the date is unknown.

Montgomery property wall (only remaining evidence of house and property). Old brick wall and arched entry led the way to the Montgomery family residence. This is the only evidence of the third residence built at this location. They all burned, and the last house built



own received a spur line from Micanopy station (several miles to the east), rather than the main track. The reason for this was that the city fathers rejected the idea of having the main track of the FSR through the center of town and disturb the peace. It soon became apparent that progress would soon bypass the town.

At present the Franklin Crate Company is the town's largest source of income, and many residents commute daily to work in Ocala.

Streets around the side streets as well as the Main street, but finish at S 25, at the northern part of town.

Tuscawilla Lake, to the south on S 25 across from the African Episcopal Methodist Church. It bears the name of Chief Micanope's wife. The water level changes depending on the season and whether the sinkhole is clogged with debris.

Turn south on US 441 and continue to McIntosh. To the east are small settlements which developed because of the railroad (FSR), which roughly parallels the present highway. Once the railroad lost its importance these settlements have barely survived.

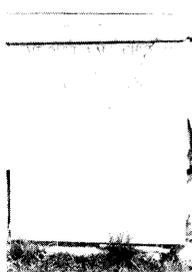
The town lies near the boundary of Alachua and Marion counties, and was named after Capt. Evins, of South Carolina, who had large land holdings nearby. Although the town and post office were established in 1882, it was well known for its oranges prior to 1882. Today about three churches remain, in addition to a general store; the railroad depot was discontinued in 1956.

## Evinston

Mt Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church; a white painted wood frame structure with sheet metal roofing. The building is in fairly good condition; date of erection is unknown.



Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church; a marble slab at the southwest corner of the building listing the officers of the Church in October of 1956.



## Boardman

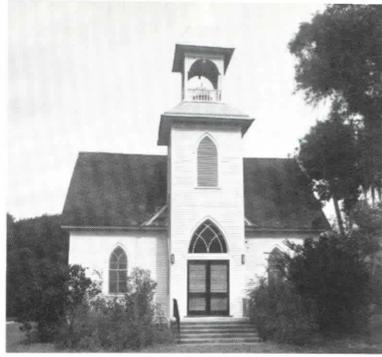
Known as Keep's Point before the railroad and was named after Capt. C.W. Keep. The FSR had a station here, with additional connection by steamer with the Transit Railroad (paralleling US 301 to the east of Orange Lake). It was settled by a group from Louisiana in 1881, and by 1884 it had 30 to 40 families. Cattle, sheep and citrus were its major products.

## McIntosh

McIntosh; turn east for the old part of town. This town was named for Col. John H. McIntosh, a pioneer planter whose property was located on Wire Road, the mail stage route from Gainesville to Ocala following the old telegraph line. In 1882, the Florida Southern Railroad followed this route from Gainesville-Rochelle-Ocala.

In 1885, the plat was surveyed and laid out by J.K. Christian and W.M. Gist, who erected the first dwelling in town. The town lies on the west bank of Orange Lake and is made up of two acre blocks subdivided into building lots and intersected by 60 and 80 ft. wide roads, these are planted by rows of live oaks.

Before the 1895 freeze, McIntosh had quite large and profitable orange groves, including some with the highly prized pineapple orange. Around 1900 McIntosh had around four-hundred residents.



Christian Church, a wood frame church with a tall steeple and gothic windows; probably built between 1880-1895.



Presbyterian Church, an elaborate wooden frame building with a corner steeple and double gothic windows having a trefoils above. Probably built between 1880-1895.



Residence across the street from the Presbyterian Church; wood frame building with an elaborate Victorian twostoried porch at the front. No dates.



Lois Dickson residence; wood frame with elaborate detail, including carved balusters and posts, and fancy barge board at the top of the gables. Reminiscent of the Victorian or 'Eastlake Style'. Probably built before 1890.



Handsome residence having a rounded one-story porch and a simple barge board pattern. The date for this wood frame house is unknown.



## MCINTOSH

Large residence across the street from Post Office. It has an elaborate piling pattern and cut shingles at the front of the gable. The date is not known, and its size indicates that the probable use might have been that of a hotel.



Citrus packing plant beside the railroad so that citrus may be shipped without any difficulty. In McIntosh citrus is grown commercially and often the lawn may be a grove instead. No date.



