From Boom to Bust: Ghost Towns of Selected Florida Gulf Coast Communities

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines extinct or vanishing towns along Florida’s northwest coast, specifically communities in Wakulla and Levy Counties, that experienced a boom to bust phenomena between Florida’s territorial period and the early twentieth century. The exceptional growth of the selected areas prospered largely due to an abundance of seemingly inexhaustible natural resources. The towns withered and disappeared when industrialization depleted the natural resources or when populations shifted according to changes in land availability and mandated land use. Lumberyards sometimes demanded specific wood for manufacture and harvested a species to decimation within a geographical area. Sawmill owners bought non-contiguous land or leased other nearby lands to meet the increasing need for production. Early Gulf Coast railroads tended to follow the path of high-yield lumber mills and commodified natural products. Newly implemented laws often changed the methods of available collection, and consumption of resources and became another factor in whether a town thrived or died. Small, independent commercial fishermen abandoned their livelihoods when new net bans challenged their authority. Hunting resorts closed in consequence of federal land purchases.

The Civil War changed forever the labor force behind cotton production. Southerners who viewed slaves as just another limitless resource had to reevaluate their lifestyles. Even the old planters and slave owners who could readjust morally and socially were unable to realign themselves financially and the death of their beneficent town soon followed. Freedmen left their master’s land when and if opportunity arose in favor of newer or black-cultured communities. An out-migration of freedmen could lead to the death of post Civil War towns.

The demise of many southern ghost towns is often attributed to technological advances and progress bypassing the sleepier little villages, but this theory diminishes, if not totally dismisses the agency of a single person, or a select group of people, to make or challenge decisions contributing to the boom or bust of a particular settlement. It is true that the areas studied often witnessed a loss of transportation services and outward migration in favor of larger or newer sites, but a breach usually appeared in the town’s
power-structure long before population loss. Larger political, social, and economic forces working outside of the geographical area of a future ghost town were not truly as powerful as might be expected. Instead, the decisions of a relatively small group of citizens, who often had contacts with people connected to larger government forces, made decisions independently of a town council and greatly contributed to the sometimes gradual and sometimes swift extinction of their own districts. The town’s lack of a powerful force could be equally devastating if the area received no external representation.
PROLOGUE

Imagine, for a moment, standing on a favored piece of earth around your home or in your neighborhood as mystical forces transport you back through history to see exactly what happened on your hallowed ground in another era. While your feet remain anchored in the same spot, images would appear, linger, and then vanish around you revealing the intimacies of the land’s invisible photo album.

Numerous texts have dealt with time travel, but the propensity of the authors is to make the time and place variances have grandiose proportions. The time traveler in H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* (1895) flies both backward and forward a few hundred thousand years. Mark Twain has Hank Morgan jump back a mere thirteen hundred years as *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889). Daphne du Maurier closes up the time gap in *The House on the Strand* (1969) by using only six hundred years between Dick Young’s modern twentieth-century life and his drug-ingesting experiments taking him back to the fourteenth-century Cornish countryside.

More drama occurs for the author, playwright, or director when the prognostications of what could have been or what is yet to be span several hundred centuries. These authors, even Twain as the sole American, all chose England for a primary setting, possibly because their characters reflect the author’s desire for a sense of time travel in familiar areas or regions steeped in architectural English history. Even more interesting, however, is the similar theme of these authors to maintain a relatively consistent sense of place when zooming back to the past. For example, a character standing on platted English land does not choose to soar back to ancient Egypt, Persia, or China. Instead, forces thrust the protagonists back into a setting in close proximity to their origination source.

What these science fiction books represent is a need for humans to connect with a sense of place beyond their present physical realities. The outcome of such a connection between past and present or between present and future in the referenced literature ranges from a doomsday-type prophecy due to industrialization and a laissez-faire attitude on time travel to simply pining for the older ways and creating a deeper appreciation for the present through a tango with the past. However, no matter what the didactic message
may be, intentional or not, a larger theme of connection exists between place and space—
the connection among man, land, and time. The pulse of many kindred spirits beats with
a desire to have a sense of place and home while also striving to embrace the past—to
embrace all the changes and still call the place and claim the place as one’s own.

Now imagine yourself once more standing on a sacred space as time rushes back,
but the place is specifically Florida and the time jump is not so extravagant as some
literature requires. Instead, you see a land on which only a few generations have passed
but the changes are still dramatic.

Nothing seen from Florida’s past—the recent past of 175 years—can cause you
physical harm. You are safe and protected within these images even as cities and towns
emerge and disappear before your eyes. Yellow fever and hurricanes obliterate
communities in an instant, while other towns fall to the competition of newer
transportation and nearby growing ports and harbors. Florida’s territorial and early
statehood setting is a land where pioneers still fear the Indians and subjugate the blacks.
Cracker cattle, wild boars, civets, and snakes saunter, run, sneak, and slither in your
backyard. Cotton and lumber ply the rivers, turpentine camps flourish, and rural Florida
thrives even as it hugs the waterways necessary for survival. Time travelers going back
to Florida’s Gulf Coast region easily witness scenes of schooners and stevedores near the
docks and hear the nearby sound of a train whistle. A flash back into the present day
reveals that little remains of the once thriving industries of the selected port and river
towns. Some places have totally vanished while others have recreated themselves. Still
others have been absorbed as part of national refuge lands or become a state of Florida
historic site. This is the land and the story of North Florida’s selected Gulf Coast ghost
towns.
INTRODUCTION

Every civilization carries the seeds of its own destruction

Mark Twain, *Eruption*

Successful communication of ghost town history necessitates a certain level of language consensus. Mention “ghost town” in casual conversation and the typical image is of a dusty, hot, and dry western town left in ruins.

The gold rush era of the 1850s and the American adherence to Manifest Destiny created a multitude of boomtowns that were deserted by the turn of the century. Historian Frederick Jackson Turner even used United States Census statistics to claim the western frontier closed to new expansion by 1890.\(^1\) The Civil War had come and gone, gold was in short supply, and now the West was dotted with decaying centers of hopes and fortunes never realized. The West, however, never had the market cornered on ghost towns. Florida, too, had its share of unrealized dreams in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

James Warnke’s *Ghost Towns of Florida*, first published in 1971, divides ghost towns into three categories: a) true ghost towns “that once flourished with many buildings and residents” but now have next to nothing left; b) once successful towns with enough demise to be considered a ghost town, but people still live there, and; c) brief railroad stops located on a map that never actually coalesced into a town.\(^2\) Warnke concentrates mainly on the first category and delivers speedy summaries of five principle ghost towns in 20 pages. His work is accurate but brief with the majority of the 104 pages committed to interesting photographs and even briefer descriptions of what he considers to be secondary Florida ghost towns totaling 36 extinct places. *Ghost Towns of Florida* is an invaluable starting point in locating ghost towns, but it lacks a bibliography and serves as more of a tourist guide than a historical reference. Warnke’s updated 1978

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edition identifies more than a dozen additional ghost towns brought to light by readers of the first publication.

Historian Joe Knetsch, with the state lands division of Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection, is currently working on a newer version of a book on Florida ghost towns. His numerous interviews and articles as an authority on Florida’s land grants and titles should prove an asset to the endeavor. Knetsch and his associate have identified more than 400 extinct places. Their definition of a ghost town calls for the nonexistence of a sign marker, but still permits small occupancies.

The definition used for this thesis is more liberal than either Warnke’s or Knetsch’s classification and allows inclusion of communities where people still reside as well as sign markers, although the site is not the boomtown it once was. For example, a few occupied houses still exist on the road to Wakulla Beach past the grove of Live Oaks where the town previously stood. The most subjective use of the term ghost town is applied to Cedar Key, Florida, but the residential population shift from nearly 2000 in 1880 to 790 in 2000, along with the disappearing livelihoods of local residents, is dramatic enough for categorical addition.3

The third edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* includes the term “completely abandoned” in the definition, but it also favors a western location. If only entirely extinct towns were reviewed, most source lists compiled for this research would be substantially diminished. Warnke’s secondary list includes ghost towns such as Pinecrest, Johnstown, Peace River City, and Old Venus, where “there are still some people in residence, [but] the town, as such, has disappeared.”4 The Ghost Town USA and Ghosttowns.com websites both list Florida towns with some populations still present.5

Modern publications have modified the ghost town term to become more inclusive as towns boom and bust and then boom again with new businesses. The Florida

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3 United States Census Reports 1880, 1890, 2000. Cedar Key was combined with the population of Rosewood for both the 1880 and 1890 census. The Rosewood Massacre occurred in 1923. The original town of Cedar Key on Atsena Otie Island is extinct.
5 Ghost Town USA is found at [http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~gtusa/index.htm](http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~gtusa/index.htm) and lists Cedar Key, Center Hill, and Lacoochee as ghost towns with some populations; [http://www.ghosttowns.com](http://www.ghosttowns.com) lists over 140 Florida towns. The ones with some populations are too numerous to mention.
tourism industry has moved into some areas, while urban sprawl, new suburbs, military bases, and state parks absorb others. The American ideal of personal reinvention and adaptation applies equally to pioneer towns. Areas of blight and dormancy may resurrect themselves with newer commerce within mere decades. A ghost town of today could be another boomtown tomorrow.

My specific definition for a ghost town will follow three criteria: a) the town prospered because of a predetermined goal by incoming residents and was successful for a period of time—the boom time; b) the original purpose of the town collapsed and the population declined or disappeared altogether—the bust; and c) something remains either structurally or topographically to offer images of the past. In other words, something needs to exist to show the most recent passing of time (without fully manmade recreations), such as foundation ruins, railroad grades or roadbeds, cemeteries, chimneys, or old industrial tools still on site. These parameters exclude towns fully reabsorbed by the earth where absolutely nothing remains. Also excluded from the list are any of the forts from the three Seminole Wars unless non-military persons in pursuit of industry later reclaimed and reinitiated a town.

