

Richland, Florence, and Omaha

October, 2000

Text Contributors:

Mary Gunnels, Charlie Gunnels, Blanche Morrison, Floyd Morrison, Mac Moyer

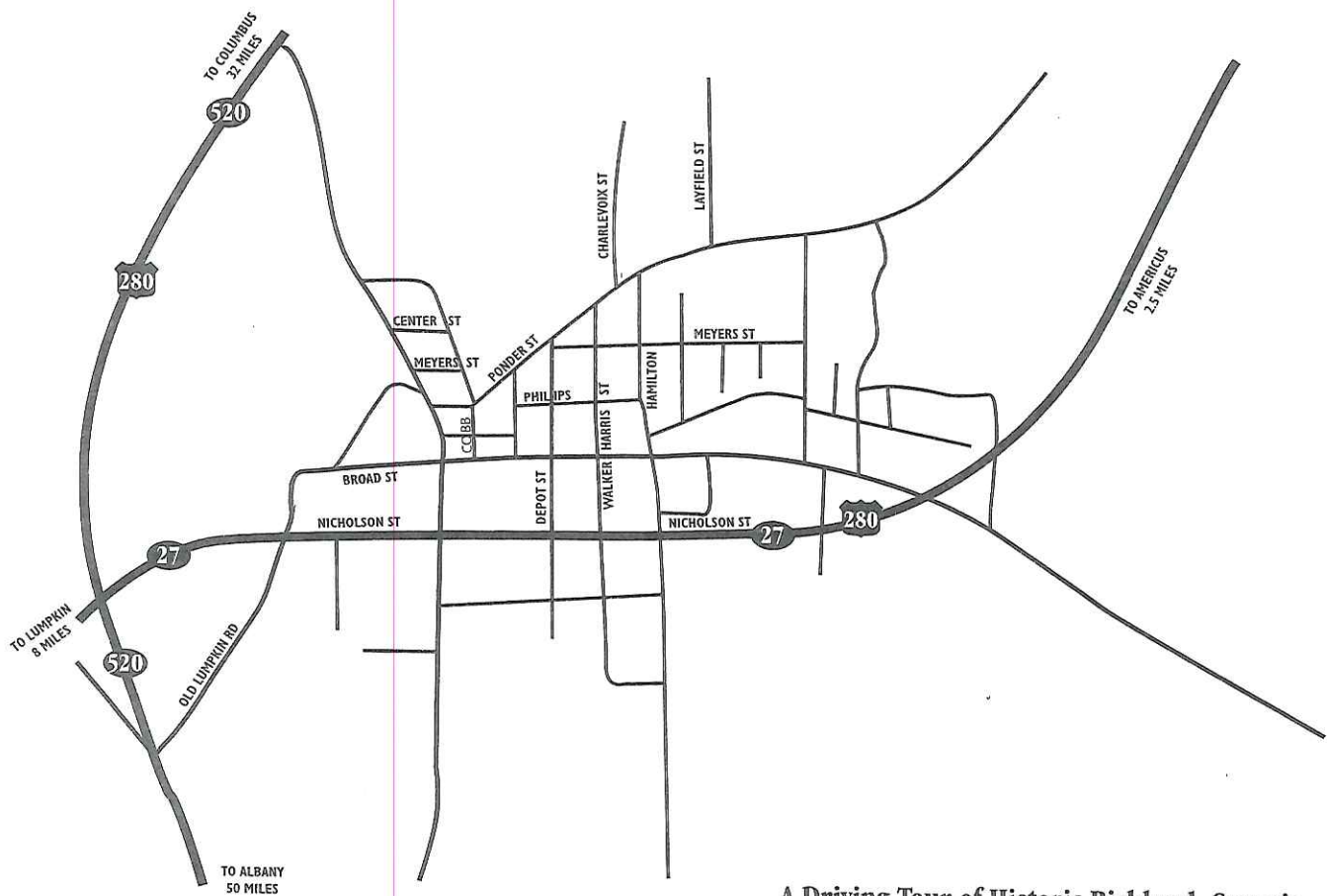
Edited by Mac Moyer

Note to the People of Stewart County. This project was undertaken by Westville to fill a need for interpretive information about the historic buildings and sites in Stewart County. It was intended to supplement the "Stagecoach Trail" brochure which the Stewart County Historical Commission publishes.

It will be obvious to everyone that most of the historic sites and homes in the county are not represented in this project. Further, there are large gaps of information in the properties that have been listed. Therefore, we are happy to announce that we will expand and update this publication as regularly as is feasible. This is a work in progress. We ask your help in fully documenting and listing all historic properties in the county.

Please contact Westville (912/838-6310; PO Box 1850, Lumpkin, GA 31815; whh@sowega.net) for documentation guidelines, or to make suggestions.

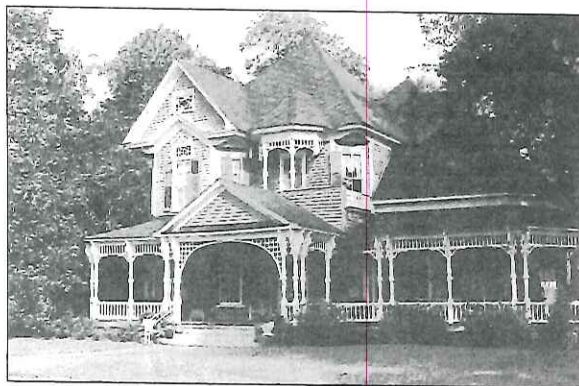
Thanks to Marian Clarke of Augusta for seeding this project in preparation for the "Treasures of Stewart County" Ramble of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation.