Railroad Depot, still appears to be in good structural condition despite lack of maintenance. Wood frame building is raised on post to avoid termites.



Interesting example of a double gable residence with a more recent porch added to the front. No dates.



The town was settled in 1881 upon the completion of the FSR tracks, by William Hickson. Orange Lake contained two churches, a school, a land office, and a post office in 1883 when close to fifty families settled in what had once been the plantation of Gen. J.B. Gordon.

The lake of the same name (Orange Lake), is very close to the road at this vicinity, and the "Floating Islands" can be seen. Heagy Barry recreational park is located off US 441 before junction with US 318.

Dr. Cross says that Orange Lake is 26 sq. mi., but only 10 to 12 ft. deep. Great mats of floating vegetation, loosely attached to the bottom become dislodged during strong winds, or possibly by the formation of marsh gas in the lake bottom. These

masses drift to new locations where they again become rooted – hence their name. These unique islands have been featured in Ripley's "Believe it or Not."

Don McKay has for many years owned land borders the southern edges of Orange Lake. The few visitors that find his property "Floating Islands," which lies ½ mi. from the Orange Lake post office to the east on US 441, soon become friends, since he takes them whenever they want his boat. Stop here during the mating and nesting season of April and May. Mr. McKay knows everything there is to know on birds in the area, and he enjoys showing them to visitors.

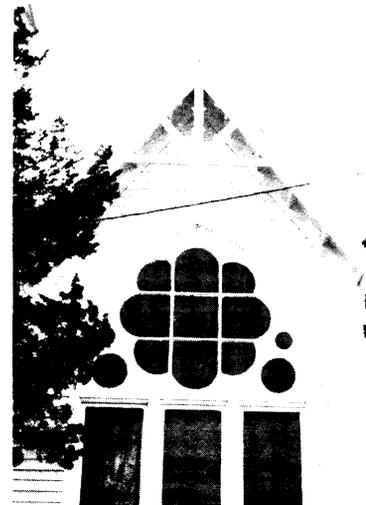
Turn east on US 318, until junction with US 301, and the settlement of Citra.

Citra was one of the earliest settlements produced as a result of the passing of the Transit Railroad (Seaboard Airline Railroad), through the area. The town was laid out in 1881 by J.A. Harris and it became famous for originating the pineapple orange. At its peak in 1885, the town had several stores, a hotel, and a population of 250.

## Citra

Turn north on US 301, Island Grove is at junction with S 25.

Baptist Church, wood frame building with a corner steeple. It is quite elaborate as a whole and is complemented by neo-gothic windows and a balustraded barge-board. Probably dates from around 1890.



The settlement was also situated on the Transit Railroad, and it was a vegetable and citrus shipping point when the post office was established in 1884.

## Island Grove

Citra and Island Grove were towns that never recovered from the Great Freeze of 1894-95, which wiped out all citrus production.

Turn west on S325 to Cross Creek.

This settlement is known for its native-food restaurants and for being the home of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings until her death in 1955. To the immediate south of the Rawlings home is a wayside park and recreation area with a boat ramp, restrooms, and picnic tables facing Orange Lake.

## Cross Creek

Continue northward on S325 and cross the creek which connects Orange Lake and Lochloosa Lake to the northeast.

Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings Museum; a typical late 19th century 'cracker' farmhouse of central Florida. The materials include vertical wood siding and wooden shingles. Mosquito-enclosed breezeways connect the newer parts of the house. The house is characterized by simple shed and lean-to roofs.

It was purchased in 1928 by Mrs. Rawlings and renovated in 1930. It was here where she wrote "The Yearling," which received a Pulitzer Prize in 1939, and which depicted the life of the community. The house was recorded for the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1965 by students and faculty from the Department of Architecture of the University of Florida.

The house was willed to the University of Florida, but it is operated as a museum by the Florida State Department of Natural Resources. Hours of operation are Tuesday through Sunday, from 9 AM to 5 PM, with a 25 cent admission. A stop here is a must since the house is kept as it was by Mrs. Rawlings.



Phifer was originally called Socattee but the name was changed to Phifer in 1920, it became important when the Phifer family located their sawmill and turpentine still at this location.

Most of this area is still heavily wooded and privately owned, although under a Wildlife Management Area of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Commission. Range cattle also roam in this area.