The path of study generally follows a course of north to south on a county-by-county basis. This line best parallels the growth of the territory and the state. Governor Jackson established two Florida counties—Escambia and St. Johns—when Florida became a territory in 1821. By 1840, northern Florida contained 16 counties compared to four in the south. The 1900 U.S. Census still showed North and Central Florida with the majority of the population at just over 425,000 residents compared to southern Florida’s 102,000 people. Not until the land boom of the 1920s did South Florida substantially increase in county number and population size. Simultaneously occurring with the north to south study is a review of the selected county ghost towns from oldest to most recent demise rather than alphabetically or according to the largest scale of boom to bust.

Chapter 1 begins in Wakulla County with an examination of three ghost towns, the stories of which have become so interwoven as to resemble the fluid movement of one mutating town. The villages of Magnolia, Port Leon, and Newport evolved along the

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banks of the St. Marks River. Magnolia established the first and northern most point of the ghost town trinity, followed by the southern appearance of Port Leon toward the mouth of the river, and Newport later emerged between those two places. Magnolia has garnered a lion’s share of the research and editorial spotlight from the trio probably owing to the existence of more than a year’s worth of newspaper publications dating back to the early 1800s. Magnolia is also the site of the county’s oldest tombstone—that of Weld Hamlin—one of the four Hamlin brothers credited with establishing the area. The appeal of such an entrepreneurial family has not lacked attention in contemporary articles ranging from those in Florida Living and The Magnolia Monthly to the Tallahassee Democrat and an undated monograph. Elizabeth Smith’s publications in the 1960s, most notably The Magnolia Monthly, offer useful information on the area. Her residency in Wakulla County allowed substantial research, interviews, and personal observations.

Port Leon is arguably the least well known of the three cities. The State Library of Florida holds an extensive compilation of primary materials on the inception and disappearance of Port Leon. Newport still supports a population, although the town is nowhere near the size and significance it claimed during the reign of commercial magnate Daniel Ladd.

Chapter 2 remains within the geographic boundaries of Wakulla County, but the history of Arran, Wakulla Beach, and West Goose Creek reflects different land use patterns from the previous towns for their boom periods. The Saint Mark’s River towns in Chapter 1 relied heavily on the exportation of non-indigenous cotton, while the next set of towns marketed the natural resources on site: lumber, fish, hunting of native and migratory species, and natural beauty for a resort. The Wakulla County Historical Society is a repository for many of the resources used to research this chapter; however, at the time of this writing, the society did not yet have a permanent home. Board members hope to locate the county’s historical documents and photographs in the renovated old jail and some work has progressed already toward that end. A monograph on the West Goose Creek fishing industry offered detailed information on seine fishing

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and contained an excellent bibliography leading to other sources. Florida’s photographic
collection, housed in the State Library of Florida, also offered primary source material.

Chapter 3 moves into Levy County and yet remains linked to Wakulla County as
the next natural port on a trip south down Florida’s Gulf Coast. The land between the
Suwannee and Withlacoochee Rivers—the north and south borders of Levy County—juts
out into an area known as the Cedar Keys. Men from Wakulla County often moved to
Levy County to expand their business or to reinvent themselves after a failed enterprise.
The next natural stop down the coast after Cedar Key, by ship, was Tampa.
Entrepreneurs struggled with deciding whether to stop to build in Cedar Key or Tampa,
with the latter city ultimately granted the larger population. Henry Plant’s railroad
bypassed Cedar Key, but not before Henry Plant considered Cedar Key as a terminus.
Other issues were occurring in Cedar Key to precipitate Plant’s decision.

Cedar Key, the community on Way Key, and a neighboring town to the north,
Rosewood, share a history in Levy County that is a study in white and black race
relations. White residents from Sumner, with support from some Cedar Key residents,
murdered at least eight blacks in Rosewood in 1923. The tragic event continues to affect
population patterns in the area. The resurgence of southern white democracy stifled both
social and economic progression.

Several unpublished studies done on Cedar Key proved beneficial to historical
research on the area, including Masters theses by Thomas Dye and Peter Burtchaell.
Charles Fishburne wrote on selected historical periods of the Cedar Key region in the
1980s and his research proved a most valuable tool. FSU History Professor Maxine
Jones, along with a team of scholars from FSU and FAMU, conducted an extensive
investigation on the disappearance of Rosewood as requested by the state legislature in
1993. Their report, known as A Documented History of the Incident Which Occurred at
Rosewood, Florida, in January 1923, provided the backbone of material on Rosewood.
A book by Michael D’Orso followed the report and offered insight into the results of the
report and the legislative reaction.

Travel and tour guide publications seem quickly to attribute the demise of these
towns to progress: changes in transportation from steamers and ships to railroads,
changes from horse and buggy to automobile, changes from railroads to a highway
system, and changes in social preferences from rural to urban living. People tend to attribute to progress rather than to personalities the reason why one town survives and thrives and another town slowly dies. If a train bypasses one town in favor of another, such as Magnolia in favor of St. Marks, or Cedar Key in favor of Tampa, towns are easily written off as ghost towns due to newer transportation. Yes, these towns did feel the impact of technological changes, but quite often, the choices made by people who held the concentration of power in the town played a significant role in the outcome of the region’s decay.

Another major determinant of whether a town thrives or dies is Florida’s weather: namely hurricanes. At least one town in each chapter met its death, or began its decline, from the impact levied by the climate. Again, simply attributing a town’s disappearance to the weather neglects the agency of man in the decision to keep building on land prone to storm surges and natural coastal weather systems. The choices made by men, of when, where, and how to build a town cannot be denied in examining the site’s future viability. Usually, the decisions were made by the rich and powerful—especially elected officials—who set up a town with a specifically vested interest in the area and who were unlikely to compromise in a manner to keep the town thriving.
The histories of Magnolia, Port Leon, and Newport are linked together simply by their successive and similar locations on the St. Marks River. Each port sought to garner a share of the cotton-shipping trade. The lives of the towns are also intertwined because the succession of each small area rose in direct consequence from the absence of the previous town. Port Leon was born from the demise of Magnolia, and Newport arose after the death of Port Leon. Many of the same people inhabiting the first village also initiated or followed into the newer towns.

Magnolia and Port Leon are true ghost towns in every sense of the term. No dwellings or residents remain, but the Magnolia cemetery contains the oldest gravesite in Wakulla County, and the rudimentary streets and culverts of Port Leon on the Gulf of Mexico are still visible after a tortuous hike through national refuge lands. A summer visit to Magnolia is not recommended because the mosquitoes are unusually large and hungry and the abundance of swamp land leading to Port Leon typically includes an above-the-ankle water trek. A preferred method of visitation to the remnants of Port Leon should be by boat. Newport still supports a population and is easily accessible by road, but the town is only a specter of its original strength. These locations are also solemnly beautiful.
Magnolia

The town of Magnolia really began to take shape in 1825, when some of the Hamlin brothers arrived in Florida en route from Augusta, Maine, to turn a profit in land speculation and the short-staple cotton industry. Special commissioners had already selected Tallahassee as the location for the new territorial capitol and secured construction of a log cabin to hold the first Legislative Council by the fall of 1824.\(^8\) Planters soon had their cotton weighed in Tallahassee, carried by wagons to St. Marks, and shipped up north. North Florida lands began to flourish. Council members established Leon County during Florida’s territorial period and the county originally encompassed the site of Magnolia; the formation of Wakulla County was still nearly two decades away. The four Hamlin brothers had been introduced to the southern business market in 1817 when Theophilus Hamlin took his four sons to New Orleans for a trading venture. Theophilus returned to Maine, but his sons remained in the South. They first bought and sold land in Mississippi. When Florida ultimately changed hands from Spain to the United States in 1821, the older brothers saw ample opportunity.\(^9\)

At least two of the Hamlin Brothers, John and Nathaniel, were in St. Marks in 1825 to help load cotton shipments and sell goods brought over from their family store.\(^10\) The enterprising young Hamlins soon bought enough Florida land from the U.S. Government to establish their own town of Magnolia. John and Nathaniel, both married while in Mississippi, brought their wives to the new port town along with their other two brothers, George and Weld, with Weld being the youngest.\(^11\) By 1828 *The Magnolia Advertiser* was printing a weekly paper edited by Augustus Steele and the three older Hamlin Brothers were advertising their remaining lots for sale. They also highly promoted the town:

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\(^10\) Discrepancies exist on the exact date all four brothers arrive. Eddie Page has all four in Magnolia by 1825. Clifton Paisley mentions only two in 1825. Elizabeth Smith has all four in Magnolia by 1827, the year the town is founded. Most likely some of the brothers did arrive prior to establishment for site surveys, labor or labor oversight, construction, etc.

The first improvements in this town were made one year since, it now contains 200 inhabitants, 40 houses occupied as dwellings, Stores and Warehouses, besides other out houses, many others are building. 9 respectable mercantile establishments are in full operation, two Public Houses of Entertainment, a Weekly Newspaper, it has a weekly mail from Tallahassee; a good spring, Well and River water for family's use: the situation high, dry and healthy—as the past season has established beyond a doubt. It has extensive country trade with the interior of this territory and the State of Georgia: 2 regular Packet vessels running monthly to New Orleans, it also carries on a regular trade with New York and other Northern Cities. . . It is accessible to vessels drawing 8 ½ feet of water.

The years between 1828 and 1832 were indeed boom years for Magnolia. Land easily sold on the west side of the river where the town was situated and sales gradually crept to the east side of the river. Lot prices ranged from $37.50 to $100.00 and were payable with ¼ down and the remainder within twelve months.\(^\text{13}\) The Magnolia Hotel, with Thomas Cunningham as proprietor, opened its doors for business and boasted “the choicest wines and liquors [with] the best food available” for its travelers. The hotel also advertised a welcoming stable with “good forage and careful attendants.”\(^\text{14}\) Several dry goods stores, run by Benjamin Bryd, Alexander Martin, William Haskins, and Robert Larkins, took out lengthy ads listing their merchandise for sale. The proprietors sold almost everything necessary for early pioneer and plantation life: hats, boots, shoes, Negro cloth or clothing (the term used in antebellum Florida to denote a coarse, unbleached cloth used primarily by slaves), saddles, bridles, hammers, hatchets, sugar, tallow, flour, whiskey, cookery, dogs and wagons, powder, shot, and guns. Magnolia was thriving.