A Driving Tour of Historic Richland, Georgia

Richland Driving Tour

(Thanks to Mary and Charlie Gunnels for their information)



George Lunsford House, W. Broad St., 1899. Queen Anne Victorian. Frankie and Mary Murrah are the current owners.



Henry Audulph House, 68 W. Broad St., 1827, 1842. Original log house now enclosed by the vernacular Greek Revival clapboard building. Aka Major TAH Meyer House, Barbaree House. Current owners are Marie and Bill Mayo.



Arthur A. French House, 67 W. Broad St.,
1914. Bungalow.
Current owners are Diane and Charles Lee.



Wimberly House.



M.P. Wall House, W. Broad St.,
1922. Craftsman. Also the Willis Strickland House.



Miller's Dry Goods, 100 E. Broad.
Currently Farmers State Bank.



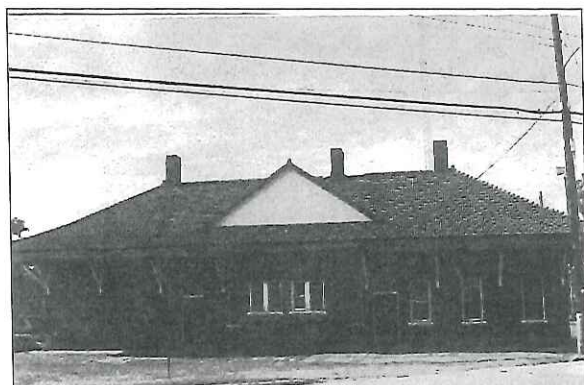
Peoples Bank, E. Broad St.. Classic Revival.
Originally the office of Dr. A.R. Sim's.
Home now to The Stewart-Webster Journal.



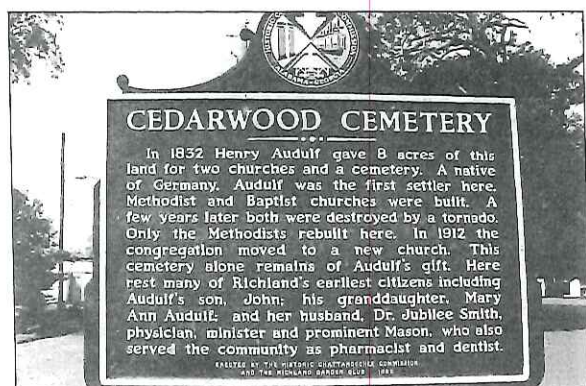
Movie Theater, Dr. W.C. Sim's Office, 144 E. Broad
St. Dr. Sim's office was upstairs.
Currently Richland City Hall.



Richland Hotel, E. Broad St., 1890. Late Victorian. There was also the Bank of Richland in the east entrance.



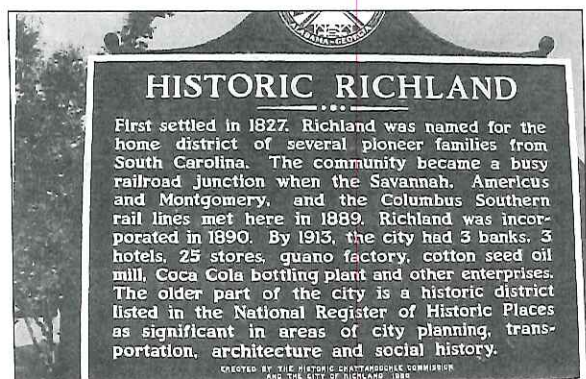
Richland Depot, E. Broad St., 1913. Currently owned by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The Depot will be restored through an ISTEAG grant.



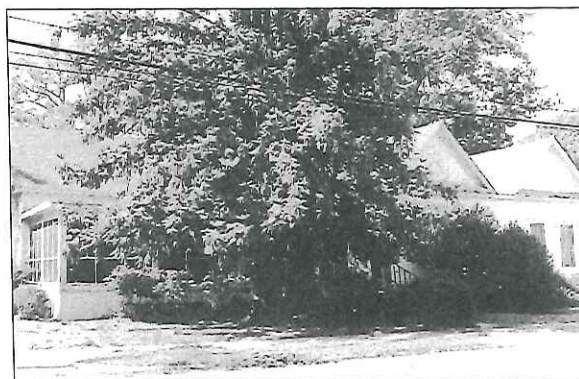
Cedarwood Cemetery historical marker.



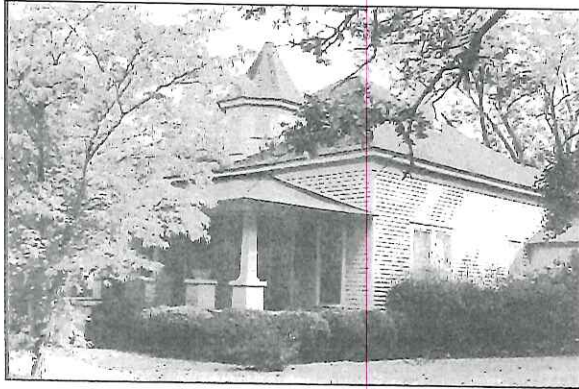
Warehouse.



Historic Richland historical marker.



Dr. Barnum House, 609 Harris St., c. 1900.