Cypress logging was carried out nearby until early 1930's. The large cypress swamps were often logged from barge-mounted, cable-rigged spars from which cables extended to pull in the logs. In some of the swamps canals were dug for a mile or more so as to reach the virgin stands of timber.

Continue west on US 20, to junction with S 234; Rochelle is immediately south of this junction.

## Rochelle

Although not much is left, Rochelle had an important past which merits attention. The first people to inhabit the area were the Potano tribe of Indians who were noticed by De Soto when he passed nearby in 1539. In 1606 the Spanish explored the area for future mission sites under Father Prieto.

This particular site, called the Zetrouer Site, was first occupied from 1685-1704 and appeared as a secondary mission to the major mission of the area, San Francisco de Potano, near Gainesville. A site, 1 mi. south of Rochelle on S 234, was investigated by Archaeologists in 1955 when the road cut exposed Indian and Spanish artifacts. These indicated the concurrent occupation of both white and Indian settlers.

Much later, between 1830-40, when the Seminoles were terrorizing white settlers, Fort Crane was established. This site lies on the east side of the road, 1.3 mi. south of Rochelle. Both of these archaeological sites adjoin each other. However, they are on posted private land, and this is strictly enforced.

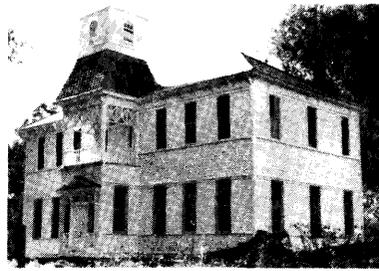
The surrounding area also includes Oak Ridge Cemetery, also south of Rochelle on S 234. This is a free cemetery which has been used primarily by Rochelle and Micanopy families. According to Jess Davis, historian of Alachua County, it is the second oldest cemetery for white people in the County (after Newnansville), and the burial place for Governor Madison Starke Perry. Perry, a native of South Carolina, was a resident of Rochelle and served as governor from 1857-1861.

Both the Perry and Zetrouer families settled this area around 1850, and Gov. Perry owned 3,000 acres of land called Ft. Crane Estate. According to Davis, it was then called "Perry" and later "Gruelle".

The name was finally changed to Rochelle in September of 1884 when it became a railroad center. It was the terminal of the High Springs to Rochelle branch of the Atlantic Coastline Railroad, and on the Ocala Division of the FSR.

In 1884, the population was 150 to 175, with two sawmills, two schools, two churches, and 25 houses. Horace Zetrouer of Rochelle, says that at its peak in the 1890's, there were around 4,000 residents. Yet the town was doomed by the Great Freeze, lack of available land for newcomers, and the closing of the sawmill. It is hard to imagine that this town without a visible town center could have been a bustling community at one time.

Rochelle School; called the Martha Perry Institute when built in the 1870's. Sally Perry, who gave the land in memory of her mother, was Gov. Perry's daughter. This is a very fine building in extremely good condition, and with the original school desks inside. The current owner is H. Zetrouer, since it is no longer used as a school. Although the building is closed to the public it may be viewed from the dirt road that runs beside it.



Harry L. Jenkins residence; built by the Zetrouer family in c. 1890, and sold in recent years to Mr. Jenkins. This is a house of elegant proportions with good details, ie. brackets at the entry, porch, and bay window, characteristic of Victorian architecture. The house has been remodelled recently so it is in very good condition, and it still maintains its original character.



Trinity Methodist Church; no longer used as a church, and privately owned by H. Zetrouer. This building represents a country version of the Gothic Revival with its neo-gothic windows. Built in 1890, it remains in good condition, although part of the cornice was torn by a falling tree recently.



View of Oak Ridge Cemetery south of Rochelle, location of Governor Madison Perry's grave.



After crossing US 20 and going north on S 234 toward Windsor, stop at battle-field marker on the left. It commemorates the battle between Col. Daniel Newnan and his volunteers who were dispatched to the area of Paynes Prairie to fight King Payne's combined force of blacks and Seminoles. They met just south of Windsor, and King Payne was one of the first to die. However, Col. Newnan's force had to retreat by lack of reinforcements.

# Windsor

Windsor was settled around 1845 as a cotton plantation on lands belonging to Col. Edward Lewis and Elder King, a Methodist preacher. In 1854, a visitor who wrote of his accounts, Mr. Doig, notes that both families were from South Carolina and that Preacher King owned slaves who worked on his plantation. Later newcomers came mostly from Georgia, Maine, Illinois, Ohio and New York.