Magnolia also attracted wealth and power. Although the local newspaper editor stated in his premier issue “we do not hold it necessary to the attainment of truth, or the advancement of the public good, to become a partisan in political warfare” his very next issue on December 19\(^\text{th}\) trumpeted the unexpected arrival of Governor Duval for a pleasure excursion to the mouth of the river.\(^\text{15}\) The Governor’s visit was certainly newsworthy, especially for a paper that usually focused on printing marriage and death.

\(\text{12} \) The Magnolia Advertiser, Vol. 1 no.1, 12 December 1828. River depth and ship size would soon become a point of contention between Magnolia and St. Marks.

\(\text{13} \) The Magnolia Advertiser, Vol. 1 no.1, 12 December 1828; The Magnolia Monthly, Sept. 1967, 19.

\(\text{14} \) The Magnolia Advertiser, Vol. 1 no.1, 12 December 1828.

\(\text{15} \) Ibid
reports, numerous advertisements, ship arrivals and departures, and copies of serial and romance stories from larger periodicals and newspapers. What made an exception to Augustus Steele’s previous statement—that he and his paper did not want to become involved in partisan politics—is the editorial on Governor Duval that followed the news. Mr. Steele, speaking for the citizens, extolled the virtues of the territorial governor for not abandoning his post to return home during heightened Indian hostilities, even though he recently received word of his own personal financial problems from friends back north. Steele then defended Duval against “slanderous falsehoods” referring to the governor’s refusal to charter the first Tallahassee bank several years earlier. Evidently Steele only meant no editorials for the first publication.

While the town was booming, the Hamlin family suffered the loss of their youngest brother Weld in 1829 at 23 years of age. His tombstone at Magnolia is the oldest in Wakulla County. There is no stated cause for Weld’s death, although this fact is not unusual in the early nineteenth century. Parents sometimes feared a strong emotional bond to their children due to the preponderance of early infant and young adult deaths. Weld was certainly no infant, but the pervasiveness of sickness and disease was commonplace enough to preclude intense investigation. Unless contagion was suspected, townspeople simply regarded Weld’s death as a natural occurrence. For those people

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who might have suspected that Weld’s death was more of a foreshadowing event signaling the future dismantling of a town, a larger though less personal event transpired when the newspaper shut down.

_The Magnolia Advertiser_ closed its doors in 1830 after two short years of existence. The first salutary paper of Magnolia and the seventh paper published in Florida as a territory simply stopped setting type. Why Augustus Steele picked up shop in 1830 and eventually headed south is something of a mystery. In 1830 Magnolia “was the second largest town in Middle Florida . . . with a population of 276.”

Steele collaborated with Thomas Hayden as a newspaper publisher within several months of inception and around the same time they began to print a paper for Key West delivered by weekly packet. Magnolia was still growing in 1830, but Steele’s paper was floundering.

Steele, not a man prone to idleness, would soon be instrumental in establishing Hillsborough County by 1834 and initiating a new paper called the _The Gouger_. He later founded Cedar Key in present day Levy County becoming a prominent citizen alongside David Levy Yulee and promoted establishment of the Florida Railroad to the area. After Union soldiers arrived at Cedar Key, Steele fled to Welborn and died there in 1864.

Augustus Steele was a judge, a state legislator, and a slave owner. A grandson of Steele’s living in Oklahoma in the 1920s preserved an article stating “Steele may have been born in Connecticut, but he was as true to the south as any living man, as his contributions to this paper together with his whole record will show.”

Steele was also a businessman and wanted to make a profit. _The Magnolia Advertiser_ was becoming dead weight to a man whose ambitions leaned more toward travel, politics, and pursuit of better business. By 1830 the residents of Magnolia Florida no longer had any native newspaper. Instead, merchants displayed their ads and Magnolians received local news from Tallahassee’s _Florida Courier_ and the _Floridian_. Perhaps Augustus Steele was more perceptive in business maneuvers than the Hamlin brothers had been in selecting

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18 _The Magnolia Advertiser_, Vol. 1 no.7, 23 January 1829 through Vol. 1 no. 11, 6 March 1829.
the site of Magnolia, and perhaps Steele sensed the death knell around the corner for Magnolia. Whether Augustus Steele left Magnolia because of bankruptcy, shame, a desire for political advancement, or personal reinvention is not known, but no matter what his reasons, Steele vacated the area well in advance of the Hamlin brothers.

George Washington Sully, a cotton broker and self-taught artist, lived in Magnolia for the first few years of its existence. Sully seemed to have a special talent for visiting and inhabiting West Florida places now extinct. His watercolors and pen and ink drawings include representations of a small village on the Apalachicola River known as Aspalaga, Foster’s Island near Pensacola Bay, Fort St. Marks, and Magnolia; each site is now a ghost town. His Magnolia residency lasted from approximately 1829 to 1833. Images of Magnolia during its inception are extremely rare. Sully’s drawings, along with sketches from French explorer and artist, Francis, Comte de Castelnau, are some of the only visual records from the territorial era of north and west Florida. Both men chose to depict the Hamlin warehouse on the St. Mark’s River as subject material. Sully’s drawing predates Castelnau’s by at least eight years; however, both drawings reveal a manicured structure with two palm trees visually supporting an entrance gate. A low fence surrounds the grounds with two bay doors opening on land. The Sully image is drawn from a closer shoreline angle, but it distorts a truer perspective for graphic simplicity. A second building, or an extension of the first, is seen in the 1829 drawing with three doors opening onto a wharf or small dock. Castelnau’s later drawing from 1837 presents a more accurate vanishing point, but the second building is hidden and there is a sense of some neglect in the uneven fence and the hanging gate. One drawing demonstrates the inhabitants’ use of double doors while the other drawing portrays the use of single doors. Each artist took obvious liberties in his illustration, but the similarities of layout and design are striking. Castelnau observed Magnolia becoming more of a deserted town than Sully within less than a decade. Sully painted an additional picture of a magnolia homestead, showing a two-story structure, a well-tended garden protected by fencing, and a bridge crossing the river. The earlier Sully paintings were

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20 Castelnau’s observations of the St. Mark’s railroad are detailed later in this chapter.
Figure 5. *A Slight Sketch of Mr. Hamlen's Warehouse*, George Washington Sully, 1829. *Special Collections*, University of West Florida; *Collection of Joan Morris*.

Figure 6. *Magnolia, Florida*, Francis de la Porte, Comte de Castelnau, 1837. Photo courtesy Florida Photographic Collection. Accompanying caption reads, “Nothing is now left of the town of Magnolia, once a place of some importance on the St. Marks River in Wakulla County, but already in decline when this picture was made.”
from a more prosperous time.\textsuperscript{21}

Magnolia’s river location had always been a point of controversy and competition. Captains had to navigate an additional six to eight miles past St. Marks to reach the spring and docks; however, most boats anchored closer to Fort St. Marks and waited for their cargoes to be lightered up the river by smaller boats kept at Magnolia. An oyster bar near Fort St. Marks prevented vessels drawing more than eight feet of water from ascending the river to Magnolia. With so many navigable obstacles obstructing the port of Magnolia, the natural question is what possible benefits did Magnolia ever offer as a cotton-trading center?

A plank road from Tallahassee to Magnolia was more reliably high and dry than the additional four miles necessary to reach Fort St. Marks. The path to Fort St. Marks was often flooded and treacherous, as it lay so close to the river. Loads of cotton from southern Georgia and lands east of Tallahassee could bypass the capital and ride directly to the newer town upriver. Businesses sprang up in Magnolia that enabled merchants to better ship their goods. Samuel Culver operated a cotton press in Magnolia and advertised his ability to not only condense the cotton, but to lighter the material out to the waiting larger vessels.\textsuperscript{22} When merchants touted their lightering capability, it meant they owned or leased small boats with low drafts that could clear the river’s impediments. Traders might also have viewed Magnolia as less prone to Indian attacks than Fort St. Marks. Indians seemed more inclined to attack the fort as a symbol of military belligerence than to attack the agents at Magnolia. Fort St. Marks had also recently been garrisoned against attacks of which Magnolia was so far spared.

Inadvertent promotions for Magnolia appeared in the form of derogatory comments about Fort St. Marks. An article in the \textit{Florida Advocate} in 1829 did nothing to help attract settlers, visitors, or traders to the fort. The title was simply “Trip to Florida No. 1” and was continued in subsequent editions. But the damage for St. Marks was sufficient in the first episode. The out-of-state traveler claims the fort is in ruinous condition, every family has a least half a dozen children, though the food and the oysters

\textsuperscript{21} Castelnau’s drawings are available through the Florida Photographic Collection; Sully images are through Special Collections, University of West Florida; my access was through magazine reproductions and other originals in the private collection owned by Joan Morris, former archivist for the State Library of Florida.

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Magnolia Advertiser}, Vol.1 no. 7, 30 January 1829.
are excellent. “St. Marks is a dirty, swampy, little place; a few huts are scattered over it, half buried in mud—the inhabitants are pale and squalid—and as for the infantine part, they look like resurrection children.”

The author referred to the children as appearing to be the walking dead and in unkempt appearance, much like the parents. Every place in the building was damp or dripped with water. The unnamed contributor had little good to say of the fort town except for the food, which received much praise. Interestingly, the Florida Advocate article was a reprint from The Key West Register, a paper being printed and paid for in Magnolia and then shipped by packet down to Key West. Steele and Hayden, the officers of The Magnolia Advertiser, could claim a degree of separation from the scathing article on St. Marks reprinted in Tallahassee’s Florida Advocate. The owner and manager of Magnolia’s newspaper were not above attempted subterfuge to outmaneuver the town of St. Marks as a primary and important shipping port.