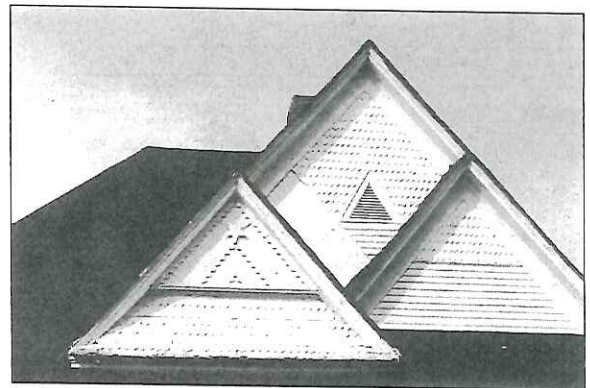
Dr. J.A. Sim's House, 610 Harris St., 1910. Dr. Sims was a great oral surgeon and Mayor of Richland 1906-1908. Aka Dr. Kenyon House. Currently the home of Mary and Charlie Gunnels.



Morton House, Harris St., 1910. Bungalow. Currently home to Gloria & Larry Smith.



Dorman House, 511 Harris St., 1895. Currently the home of Mrs. M.D. Overby.



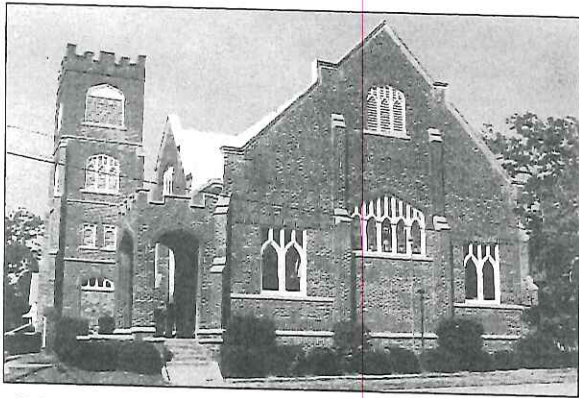
Dorman House. Detail.



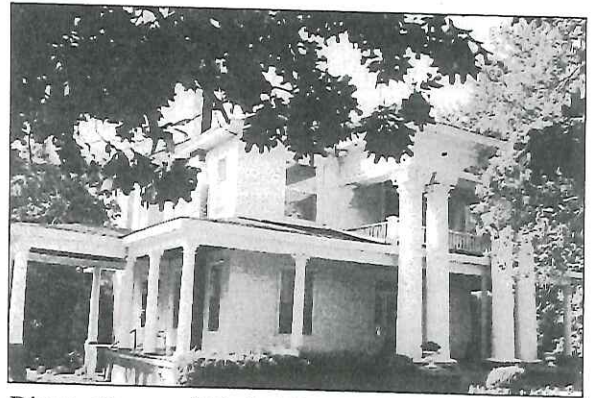
Jim French House, 510 Harris St. Ted and Willette French are the current owners.



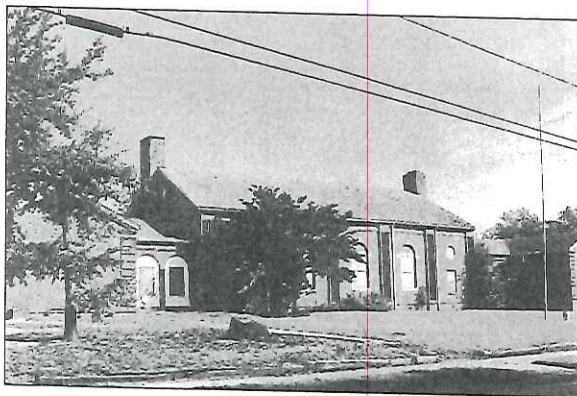
Woods House, Phillips St. Aka home of David and Jack Mathis.



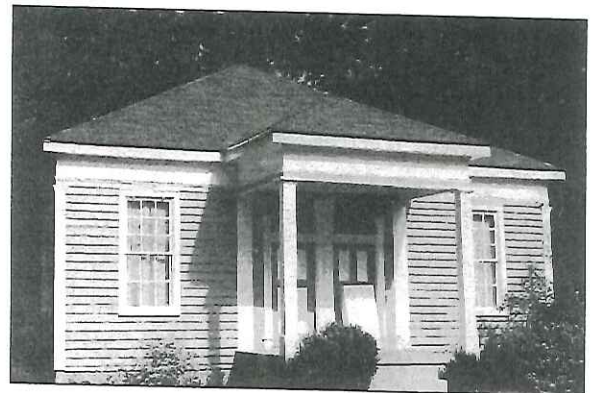
Richland Methodist Church, 307 Phillips St., 1912.



Dixon House, 306 Phillips St., 1900. Classical Re-Revival. Sara Robertson Dixon edited the History of Stewart County, Georgia. Now owned by Kay and Bob Snipes.



Richland Elementary and High School, Phillips St., 1933. The first school on this site was built in 1888-89. The second school was built in 1901 and burned in 1931. This structure was built and occupied by 1933.



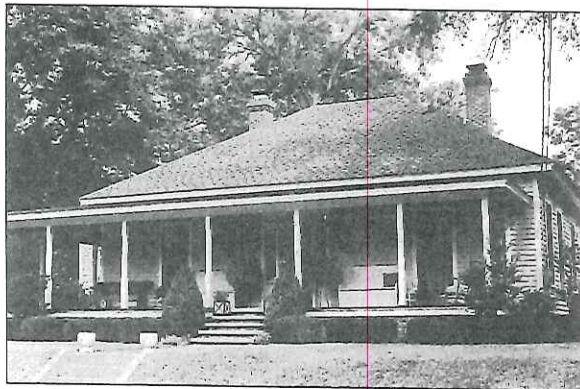
Dr. Jubilee Smith House, 1857. Greek Revival. Dr. Smith was a pharmacist & dentist.



Richland Christian Church, 1925. The first church was wooden, built in 1901. The current brick structure was built 24 years later.