The town was laid out in lots of 1 to 20 acres with many cleared streets. When the post office was established in 1884, it had a population of 75, and by 1885 the town was bustling with three stores, a

gristmill, two sawmills, a fertilizer plant, and a population of more than 300. The major source of income was citrus, with a scattering of peach orchards.

The March 7, 1887 *Florida Dispatch* mentioned a population of 400, three churches, and four stores. By this time a daily stagecoach connected Windsor and Rochelle, bricks were being brought in from Campville to the east, and Capt. Kelly's ferry service was carrying people, cattle, supplies, and oranges across Newnans Lake.

Windsor had the peak of its prosperity just prior to the Great Freeze, and immediately after people packed their belongings and left town. Many of the fine homes on "Society Row" were later torn down or destroyed by fire, yet the few remaining houses and stores manage to convey the feeling of the past.

Today most of Windsor's residents commute to work in Gainesville. There are other signs to indicate progress such as the approval of funds in 1971 to complete a new fifteen acre county park on the east shore of Newnans Lake.

King residence; built c. 1890 by a black man named King Davis. This was Preacher King's home, and it remained in the King family through the 1950's. The house is presently being renovated by the owner, Mr. Harrell. This is a very fine elaborate house with many fine carpentry details. The main part of the house is flanked by two attached gazebos, thus extending the horizontal lines of the house. The pailing pattern on the porch railing is a good example.



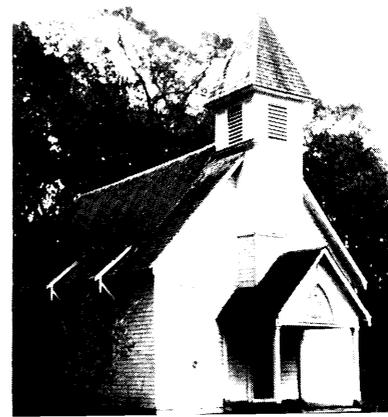
Langford Residence; originally the home of Preacher Watson, a circuit riding minister. Probably built around 1890, it is a simpler version of the previous houses. The major decorative effect is created by the use of patterned shingles. This wood frame house is in good condition.



George Byles General Store; presently unoccupied but owned by Mrs. Wilkinson. Probably built in the late 1880's, using lumber from the Windsor Planing Mill for its wood frame construction.



Baptist Church; a wood frame building built prior to 1894, although the church was established in 1855. It is no longer used by the Baptists so it is rapidly deteriorating.





General Store and Post Office; also wood frame construction and dating from the same time. This is one of the more rustic examples of architecture in the area, and combined with the false front above the second story, it gives the impression of "Frontier" architecture in the West.



Simms Residence; this rather elaborate house, is a small wood frame residence of the 1890's. It was originally owned by the Ford family and later by the Nichols. At the front is a very unusual architectural element that protrudes from the main body of the house in a tower-like fashion.



Black Church, on the outskirts of town; appears to be very old and is in very bad condition. However, it is still in use and it represents a native architectural expression.



Providence Church, also on the Campville Road on the outskirts of town. It was built prior to 1894, is still in use, but it does not represent an outstanding work of architecture. The cemetery beside it has served as burial ground for all the old families in the area. ie. Kelly, King, Zetrouer, and Tillman.

## Newnans Lake

Turn north to follow the southwestern shore of Newnans Lake. This western portion of the Lake was expected to become a popular resort and residential district prior to 1890. The developers proposed having horsedrawn cars running from downtown Gainesville to a proposed hotel beside the Lake to be called the "Hygienic Hotel and Sanatorium of New Gainesville". However, the project was stopped permanently after Gainesville's Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1888. Today upper income homes parallel the road facing the Lake.

After turning around on the Campville Road to retrace route on S 234, turn west on US 20.

Prairie Creek, the outlet for Newnans Lake which flows into Paynes Prairie. When the Prairie was Alachua Lake the creek served as a link for steamers from Windsor to Rochelle, with connections from Rochelle to Sweetwater Branch or Rocky Point, in Gainesville.

Wayside Park to the right with a food view of Newnans Lake, and facilities for boat launching and picknicking.

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