Magnolia residents were sure enough of their port superiority that in January of 1829 they petitioned Congress to become a port of Customs for ships traveling to and from the northern mills along the eastern seaboard and into Apalachicola Bay. Forty townsmen including all four Hamlin brothers signed the petition. Weld Hamlin’s name on the document is the first and last record of his signature prior to his death. Magnolia received the requested Customs House in a relatively short time, but not without resistance from Tallahassee. Residents of Magnolia bristled at the suggestion that the Customs House should be moved to Fort St. Marks. The most vocal complaint Tallahasseeans addressed to Congress was an inability of vessels drawing more than six feet of water to clear the channel. Opponents claimed the journey presented “continued difficulty and delay” in addition to contributing to the “embarrassments. . . hazards. . . [and] loss and fraud to the revenue” for the captain and crew.

The Magnolians response in The Advertiser was swift and caustic. The reply stated that 8 feet of water was the correct number and not 6, and that during high tides and full moons ships drawing 8 ½ to 9 feet of water could navigate the river. Evidently they thought this sounded like a good argument; however, they seem to be saying that if

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23 Florida Advocate, Vol. II no.41, 14 March 1829.
25 The Magnolia Advertiser, Vol.1 no. 8, 6 February 1829.
captains would just be willing to add a few more limitations on their passage, if ships would just construct new parameters for their port, then the town was indeed an excellent stop. They further documented the amount of tonnage and number of ships to trade with Magnolia rather than Fort St. Marks. The most biting sarcasm suggests the Tallahassee group next petition the Custom House from New Orleans to be moved to the mouth of the Mississippi. The town of Magnolia had to offer something superlative over the town of St. Marks if it wished to attract customers willing to traverse the extra miles and obstacles. The plan of the Hamlins and other Magnolia merchants simply seemed to be forming a better and more profitable town.

The river quarrels taking place during Magnolia’s golden years did not yet impede personal or professional growth. The people of Magnolia were still buying orange trees as advertised in the paper. Andrew Rush was soliciting for teachers at his new school. Customers to the dry goods stores could buy ham and bacon for 10-12 cents per pound, flour for $9 per barrel, deerskins for 10 cents a pound, and whiskey at 33 and 35 cents a gallon.26 The town soon proclaimed “to Masters of Vessels and others interested that the Light House at the mouth of the Harbor is completed and in operation.”27

Magnolia, founded by the Hamlins, was indeed a family town—in the sense of a family business town. The brothers strongly solicited original land sales in Pensacola, Florida, and back in their home state of Maine. Family and friends who owned spinning mills along Maine’s Kennebec River wanted a quality and consistent source of cotton as well as another destination for their final products. Travel was surprisingly frequent between the two cities considering the great distance and time. In 1833 Daniel Ladd, nephew to the Hamlin brothers, arrived in Magnolia to take part in the family business. Daniel’s mother was Sarah Hamlin and her husband Joseph Ladd had already settled an area for his family at Magnolia. The arrival of the remaining Ladd family in 1833 signaled the falling star for both Magnolia and the Hamlins.28

27 *The Magnolia Advertiser*, Vol. 2 no. 6, 13 March 1830.
28 “The Life and Death of Magnolia Florida” author unknown, State Library of Florida-Florida Collection. Staff speculation mentions the name of Dorothy Dodd, although Dodd’s other sources are always signed. No date. The 3 ½ page single spaced report mentions that Magnolia wood structures were still discernable in the 1890s. State Library of Florida catalogue no. Fla 975.989 L723.
Magnolia had expanded to roughly 300 people by 1833, but land sales were starting to slump with only “two transfers recorded in the courthouse in Tallahassee.” The recently chartered Merchants and Planters Bank, with capital not exceeding $300,000 sold shares of $100.00. The problem was, shareholders paid large percentages by means of mortgages and slaves. The plan called for the mortgage interests to finance the bank. When land sales continued to plummet, the bank essentially vanished by 1834.

The wealthy Benjamin Chaires, who ran the Central Bank of Florida in addition to the Union Bank and the Bank of Florida in Tallahassee, assumed the debts of Magnolia’s bank for $10,000. The Hamlins needed money immediately to keep operating, but borrowing options were few. Their father, although still alive in the 1830s, was evidently not well off. Upon his death in 1842, he left nothing to seven of his ten remaining children and only a few small necessities to sustain his wife. His will essentially stated that he had done all he could do for his children while alive and now they must be self-sufficient and help each other.

While Magnolia appeared to be an active town at this point, its foundations were starting to crumble. The nearby town of Fort St. Marks had been busy making changes to remedy its own shortcomings as a trading center by moving the town two miles upland to prevent the sogginess and mud so often complained about by visitors. At this time, St. Marks was an equal and challenging competitor. However, the worst news for the Hamlin brothers was still to come. Between 1833 and 1835 three huge blows struck the Hamlin men: a duel over finances and honor, railroad competition from St. Marks, and a land dispute predating their original purchase.

First, the Hamlin brothers were forced to close their businesses and auction off their personal property. Alexander Campbell, “a rival Magnolia merchant,” had been shadowing the Hamlins and scrutinizing their financial woes. He acted as an informant to the Hamlin’s New York creditors and his information impelled legal action from Tallahassee. The three Hamlin brothers, two with families, were forced to place all their

30 Ibid.
32 Glorida Jahoda, The Other Florida (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967), 197.
belongings up for public sale in 1833. The founding families endured public shame and humiliation. They would not forget the man who seemed so eager to witness their downfall.

Some hope arrived for the brothers in the middle of all their financial difficulties in the form of their brother-in-law Joseph Ladd. During the public auction, Joseph stepped up and bought the properties and businesses of the two brothers for just over $6,000—another brother had already sold his house and his slaves. Ladd’s precise intentions for his newly acquired property are unclear. He died from the dreaded yellow fever just one month after the purchase, and it fell to Sarah to return 5/8 of the lands to her brothers for nominal transaction fees of $5.00. Joseph Ladd is buried at the Magnolia cemetery.

Even with a glimpse of recovery from total destitution, the Hamlins now had the death of a relative on their minds. The Hamlins could even have thought Joseph’s death was an indirect result of so much family catastrophe—that Campbell’s interference weakened Ladd’s health and made him more susceptible to disease. So much had gone wrong. The Hamlins had lost their businesses even though they later reacquired some of their original land and homes through their sister. In the aftermath of the public auction, when the town’s founding fathers humbled themselves to street sales and shunted the Hamlin children into the homes of family and neighbors, John and Nathaniel Hamlin were thinking of revenge.

Pre-Civil-War-Florida was a violent place. The second Seminole War would commence in full by 1835, and many political pundits sought to eradicate all Indians regardless of their allegiance. Slavery was exceptionally cruel certainly for blacks and for those who actively or passively opposed the system. Free blacks, mulattoes, mestizoes, and women had to constantly be aware of racial, gender, and social bias. A wrong action or verbal exchange could mean death. The Spanish duello was still an acceptable form of social protocol. The general population legitimized such life-or-death gamesmanship because “honor under the dueling test called for public recognition of a man’s claim to power,” especially for southern aristocracy.  

John and Nathaniel, the two married brothers, wanted to exact some type of revenge from Alexander Campbell—the man who in their eyes had caused all their problems. Since George was the only unmarried brother—the second oldest—the other two persuaded George into instigating Campbell into accepting a duel. The next time George saw Alexander in public, in Tallahassee, he beat him with a whip thus forcing him to defend his honor. The Hamlins adhered to an unspoken southern truth and attempted to use it to their benefit: maintaining a sense of honor took precedence over any possible laws Campbell might have availed to use for self-protection. If Campbell wanted to uphold his family name and deflect the shame that came from public humiliation, he had to answer the call to duel. In the south, “honor gave meaning to lives, it existed not as a myth but as a vital code.”

The Hamlin brothers further subscribed to the southern code of honor by offering the unmarried George as the sacrificial lamb. The Hamlins wanted to defend their own honor against Mr. Campbell, and any family member was sufficient to defend the entire clan. George’s eligibility and virtues as a single man would only be heightened should he win the duel. Available women would perceive George as more courageous, manly, and worthy of protecting his own wife and family should the time and need arise. The wives of John and Nathaniel could rest easier knowing George initiated the duel instead of their husbands. Mothers taught their sons to “avoid quarrels as long as you can, but defend your manhood always.” The Hamlins believed their manhood needed to be defended and so prompted a confrontation with their nemesis. Mr. Campbell chose the time, the place, and the weapon for his showdown. They met at the Tallahassee-Georgia border and with one shot George killed Alexander Campbell.

George Hamlin was supposedly a changed man after the duel. He did not marry and become successful, as southern honor might have predicted. Instead, he traveled to Key West and died there within a year of the fateful duel. George looked to relief from his guilt over Campbell’s murder through his own death.

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34 Ibid, 114.  
36 Only one of three sources mentioning the duel (Magnolia Monthly, Schofner’s biography on Daniel Ladd, and “The Life and Death of Magnolia Florida”) offers site specifics. The latter report, by unknown author, believes the duel occurred at Mannington’s Wayside Tavern on the Georgia line. This is also the place suggested in the semi-fictional Florida Breezes.
Ellen Call Long transformed the duel into a legend in her book *Florida Breezes*, a novel. Wakulla County Historian Elizabeth Smith refers to as a “compendium of Territorial gossip which passed for a novel.” In the “Country Visits” chapter, the book’s narrator arrived at the plantation of Colonel Murat, who seemingly enjoyed conveying exceptional stories to his guests. Murat first related a prior Indian adventure experienced with the brilliant General Richard Keith Call (Ellen Call Long’s father) to the traveler. Murat explained how Call’s men shot several Indians one evening and left their bodies beside camp while they slept. In the morning, the men discovered that hogs had devoured the Indian bodies overnight. Troops shot the hogs and fried them for breakfast and Murat enthusiastically partook in the feast. The image invoked is that of Call’s men literally eating Indians, although Murat emphatically pointed out that Call partook of no such meal. Colonel Murat then turned the conversation toward the frequency of duels during this time, singling out the duel between Alexander Campbell and George Hamlin.