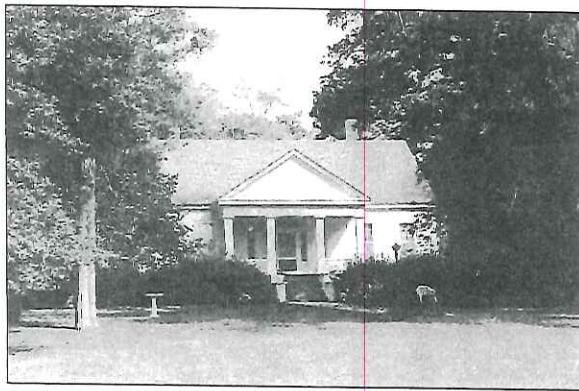
Strickland House 606 Alston St. Willis Strickland's parents lived here. Currently owned by Mrs. Frank Blackburn.



509 E. Broad St. Currently the home of AG Pierce.



Harmony Primitive Baptist Church, E. Ponder St., 1894. Organized in 1839.



Prothro Plantation, 1851. Greek Revival. East of Richland out Ponder St. This was the largest cotton plantation in eastern Stewart County in 1860. The Greek Revival main house was built in 1851 by Dan E. Ponder for Nathaniel Prothro. Of the original property, about ten acres remain, containing eight out-buildings.



Dr. Nathaniel Charles Alston, Jr. House. Classical Re-Rivival. Dr. Alston lived 1855 to 1933. He practiced medicine, but also operated a pharmacy. He quit medicine in 1900 to concentrate on pharmacy and real estate efforts. An early commercial peach and pecan planter, he was known as the "Pecan King of Southwest Georgia." The Stewart County History described him as optimistic, progressive, far-sighted, generous and friendly.



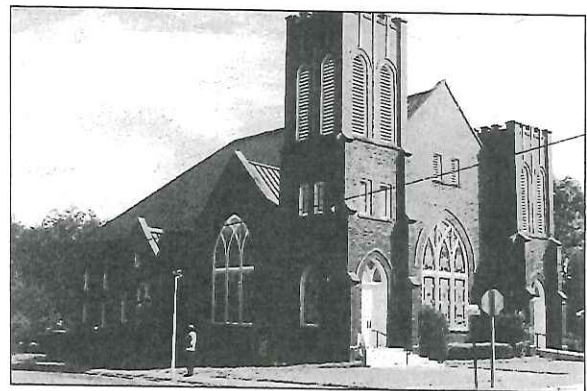
Stewart-Webster Hospital, 300 Alston St., 1950.



Tom Carter House, 111 Wall St. Currently owned by Dr. Henry and Nora Ngo.



M.G. Richardson House, Walker St.

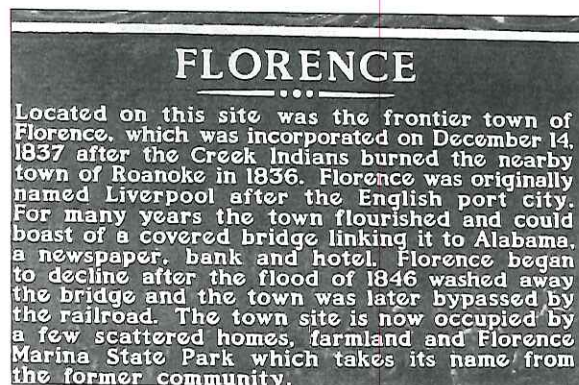


Richland Baptist Church,
corner of Walker and Nicholson, 1912.

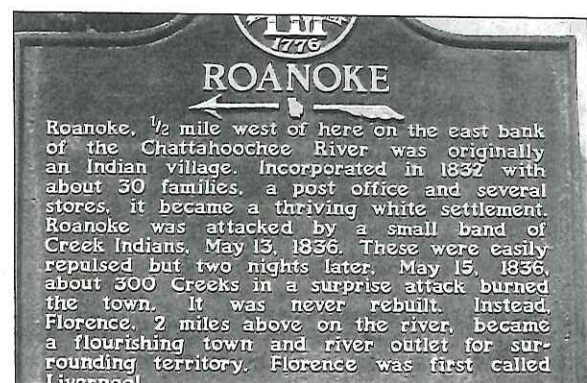


Charles Miller House, Nicholson St.

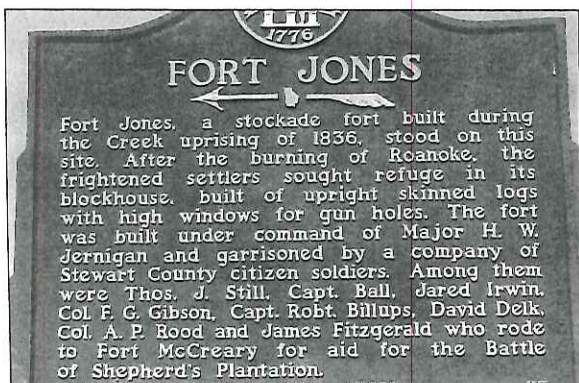
Florence Driving Tour



Florence historical marker,
Florence Marina State Park.



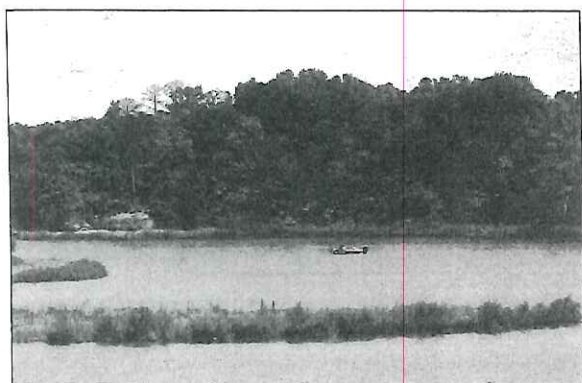
Roanoke historical marker, Ga.39, south of Florence.