Well, you see, C. had set out to be thorough in his profession—a lawyer—neither asking or granting favors, regardless of all things excepting the interest of his client, and thereby, of course, his own. Some Northern creditors had a claim against the three Hamblys, who do business in the town of Magnolia, on the St. Marks River, not far from here. The Hamblys thought they had adjusted the matter through C—, for a time, he had apparently, at least accepted their offer, whatever it was, when without further notice, he sent a sheriff down and closed their business house. The three brothers on the spur of the moment, resolved to challenge C— and each made oath that if one failed to kill, the next would re-challenge. Of course Campbell had to die with such men against him. . . They went up to Mannington and C— was shot through the head.

*Florida Breezes* was a work of historical fiction of western and Middle Florida from territorial days written for the general readers of the 1880s, much as were more contemporary films on World War II, or life in the 1940s or 1950s for theater patrons. The stories catered to a popular audience and offered some historical legitimacy while taking many artistic liberties. Colonel Murat did, in fact, travel with General Call, and both men had a strong aversion to the Indians, although their conversations in the novel.

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38 Ellen Call Long, *Florida Breezes* (Jacksonville: Ashmead Brothers Printers and Binders, 1883), 159-161. The superficial name changes and partial deletions are rather transparent.
are often a blend of fiction and reality. Additional front-porch dialogue in *Florida Breezes* lends credibility to the suspicion that Campbell’s murder was the ruin of George Hamlin. Other conversations in the book mentioning a probable meeting between Bryd Willis and Mr. Hambly several years after the shootout would be factually impossible since George died within one year of the duel.

Ellen Call Long’s book serves as a primary source for tempered Democratic political history in the post Civil War South. Her father, Richard Keith Call, was twice territorial governor of Florida with a lengthy political and military background. Her introduction credits many of the stories as generational information from family and friends that is admittedly fact mixed with romance and fiction. Scholars also use *Florida Breezes* as a source for vivid descriptions and images of the land in the newly settled area. “Many who had already come to stay left in disgust, proclaiming abroad that Florida was but a sand bank; but others told of cotton fifteen feet high, ten stalks of sugar cane to the bud, and where the lands had escaped annual burning, were found spontaneous the tender plants of Cuba, in the hiaco plum, orange, mangrove, maguey, and even coffee in the extreme peninsula.” This vision of Florida as “the Eden of America” is the land in which the Hamlin brothers and their families had hoped to prosper, but the financial woes and the duel were just the first obstacle that appeared between 1833 and 1835.

The second strike against the Magnolia town initiative was found in the political presence and the magnetic personality of Richard Keith Call and his desire to build a railroad to St. Marks. In addition to Call’s career as Florida legislative councilman, congressional delegate, territorial governor, and brigadier general, he was one of the directors of Florida’s Railroad Company. Under his leadership, Florida’s first railroad was chartered in 1834. The route was from Tallahassee to St. Marks and well beyond an access stop in Magnolia. The only other railroad competition in the entire state of Florida at that time was a line to the west serving Port St. Joe. Additional railroad plans never

41 Ibid.
42 Caroline Mays Brevard, *A History of Florida* (Deland, Florida: Florida Historical Society, 1924), 105. Caroline was a granddaughter of Governor Call.
really materialized until the 1850s when the Internal Improvements Act of 1855 allowed land grants for construction. By the 1850s, plans were in motion to establish The Florida Railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Key, The Pensacola and Georgia Railroad, and the Atlantic and Gulf Central.  

The railroad boom of the ‘Henry’s’—of Henry Plant and Henry Flagler—waited until the late 1870s and 1880s to open up Florida coastlines.

The contract for the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad went to the Gray Brothers and the track was finally operational in 1836, but construction was fraught with problems. Most notably, there was no locomotive. Mules furnished the power to pull freight and passengers on the premiere journey. The contract had never specified acquisition of a locomotive. Later, when an engine was purchased, the boiler soon exploded and Call wrote his mother-in-law explaining how the company now found horse and mule power to be quite superior, and he vowed his trials with engines on the track were over.  

St. Joseph to the west already had another line running—with a real steam locomotive—by the time the Tallahassee-St. Marks line was underway; however, Leon County’s rail system would far outlast the three-year stint of their neighbor.

The third consecutive blow to the Hamlin brothers and the town of Magnolia was a United States Court decision in 1835 involving the original ownership of their platted land. The Forbes purchase covered close to 1.5 million acres in the panhandle, and its ownership was in question. The eastern most boundary of the disputed acreage was the St. Marks River and Magnolia sat on its border. John Forbes and Company, originally part of an old English trading group, had received land as debt collection during the second Spanish period of Florida (1783-1821). Colin Mitchell bought the company in 1819.  

Congress was aware of the Forbes land, and a commission even favored Colin Mitchell as private owner, but Congress made no immediate decision. The issue went in

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45 The term Forbes land is subsequently used even though Colin Mitchel filed the original lawsuit since Forbes and his associates had the historical land use for 35 years prior to sale.
and out of lawyer’s hands and a Middle Florida courtroom before being appealed and heard at the highest level.\textsuperscript{46}

Richard K. Call happened to be the defending lawyer for the state of Florida and lost his case when the judges ruled in favor of private ownership. Call was invested in seeing the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad succeed. The defeat meant trouble for Call as well as the Hamlin family. Numerous small growing towns between the Apalachicola River west and the St. Marks River east and between the gulf islands south to the tips of present day Gadsden and Leon Counties north were at risk of losing their land.\textsuperscript{47} Many

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure7.png}
\caption{Town lots and streets of Magnolia, Florida}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{46} William Warren Rogers, \textit{Outposts on the Gulf} (Pensacola: University Presses of West Florida, 1986), 5. This book gives an excellent history of the entire Forbes purchase history from the Apalachicola Land Company to the Land & Development Co. to the William Popham era of the 1920s. The sale and exchange of lands occurred with such rapidity during certain large tract ownerships, that likely anyone could have claimed to own some of the land for a short period of time.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 47-49.
individuals such as the Hamlins had little resources to purchase land they believed they had already purchased, but extended legal maneuvers delayed any immediate necessary action. Most areas were involved in some type of litigation at least through the 1850s.

Richard Call had more resources than John and Nathaniel in 1835 (Weld and George were both deceased by then) and availed himself as a member of the newly formed Apalachicola Land Company to acquire ownership of the old Forbes land and to assure success in his future plans for Gulf Coast growth.

Land disputes and railroad construction spanned several years in the life of Magnolia, but by 1838 the end was in sight. Comte de Castelnau, a French explorer, traveled North America in the late 1830s and early 1840s. He kept a journal and made detailed drawings of his journeys.

In 1838 the count visited coastal Florida and traveled on the railroad to St. Marks. He was amazed at the construction and believed it to be “the worst that has yet been built in the entire world.”

The trip took seven hours, and sometimes the slaves working on the cars had to jump ahead of the mules to hold down the curled wood beams so that the carts pulling passengers and freight could more easily pass.

Castelnau was momentarily speechless as he found his pen. “Moreover, instead of being astonished at the bad construction of this railroad, one is inclined on the other hand, to admire the bold thought that inspired a project of such a sort in a country inhabited by hostile savages, and through almost impassable forests, which so few years ago were not even explored by whites.”

Castelnau’s observations elucidated the situation existing at Magnolia in 1838. A more recent caption reading “Nothing is now left of the town of Magnolia, once a place of some importance on the St. Marks River in Wakulla County, but already in decline when this picture was made” follows his drawing of a warehouse on the St. Marks River (See figure number 6 on page 13).

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49 Herbert. J. Doherty, *Richard Keith Call: Southern Unionist*, 91. Slaves did the majority of the line’s labor. The company owned twenty-five slaves in 1840.
The remaining Hamlin brothers continued operations in Magnolia until 1842, when they moved to the newer location of Port Leon, about three-and-a-half miles south of Fort St. Marks.

**Port Leon**

Compared to the town of Magnolia, which existed for at least fifteen years (1827-1842) and longer while residents slowly drifted away, the town of Port Leon had a brisk beginning and a cataclysmic end. Begun through the efforts of powerful and well-financed politicians in 1838, the inhabitants had been optimistic and the area showed promise until 1843 when a hurricane wiped it off the map.

Richard Keith Call founded Port Leon as the Tallahassee-St. Marks railroad extended past its first terminus. The railroad may not have been much to speak of, but the little cars were pulling their weight’s worth of fluffy white ‘gold.’ “Some years, as many as 50,000 bales of cotton are said to have been shipped from St. Marks.” Call had always planned for the line’s extension into the mouth of the river where he hoped to begin a lucrative commercial district from such exports. The land sat on the eastern bank of the St. Marks River, just outside of the Forbes purchase, and was without U.S. controversial title ownership when bought for development.

The new town of Port Leon was officially established and lot sales advertised in 1838. An ad in the *Pensacola Gazette* in late 1839 indicated the dreams of its visionaries:

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**SALE OF LOTS IN PORT LEON**

On Monday, January 13, 1840, will be offered for sale, at auction, a part of the lots in Port Leon. This town is situated on Apalachie Bay, about three miles by the river, below St. Marks. It is most handsomely located in the most elevated site on the bay, and with the exception of the ground near the bay, is beyond the influence of the highest tides. . . Port Leon being the nearest shipping point to the Suwanee and its tributaries and all the adjacent country as far East as the Sante Fe . . . Of the country lying north, east, and west of Tallahassee, which is entirely dependent on this port for an outlet, it is unnecessary to say anything in commendation as it is known to be the latest and most productive body

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of good land in Florida, and already occupied by a wealthy and
tenterprising population. Port Leon’s founders, with Call at the helm, wanted to surpass both Magnolia and St. Marks as a cotton shipping capital in the bend of Florida’s Gulf.

An extension bridge across the St. Marks River to the lands of Port Leon effectively shut off trade to Magnolia. The bridge served as a drawbridge, but the business of Magnolia dropped sharply after the final phase of its completion in 1839. The added burden of going under a drawbridge could be avoided by conducting business at St. Marks, and eventually, Port Leon. The Tallahassee Railroad Company was in charge of developing Port Leon and when it closed the freight stop at St. Marks, the founding entrepreneurs of Port Leon furthered their cause of cotton shipping success.

Daniel Ladd, now a man in his twenties, bought a lot in Port Leon for $210 and went into business for himself as a cotton trader. The Hamlin brothers bought two lots for a total of $4,000 and took on a partner, Hamlin V. Snell, for their new down river ventures. Nathaniel Hamlin registered as the Postmaster for Port Leon in 1842, the same year of its official incorporation. His mercantile business was as large as in Magnolia. The Hamlins and Ladds may have been distraught over the usurping of Port Leon over their own town, but business sense and survival led them to the newest boomtown in the vicinity.

Two Scotsmen, James Ormond and William McNaught, built a warehouse for commissioning cotton and James Ormond slept on the floor on his first night in business in 1839. His briefcase was stolen that night. Accounts of Port Leon by travelers detailed the amount of carousing and criminal activity that seemed prevalent:

The people. Oh my!... Law and Justice are not in their vocabularies. I was asked to drink about 500 times and when I refused they would turn around and look as though they were shot. One man told me that I was the only person in Port Leon but what would [not] drink and that he had

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53 Pensacola Gazette, 21 December 1839.
56 Tallahassee Democrat, 6 January 1965.
Magnolia residents came in large groups to Port Leon, but the people of St. Marks protested against Port Leon’s shipping authority. The partnership of Holt and Miller advertised grievances against rumors that their town could not transport freight. Holt and Miller called “such statements... entirely false” and announced “We now have a first class brig loading at St. Marks.” The men touted the benefits of St. Marks and offered free lighter services for headstrong captains who refused to trade at St. Marks. They also mentioned at St. Marks “there is less chance of fire and water than at Port Leon.”

In 1841 Port Leon and the entire North Florida area suffered a yellow fever epidemic that nearly wiped out the town. St. Joseph, to the west of Port Leon, received the worst outbreak. Business leaders and government officials often bickered over how to handle epidemics, because disease origins and the germ theory were not yet understood. However, people did have some idea of contagion and the use of quarantine, but rules were irregularly enforced. Still other people fled in fear. Residents of towns were often torn between readily admitting to the possibility of an impending outbreak and losing their precious cotton trading revenue. “No farmer wanted to trade cotton for yellow fever [and] no merchant enjoyed the prospect of empty wharves, deserted railroad depots, and idle drays and wagons.” Southern port cities such as Charleston and New Orleans experienced numerous yellow fever attacks during the antebellum era. Florida port cities were not ignorant of epidemics; they just lacked appropriate knowledge for treatment and mitigation. Mosquitoes carried the virus to humans through their bite and acted as a vector for disease transmission. Not all people who became infected, however, reached the stage where jaundice or the ‘yellow’ part of the fever threatened to take their life. Port Leon had a high enough survival rate for the town to continue

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58 Tallahassee Democrat, 6 January 1965.
59 Ibid.
61 Ibid, 559.
62 Yellow Fever is still seen today in parts of Africa and the Americas, although a vaccine is now available. Endemics and epidemics may reemerge if conditions are favorable.
growing. Not until the devastating hurricane on September 13, 1843, did the town of Port Leon succumb to the elements.

News of the total destruction of Port Leon reached papers from New Orleans and Mobile in the south to Baltimore, Hartford, and New York in the northeast. The *New York Herald* called it “one of the most dreadful hurricanes we have ever remembered to have occurred on this continent” and carried a substantial column with reprints of articles from both the *Port Leon Gazette* and the *Tallahassee Star*.63 The lead sentence from Port Leon dripped with emotion.

> Our city is in ruins! . . . Nearly every dwelling was thrown from its foundation, and many of them crushed to atoms. The loss of property is immense. Every inhabitant participating in the loss more or less. None have escaped—many with only the clothes they stand in. St. Marks suffered in the like proportion with ourselves. But our losses are nothing in comparison with that at the light house. Every building but the light house gone. And dreadful to relate, fourteen lives lost, and among them some of our most valued citizens.64

Fourteen lives were lost in the storm. The paper lists eight names of the deceased, along with their occupation. The remaining six people lost are listed as “a crazy Negro boy belonging to Tallahassee . . . and five Negroes.”65 The lives of many more black people were potentially lost and unaccounted for except for their inclusion as loss of property. Daniel Ladd owned two slaves at the time and the Hamilns had slaves off and on through the years. The estimated property loss was valued at $250,000.

The water level breached the entire downtown area by ten feet and washed away all that stood in its path. The train tracks from St. Marks to Port Leon no longer existed and the drawbridge was ripped from its supports. Port Leon was gone, never to be rebuilt.66

The Hamilns still owned a warehouse in Magnolia and briefly tried to revive their original developments, but most ships stayed with St. Marks, especially when the railroad was rebuilt to end there for a second time. The loss for Richard Keith Call was, by his

64 *Port Leon Gazette*, 15 September 1843 as in the *New York Herald*, 29 September 1843.
65 Ibid.
own accounts, estimated at $50,000. The hurricane, however, was not the end of his troubles with Port Leon and the old railroad extension. The hurricane and storm surge had taken the drawbridge and deposited it, still completely intact as a drawbridge with some pier supports, at some distance up the river where it made ship passage difficult if not impossible. Since Call was still the president of the Railroad Company, and the railroad was now blocking the river, someone decided to take legal action against Call saying he “unlawfully, willfully, and maliciously” erected a pier in the river to obstruct navigation. The lawsuit outraged Call, especially since it came from Middle Florida...
District Attorney, Charles Sibley. Governor Call wrote to the Secretary of State, John C. Calhoun, explaining his quandary and leveling charges back against Sibley. Call allowed Port Leon to become an overnight ghost town and instead focused his time on other land sales, his legal practice, and his interest in the railroad, from which he did not divest himself until 1855.

Before the hurricane, Port Leon had a population close to 500 people. Many of the people chose to move up river, below Magnolia, and start again as New Port Leon. When Wakulla County was carved out of the territory in 1843, New Port Leon petitioned to become the county seat and dropped the name of Leon to become Newport.

Newport

The residents who owned waterfront property in Port Leon were similarly the ones who acquired river front lots in Newport. Some of the wealthiest men included Ormond and McNaught, the same partnership from Port Leon. Their individual reports to the 1850 census taker show each man worth about $6000 and owning 10 slaves. Other prominent merchants included brothers Andrew and John Denham, and George Miller. Daniel Ladd, at 33, gave a value of only $1500 to the federal government. Whether he underreported or was simply yet to reach his zenith is not known, but by 1857, his capital was assessed at $30,000 and by 1859 he held notes and loan titles to more than $70,000 worth of merchandise and property. He reported his value at $100,000 by 1860.

John and Nathaniel stayed in Newport for a brief time before giving their nephew Daniel power of attorney to sell their property in Wakulla County. A witness to this transaction was James W. Skipper, whose tombstone in the Magnolia cemetery is one of the few grave markers still readable and unbroken. Nathaniel Hamlin moved to New Orleans, the port first visited with his father in 1817. In New Orleans, Nathaniel became

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a commission merchant for cotton at No. 15 Canal Street and advertised on a regular basis in the *Newport Gazette*. John Hamlin, the oldest of the original four brothers, followed suit and allowed Daniel to sell his property in Wakulla county before returning to Magnolia where he died in 1849.

Daniel Ladd became one of the primary merchants in Newport. Like the towns of Magnolia and Port Leon, Newport was established to be a cotton-trading town, and Daniel was closely involved with that business; but he expanded into almost every aspect of Newport life and commerce. At various times and by diverse sources he was listed as the owner or operator of warehouses, the Wakulla Ice Company, the Newport Iron works, the Newport Oil Company, turpentine stills, rental houses, general merchandise stores, and a sawmill. He also owned stock in some newspapers and in the Georgia-Florida Plank Road Company. Whatever he could sell, whatever he could trade, he sought to dabble in—this also meant that he traded in slaves. Ladd acquired several slaves through debt transaction, but others he bought as laborers for his expanding businesses. He owned two while in Port Leon, five by 1850, and 27 by 1860.

Jerrell Shofner, in his 1978 biography on Ladd, believes the northern merchant thought of himself “as American first and citizen of a state second” rather than a secessionist or unionist. Still, Ladd was dependent enough on slave labor for so many of his businesses that he was not much different from a slave-owning planter. As a southern capitalist, much like his uncles, he needed cotton exports and found himself deeply ingrained in the southern way of life.

Medicines were an often-sought commodity in the 1840s and 1850s, and so Ladd made those items available on a regular basis to all his customers. Advertisements in the *Newport Gazette* recognized Daniel Ladd as an agent for numerous cure-alls and preventatives. Some advertisements are even flowered with poems.