Fort Jones historical marker,
Ga. 39, south of Florence.



Bradley Farms Ga. 39, south of Florence.
Mature cotton.



Grassy Creek near the Chattahoochee River,
Ga. 39, south of Florence.



Kirby Center at Florence Marina State Park, corner of
Ga. 39 & Ga. 39C.

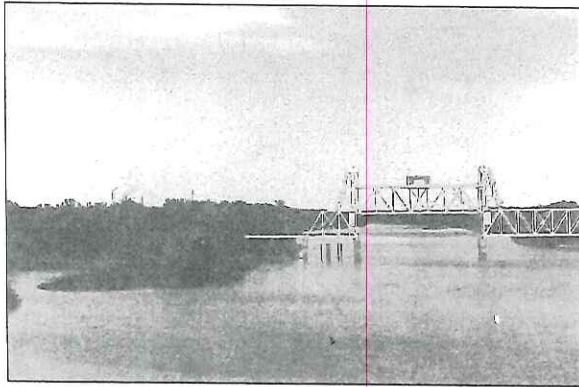
This interpretive center is dedicated to the Native American archaeology of the area and to the history of Florence, once a large city.



Battle of Shepherd's Plantation historical marker,
Ga. 39, north of Florence.



Georgia State Line/ Stewart County Line marker,
Ga. 39 Spur (George Lee Causeway),
west bank of the Chattahoochee River.

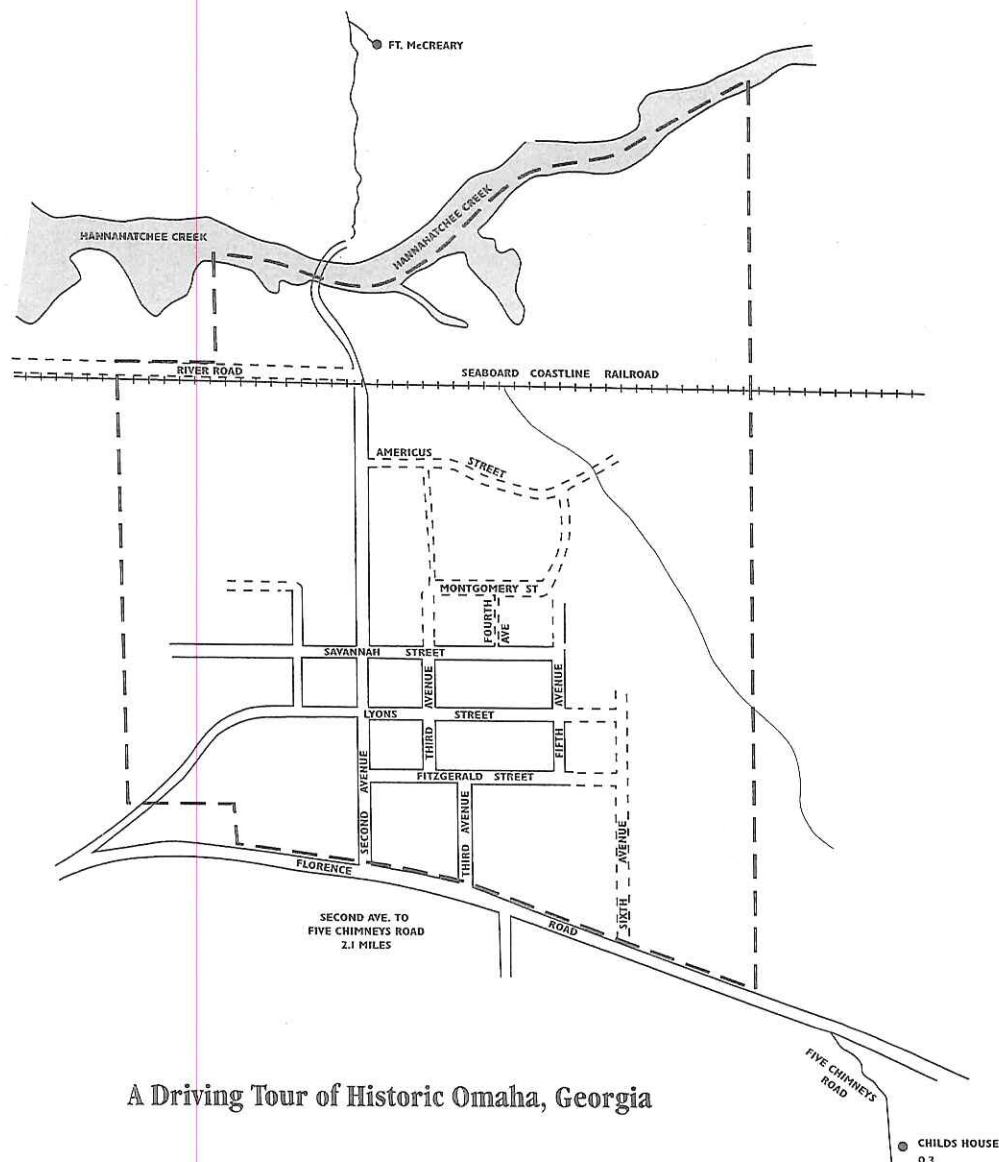


Rail Trestle over the Chattahoochee River,
Ga. 39 Spur, looking north.
Note the Mead paper mill on the Alabama side.

Omaha Driving Tour

Thanks to Blanche and Floyd Morrison for their information)

Note: There are no street signs in Omaha.