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73 *Newport Gazette*, Vol. II no. 5, 12 October 1847.
75 Ibid, 150-151.
76 *Newport Gazette*, Vol. II no. 5, 12 October 1847.
Figure 10. Daniel Ladd’s Advertisement for Balsam of Wild Cherry

Selling all types of merchandise was facilitated when Daniel Ladd, John Denham, and McNaught and Ormond, received a state charter to build a plank road from Newport to the Georgia line toward Thomasville. The road never materialized all the way to Thomasville, but a rough path was constructed to Chaires Crossing (where the road crossed St. Augustine Road, known today as Chaires Cross Roads) with a branch to Tallahassee. By 1852 the Plank road to Chaires moved cotton and freight. Newport now competed again with the exporting of cotton from St. Marks. Even though St. Marks had a train, mules, not a steam engine, pulled it.\(^{77}\)

Plank Road is still traveled by residents and visitors in Wakulla County. The rough graded dirt road is the last turn on the left of Highway 98 before crossing over the St. Marks River. About one mile down the road is a cement abutment that bridges Newport Spring. The spring, also known as Sulfur Spring for the mineral in the water, is the site of the old Wakulla Hotel advertised in 1847.

The proprietor of the Wakulla Hotel, William Daughtery, praised the healthful benefits of the mineral waters, especially for invalids, and held their quality as high as

\(^{77}\) Jerrell Shofner, *Daniel Ladd, Merchant Prince of Frontier Florida*, 33-34.
any in the state. Bathhouses were available for men and Daughtery anticipated a new facility for women next season. The manager promised his guests “In addition to the usual fare at country taverns, the WAKULLA HOTEL will be regularly supplied with Green Turtle, Fish, and Oysters, and every attention paid to the comfort of the visitor.”

The same sand and dirt road that passes in front of the old Wakulla Hotel site also passes within a short distance of the old Magnolia cemetery before winding up in Leon County; however, any route to the cemetery is blanketed by pines, saplings, and extremely thick underbrush. The plank road operated until 1858, with Ladd serving as president for its entire tenure. Railroads gained popularity and preference by the late 1850s and Ladd began operating out of both Newport and St. Marks. In 1860, Newport was still a boomtown, but St. Marks was once again the competition, as it had been for both Magnolia and Port Leon. “Tallahassee’s preference for and support of St. Marks was a powerful force and the national swing to public supported railroad construction was probably decisive.”

In addition to a larger exporting city’s partiality for St. Marks, the impending Civil War would prove critical in the future of Newport. Ladd had always been a man to take liabilities and make them assets. He had gone from Magnolia to Port Leon to Newport with increasing ease and wealth, but the Civil War would prove to be the undoing of Newport and the empire of Daniel Ladd.

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78 *Newport Gazette*, Vol. II no. 5, October 1847.
79 Jerrell Shofner, *Daniel Ladd, Merchant Prince of Frontier Florida*, 34.
Even though he openly admitted to neighbors, clients, and friends that he was a unionist, townspeople still asked him to be one of the two Wakulla County representatives sent to the Tallahassee Secession Convention. “His neighbors forgave him, he was after all, rich and powerful.”

Confederates used Daniel Ladd’s boat *The Spray* during the Civil War when Federal troops blocked the harbor at St. Marks. Ladd’s years along the river had taught him that a boat with a low draw of only six feet was necessary to navigate the area waters and it proved useful for Confederates needing to transport supplies up and down the river.

The final blow came in 1864, when General Scott arrived in the St. Marks River and torched the salt works and all the warehouses. Thirty years of work and $500,000 of Daniel Ladd’s investments went up in flames.

Ladd did rebuild in Newport, but he never again attained the status and wealth of his antebellum days. Railroads would soon be the transportation of choice, with cotton bypassing many ports and going directly to the North. Daniel Ladd died during the Reconstruction Era of Florida in 1872 and is buried at the Old City Cemetery in Tallahassee. One of Ladd’s daughters who died in infancy is buried at the Magnolia cemetery.

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Magnolia’s demise, like that of Newport, is often attributed to a competitive edge given to St. Marks with the arrival of the railroads, but the town of Magnolia was suffering before track and bridge construction. The financial dilemmas of the Hamlins hampered their support of the town at a crucial moment before the railroad was ever constructed and unintentionally aided men such as Richard Call to push for St. Marks. The initial location of Magnolia so far up the river is another source of wonderment. Port Leon was too close to the water for the town’s survival and magnolia seemed too far away.

If Call and his board had seen the already established town of Magnolia as their new dream location, perhaps survival would have been possible. Call had the resources

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80 *Tallahassee Democrat*, 28 November 1965.
81 Ibid.
at his command to push for strengthening an already existing town rather than starting one from scratch. In Call’s defense however, the Forbes land controversy might have been enough of a prevention, although doubtful. The railroad had already been built on land with questionable ownership and the monies necessary to purchase land could be sought from other investors. Even before all the land disputes were resolved, counties continued to be formed and cities initiated by entrepreneurial men. It is likely that Call simply wanted a town with his personal mark on it and not that of the Hamlins or the foundations of an old fort.

The reasons for Magnolia’s passing are more speculative than those for either Port Leon or Newport. Port Leon was so easily obliterated by a hurricane that little question was left about whether it was feasible to rebuild—it was not. Newport’s location so far up the river was an act of overcompensation by the recently defeated hurricane victims at Port Leon. Newport might have stood a better chance of survival if the refugees from Port Leon had found a location halfway between their chosen site and St. Marks.

The histories of each of these towns, while having the strength to stand alone and tell a story, are actually interdependent on one another. A complete history of Port Leon would be difficult to construct without mentioning the creation of Newport. Likewise, Port Leon’s history deeply embraces the backgrounds of families from Magnolia such as the Hamlins and Ladds. Lines of distinction among the areas blur and create the perception of one large mutating ghost town rather than three, a region coined “Magport.” Three times Magport tried to establish itself and three times it failed.

The flagship town of Magnolia exists only as a cemetery and in the paintings and drawings from Castelnau and Sully. The Magnolia cemetery is fading away. Logging paths are sometimes extremely close to the remains and vandals have taken iron posts and disturbed and disinterred graves. The plank road constructed under Daniel Ladd has returned to sand and dirt, but it crosses directly over Sulfur (Newport) Spring before nearly touching the area of Magnolia as the road heads north to Leon County. The St. Joe Paper Company owns the land where Magnolia once flourished, and their local administrators provided clearance for my visit to the cemetery in June of 2005.

Port Leon will soon not fit into the classification of ghost towns used for this paper as all traces of the road and culverts wash away with tides and storms. Persons
wishing to traverse the path to old Port Leon will find it necessary to enter the wildlife refuge and hike approximately three miles to the site. The path first leads to the old entrance of the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge used in the 1930s before winding to the gulf and the vanishing outlines of roads from the once-prosperous town. The old railroad grade is now part of the Florida Trail. Another option for rediscovering Port Leon is to take a boat from the docks of St. Marks or the St. Marks Lighthouse and travel either up or down river, depending on your origination point, to the marshes and the flat mud banks of old Port Leon.

Newport is still a town with a population of 200 in 2005. Landmarks such as Outz’s Oyster Bar and the entrance road to one the larger preserves of St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge continue to receive patrons. But Newport has yet to regain the full status it attained during the 1850s.
Unlike the ghost towns of Magnolia, Port Leon, and Newport, the extinct communities of Arran and the larger geographical region of Goose Creek, with two separate and distinct ghost areas, do not reveal a fluid connection between one town’s rapid development and another town’s demise. Instead, both areas remained sparsely settled until after the end of the Second Seminole War in 1842 when the territory gradually attracted more inhabitants. The ghost town trinity of Magnolia, Port Leon, and Newport also all relied heavily on the exportation of cotton as a base industry. Planters brought cotton into the area as an agricultural commodity and cultivated their crops. The Arran and Goose Creek divisions took naturally occurring raw materials and commodified timber, cattle, and fish for marketable value. Arran became prominent in the 1890s with the arrival of a railroad depot, while East Goose Creek appeared almost overnight in 1915 as a planned community, and West Goose Creek’s long seine fishing history arguably reached its apex in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{82}

Pinpointing an exact origination date, especially for West Goose Creek, is more difficult than finding an acceptable date for each area’s disappearance. The probable vanishing years for each location follow the same order as listed above. Arran was no longer thriving by 1947, East Goose Creek was absorbed in a national refuge system in 1949, and West Goose Creek crumbled during a hurricane in 1985.

As mentioned in the introduction, this treatise reviews ghost towns in an order from north to south and from oldest to most recent demise rather than alphabetically or by reviewing the largest economic scale of a boom to bust period. The oldest demise in this group is Arran, which also happens to be the most northern site. The alphabetical order is simply coincidental. West Goose Creek easily had the longest life span of well

\textsuperscript{82} David Rodenberry, “Historic Seine Fisheries of Wakulla County and Eastern Franklin County Florida,” 2001, 20. Monograph obtained through Wakulla County Historical Society President Betty Green.
over one hundred years, but its recent extinction in the mid to late 1980s places it at the end of this chapter.

Arran

Arran once existed as a thriving town for more than forty years at the turn of the twentieth century. The little town, supposedly named Arrana after the daughter of one of the founding Scotch Irish immigrant fathers, was busier than the county seat of Crawfordville from 1900 to 1940.\(^3\) Some people even suggested Arran as the site for the new county seat not long after Wakulla County was formed in 1843. Newport had held county seat status for two years when residents called for the creation of a special commission to select a more centrally located and accessible spot for county government.

The commissioners chose Lost Creek, the original name of the Arran community. However, voters rejected Lost Creek as county seat in 1845 and Newport held the title until after the civil war, when Crawfordville became the permanent seat of government.\(^4\)

Arran was situated just two miles from Crawfordville but has almost totally vanished. Researchers now have to look deep into the ground, literally into the bowels of history, to find the most intact structural evidence of a building from Arran’s lost society. What remains of Arran are two circular cement pits suspended above cement flooring that once served as the school’s double-holed outhouse.

The bathroom wells are located in a small thicket on private property. Volunteers poured the cement foundation as part of the Works Progress Administration projects in the 1930s.