A Driving Tour of Historic Omaha, Georgia



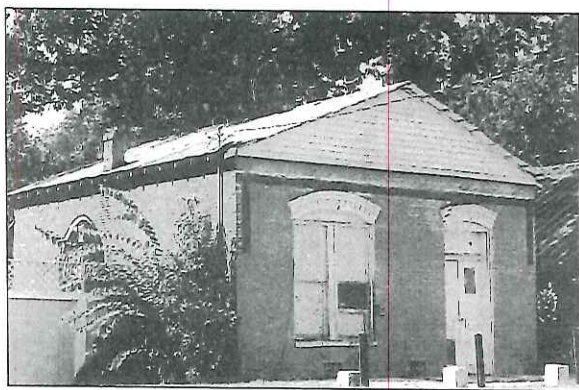
Will Fitzgerald House, Lyons St., 1904.

A teacher, Ruth Lee, came to Omaha from Dawson in 1925 and taught for 37 years. She boarded in this house.

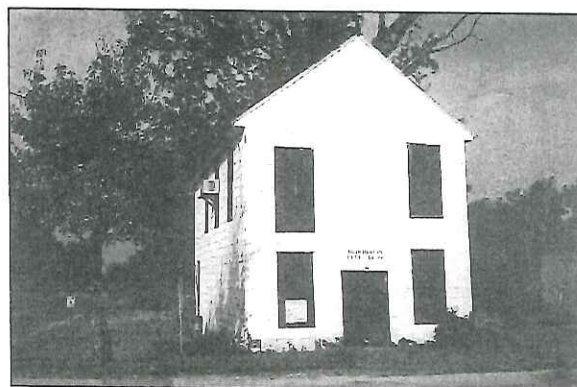


New Omaha School, Lyons St., 1939.

When the WPA built this building in 1939, the school opened with two teachers, one of which was the principal also. The school served the first seven grades. Seventh graders helped teach the first six grades. Later, the school had only one teacher for five grades. It closed in 1962.

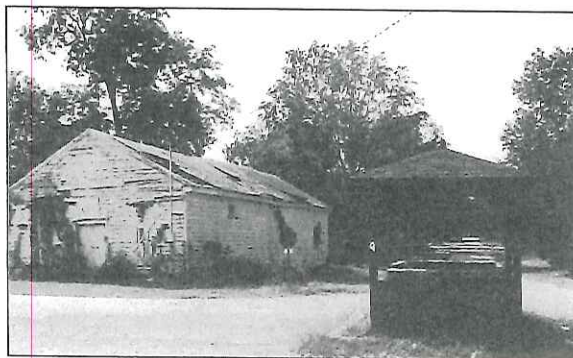


Omaha Bank, Second Ave., c. 1910. A bank advertisement read, "Conservative enough to be absolutely safe. Liberal enough to satisfy fair-minded people". This bank went out of business in the Crash of 1929. The building was used for stores later. It became a meeting place for the people of Omaha. The women talked while the men played checkers. Portis Mathis owned a store here and told tall tales about his trip to Borneo. Mathis's wife was a Carter, one of two founding families in Omaha.

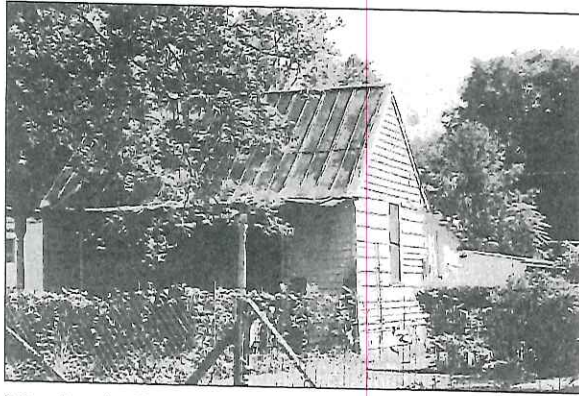


Hiram Masonic Lodge, Second Ave., 1840s?.

This building has half-round log floor joists. A store was operated on the lower floor in the 1930s. A penny would buy seven caramels, or three maryjanes, or five silverbells, or a big cracker.



Portis Mathis Store, Second Ave., 1840s? Portis Mathis's business was here in the 1940s. In the early years of the 20th century, this was the AC Reid Store. Mr. Reid's wife carried an umbrella to avoid suntans. The current structure is highly threatened by roof failure. Note the bricked up well in the center of the street. It was originally an open well. By 1929, it had a hand pump. Electricity was added later. Because people kept running into it with their cars, it was eventually bricked over. The present wooden cover was added for the Omaha Centennial Celebration in 1991. The well is a conversation piece, for no one can recall having seen another town with a well in the middle of the road. As far back as fifty years ago, it was featured in newspapers for its curiosity value.



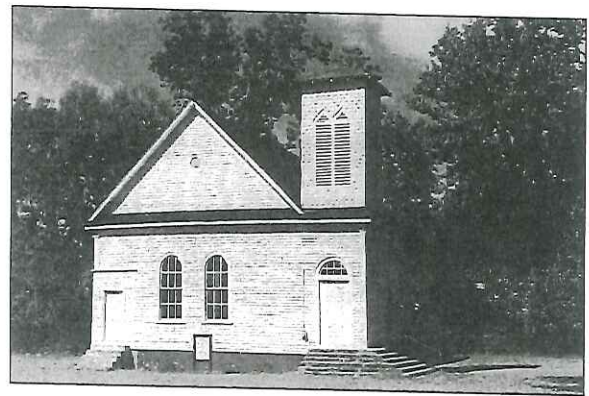
Morrison's Grocery Store, Savannah St. Mr. Powell owned a Rolling Store and this building, too. He sold the building to his daughter, Blanche Morrison's aunt. Mrs. Morrison bought the building and used it for a while as a store, selling groceries, tires, batteries, and cloth. She has since used it for storage and as a swimming pool house. It is 25 ft. x 22 ft.



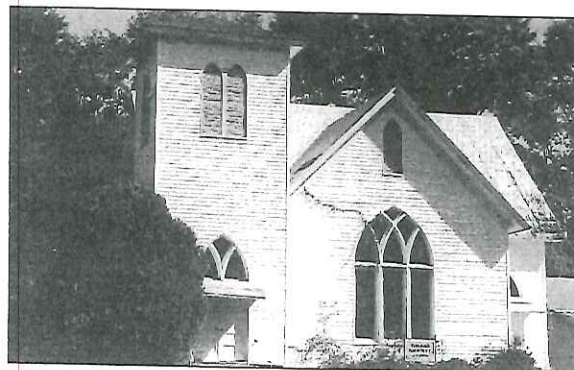
Aiken House, Savannah St., 1922.
Mrs. Aiken owned the building first.
Floyd and Blanche Morrison bought it in 1946.



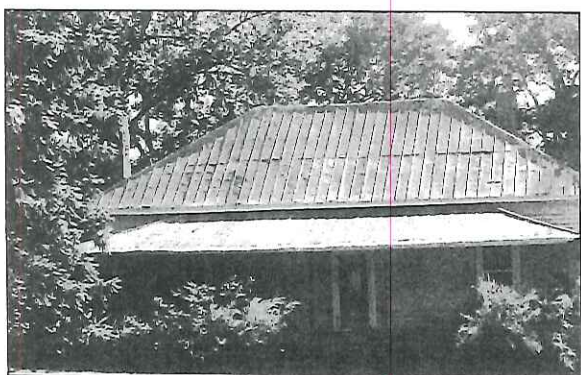
Byrd House Savannah St.. Mr. Byrd owned a brick factory about 1920. A side porch has been removed. Charlie Page owned the house after Mr. Byrd. Robin and Mark Warren own the house now.



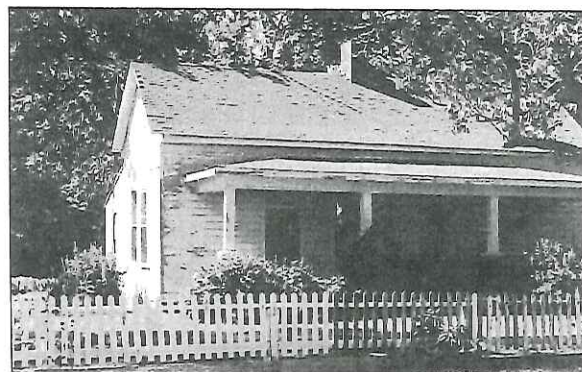
Omaha Methodist Church, Savannah St., 1895. The tower has been truncated, because the top was round and hard to care for. It featured a copper spire. There also was a shorter tower on the left, which is now gone. Some men and women, but not all, would sit on opposite sides of the church—the men on the left. Mr. Portis would read the newspaper during the sermon. Once, a hen wandered into the church during the sermon and laid an egg. The joke was that the hen had made her donation. The church was recently deeded to the last members, Blanche and Floyd Morrison and their son, Barry.



Omaha Baptist Church, Third Ave., c. 1914. Summerhill Baptist Church was built several miles from here in the late 1800s to avoid Omaha's serious mosquito problem. Then, the congregation moved to Omaha. This church was destroyed in a tornado in 1913. (The same tornado destroyed Little St. Elmo Baptist Church, a local African-American church.) The current structure was built probably by the next year. Blanche Morrison has gone to church here for seventy years and to the Omaha Methodist Church for sixty years. The church has forty members, but only meets on fifth Sundays.



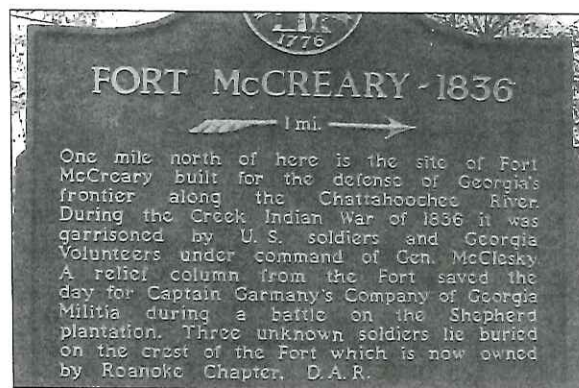
Mrs. Johnnie Brown House Lyons St. Mrs. Brown lived here in the 1940s. Henry Price is the current owner. 56. Clarence Bayard House, Third Ave. This home was owned by Mr. Huffman, an investor. He and his wife were murdered in 1927. Since the Huffmans had no heirs, Mr. Bayard was able to move in. After seven years, he became the owner by default.



Bayard



Walter E. Fitzgerald House, Lyons St., c. 1914. On this site, W.E. Fitzgerald's original house was destroyed by the tornado of 1913. This current house has 19 rooms. His son, Pat Fitzgerald, was in the Merchant Marines. Pat's son, Walter, lives here now.



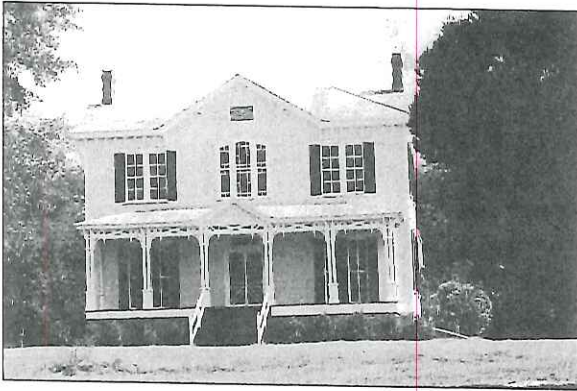
Ft. McCreary historical marker, corner of Second and Florence Rd.



Edwin Bernal House Third Ave. Mr. Bernal's sister, Norma, lived here also. She was known for her dancing, cooking, and Sunday School teaching. Mrs. Roth owns the home.



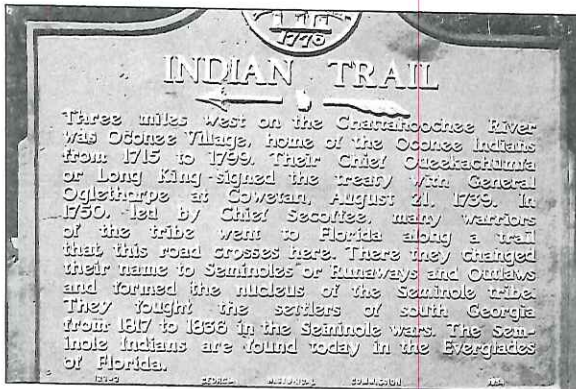
Reconstructed blockhouse at Ft. McCreary, 1996. From the old well in the middle of Savannah and Second Ave.: drive 1.0 miles, crossing Hannahatchee Creek at 0.4 miles. This is a county-maintained dirt road after the bridge. As you near the 1.0 mile turn, there is a steep bank on the right. You may be able to glimpse the obscured fort on top of the bank at that point. Turn a hard right on a modest dirt road and travel 0.2 miles more. This is the original site of the fort, built 1836. The site was acquired in the 1930s by the Roanoke Chapter, DAR.



Florrie Fitzgerald Childs House, 2.1 miles east of the corner of Florence Rd. and Second Ave. to Five Chimneys Road, then south 0.3 miles. The Childses were a very religious family. Mrs. Childs would visit the homes of newcomers to invite them to church. She would also hold parties for the young people of Omaha. The teens would play games such as "Clap In, Clap Out," which they regarded as "promming," or promenading. Mrs. Childs would never have permitted dancing if she had realized.

In 1980, a scene for a Hollywood film was made here. Directed by famed film-maker Walter Hill, *The Long Riders* featured the Carradine, Keatch, and Quaid brothers. The art director scandalized and tantalized Omaha when he transformed this home into a house of leisure for a scene. He also reportedly employed real ladies of leisure from Atlanta for the sake of realism.

Lynn Lane acquired and restored the house. It is now owned by Lynn Page.



Indian Trail historical marker,
Ga. 39, east of Five Chimneys Rd.

Tidbits About Omaha

From Mrs. Morrison

The Founding. Florence was an older community on the Chattahoochee River. About 1890, a railroad was laid that connected Americus with Montgomery. Seeing commercial opportunity, J.H. Carter, D.B. Fitzgerald, and W.W. Fitzgerald proposed that the people of Florence move upriver a few miles to a site near the new rail. They would found a new town near the mouth of Hannahatchee Creek. Carter became a founder of the Omaha Methodist Church. The Fitzgeralds helped found the Baptist Church. The first mayor, however, was Tom Salter. The charter was dated October 5, 1891.

The Name. When Omaha was founded, the name Fitzgerald was chosen to honor a local family. Then, it was learned that there already was a Fitzgerald in south Georgia. Discussions led no where. A traveling salesman from Nebraska said casually, "Just name it Omaha. That where I'm from." And so, Omaha was named.

Communications. When the train ran, Omaha had mail at 10am and 4pm daily, except only at 10am on Sunday. Omaha had only one telephone in 1946, located in one of the stores. Nowadays, Mrs. Morrison e-mails frequently to her sister in the Panama Canal.

A Modern City. A local young woman, Julia Kite, was returning by rail during World War II and began a conversation with a fellow traveler about Omaha. She bragged that Omaha was a modern town, with electricity and other amenities. Then, the train pulled into Omaha. Julia was mortified to see that because of war rationing, the mail was being picked up from the train by two oxen and an oxcart to deliver to the post office. Her "modern" hometown appeared to be still in the nineteenth century!

City Streets. Omaha's streets originally were laid out in a grid. First Street through Seventh ran north and south, while Depot, Americus, Columbus, Montgomery, Savannah, Lyons, and Fitzgerald Streets were east-west. Various people put up buildings that encroached on roads, so that some roadways had to be diverted or abandoned.

Emancipation Day. Omaha has a continuous celebration of Emancipation Day. The slave population of Stewart County apparently heard about the Emancipation Proclamation on May 28, 1863. This day has been celebrated annually ever since. For years, African-Americans would come to Omaha from great distances. A piano would be put on a truck and played while the truck drove around town. Merchants would stock up with food and drink as if it were Christmas-time. Celebrations included a baseball game, barbecue, and mullet sandwiches. The exuberant tone of the celebration changed with the advent of the Civil Rights Era. The baseball game is all that remains of the event today.

Omaha Brick. Most places around here feature at least some Omaha brick. "Omaha GA" is embossed on each brick. The first company operated from about 1900 to 1920 or so. The second company, owned by Joe Pope, made plain brick. It was a post-WWII venture that didn't last long.

Days of Vigor. Omaha's heyday came in the 1920s and '30s. A huge hotel burned in 1933. After World War II, people began to move away. Omaha gave up its city charter a few years ago. There has been an increase in population recently, however, so Omaha may be on the way back.