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\(^3\) Freeman Ashmore, *Looking Back* (Florence, Ms : Stephens Printing, 2002), 338. Ashmore cites three possible name origins, with this being the most widely accepted story.

to improve sanitation and prevent disease.\textsuperscript{85} Hookworm was prevalent in rural areas where contaminated fecal matter was not adequately contained and seeped into the soil. The problems intensified if children ran barefoot since the parasite could penetrate the skin, travel to the lungs, and eventually lodge in the intestines.

Sanitation had often been a problem in the rural south. Studies conducted by health officials under the auspices of the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission in five southern states including Florida described the sanitary situation at some schools as “not merely bad—it is too vile for description”\textsuperscript{86} Federal and state officials hoped the hookworm problem would be adequately addressed by construction of cement and chambered outhouses. Parents and teachers were supposed to counsel students to wear shoes to prevent against recurring infestations, but they likely found the rules and stipulations hard to enforce. An undated photo of boys from the Arran school shows one barefoot student. Probably several other students are barefoot since several pant legs are hiked to knee level and some ankles are visible in the tall grass and weeds. Arran was

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure13.jpg}
\caption{The Boys of Arran School. Bare ankles may be seen on the fourth boy from the left, front row. Photo: Florida Photographic Collection}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{86} William A. Link, “Privies, Progressivism, and Public Schools: Health Reform and Education in the Rural South, 1909-1920,” \textit{The Journal of Southern History} Vol. 54 no. 4 (November, 1988): 627. Florida surveys were conducted in 1911 and 1912.
a strong farming community, and the teachers might have been grateful just to have the students in school whether barefoot or not. Unless the consequences of a disease forcefully presented itself to the community, there were plenty of other priorities that mandated attention in the growing hamlet of Arran.

New settlers arrived sporadically in Arran until the construction of a railroad spur from the Georgia, Florida, and Alabama Railroad in 1894 attracted more residents, then the town began to boom with lumber mills and turpentine camps through the 1930s. Passengers and freight operators called the railroad spur through Arran the Carrabelle, Tallahassee, and Georgia Railroad. When the train depot was established, the depot agent purportedly changed the name of Lost Creek to Arran in honor of his daughter Arrana. Freeman Ashmore, a longtime Wakulla area resident, author, and historian, believes this name change to be the most plausible of local stories because “Arrana Harvey, the first child to be born in Arran and named after the community was presented a silver cup by John Bunker, the first depot agent, to commemorate the occasion.”

Genealogical records show the marriage between Mary Jane Vause and Joseph Clinton Harvey produced eight children, with the seventh child named Arrana born on February 13, 1895. The same documents reveal several of their other children also born in Arran, although the name technically would have been Lost Creek. Their ancestry records claim Arrana as the first child named in the town “after the railroad went through.” So the arrival of the train also seemed to hail the arrival of Arran as an up-and-coming boomtown in Florida’s panhandle.

An older brother of Arrana, named Riley Americus Harvey and the fourth of the Vause and Joseph Harvey children, was a cattle farmer and syrup maker. A photograph of Riley taken on December 20, 1908 shows him in a wedding party with his first wife, Lily Anna Smith, at the Arran Primitive Baptist Church. Family members identified Riley and Lily as the couple on the right, although the couple on the left was never

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88 Ralph Tabor Williams, “Descendants of James Vause,” <http://home.hawaii.rr.com/jeverly/ralph/vause.html> (10 September 2005). Mary Jane Vause is found under the third generation number 19. This information correctly corresponds to my interview with Homer Harvey and information from Eddie Page’s *Images of America*. 

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recognized. The man holding a book, presumably a bible, is Minister Joshua Spears. The photo reveals the strength of the community in 1908. Also evident is the shotgun-style architecture of the church, a term referring to the ability of someone to stand in the front of the structure and shoot a rifle straight through the house and out the back door. In more practical terms, the shotgun style house allowed for better ventilation in a hot and humid climate, although shooting through a house was not totally impractical in rural Florida, where wild game such as deer, bear, foxes, raccoons, and civets were plentiful. The house could serve as a blind to the animals and the owner could presumably shoot through, or from the house (one may hope when no one else was home or in the line of fire).

The wedding image also shows the wood construction of the church and fence. The Baptist Church was right next door to the Arran school, another structure made of wood, which is one reason why so little remains of the town. Wood gave way to the elements much faster than brick or stone. A hand-drawn map of Arran made by Clayton Taff in the 1990s shows how he remembered Arran in 1936. Mr. Taff, a former

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Figure 15. Map of Arran Florida, 1936.

- 23. Turpentine Still
- 24. Commissary
- 28. Depot
- 29. Water Tower
- 34. Swimming Hole
- 54. Baptist Church
- 55. Arran School
resident of the town, made the map of Arran in preparation for a presentation to the Wakulla County Historical Society. The church is seen to the immediate Southwest of the school (see map on page 42) and much more definitive information may be gleaned from this diagram.

Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was still over thirty years away and segregation is evident on the map. The drawing identifies three separate Negro places: Building number 11 is the Negro Café; Building 36 is the Negro Church; and 61 is the site of the Negro cemetery. Separate structures and land use for blacks during this time period is no surprise, but of some interest may be the juxtaposition of the buildings. The Negro café is across from the Barnhill store and beside the sawmill. The Negro cemetery and church are on opposite sides of the town, but remain within the town’s circumference if the Baptist Church and Arran school are used as the center, with the white residences of Willy Oaks and Tully Taff as circumference points. The growth of larger cities during this same period often emerged as segregated urban centers with whites and blacks in distinctly separate areas. However, the Arran map suggests the possibility existed for an intermingling to occur between the races that metropolitan cities never witnessed on such a personal level.

Black communities, such as Hyde Park and Shadeville, in Wakulla County in the 1930s offer much more available black history. Only whites have documented Arran’s history to date. The ghost town of Arran still presents a challenge to discover how many black families actually lived in Arran, or how they really lived and worked.

The white Arran cemetery is number 62 on the map. The oldest graves date back to the 1890s and carry the familiar names of Harvey and Vause. Additional pioneer families of Arran include the Eubanks and the Lawhons, the latter memorialized by well over two-dozen gravesites. Today, the Arran cemetery is still being used and reserved for descendents of the original settlers, but most of Arran’s descendents now live in Crawfordville or several nearby cities. For that reason—the fact that Arran’s cemetery is

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90 All references are to the map on page 41. The word Negro is used to identify and correspond with the map and its terminology.
still buying new land and expanding—it is not included as a primary marker of Arran as a ghost town. As Crawfordville continues to grow, it may envelop the surrounding lands of Arran, although the original tombstones and cemetery from Arran remain.

The black cemetery at Arran is not so well preserved. Weather and disregard have rotted away tombstones made of wood, and weeds and brush choke access to the site. What the map labels as the “Negro Cemetery” at Arran is a vanishing site and is indicative of problems experienced throughout the county. Wakulla County Historical Society President Betty Green believes the area contains more than thirty lost cemeteries. For example, the Casseaux cemetery near Cherokee sinkhole remains unmarked, unprotected, and unrevered even though approximately twenty people, some Civil War veterans, are believed to be buried there. People may still drive their cars over the old gravesites to park and swim in the crystal clear waters. Arran’s old Negro cemetery is counted among the disappearing graveyards of Wakulla County.  

Riley Americus Harvey and Lily Ann Smith are both buried in Arran, the town where they first started their family before buying land south of Arran closer to Crawfordville. One of their children is Homer Harvey, who was born in Arran on June 15, 1916. During my conversation with Mr. Harvey in January of 2005, Homer recalled some childhood activities and early traveling experiences with his mother. “My mother was from Barnesville, Georgia. And I went to Barnesville on the train to start with, all the way from Arran to Barnsville. There used to be a railroad coming to Arran. . . the train would stop there twice a day. Had a passenger train and a freight train coming in.”

Homer also attended the Arran school. “All the kids went to one school to start with until probably high school. I started school at Arran, went through fifth grade there, then went to Crawfordville and started school. I finished school at Crawfordville. The high school and the old Negro school was all together at that time.”

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92 Betty Green, Wakulla County Historical Society President, Interview by author, 6 September 2005.  
93 Homer Harvey, Interview by author, 21 January 2005, Reichelt Program for Oral History, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida. Conducted as a research assistant for the ARROW project: Apalachicola Regional Resources on the Web.
Homer’s father worked for most of the local sawmills, including the one in Arran. His father was also a seine fisherman, farmer, and cattleman. As a seine fisherman during the busy fall months, Riley Harvey may have even traveled to the nearest seine yards of West Goose Creek, although Homer was unsure if that was the particular fishery or not. What Homer did recall was the family livestock being well fed as an indirect result of his father’s mullet fishing journeys. The seine fishing was intended to catch Mullet, which were in high demand, but the numerous shrimp caught in the nets had little significant market value at the time and so they were scooped up and fed to the hogs and cattle. Refrigeration was not yet accessible and shrimp simply did not do well in the sun and could not take the salting the mullet received. The solution was to feed the shrimp to the farm animals.

Arran’s horizon looked bright by 1918. The population had doubled from 25 to 50 since 1912. By 1925, the population swelled to 200 and the town was advertised in the Florida Gazetteer and Business Directory as having a train depot, a postmaster, four general stores, a dry goods store, two sawmills, a garage, two notary publics, and a turpentine still. 94 Even as far back as 1894, when the railroad arrived, a field book touted the future significance of Arran. “It . . . will, because of its geographical position, become a place of considerable importance.” 95 If the future looked good in 1894, it sounded even better by 1927, when an article in the Tallahassee Daily Democrat heralded the town as “the center of several naval store operations and the cattle business

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95 Leon and Wakulla Counties, Clark Syndicate Companies in Florida, 1893-1894. State Library of Florida
of that section of the country.”

The entire area boomed with turpentine stills from 1910 to the mid 1920s. Naval stores and turpentine stills became a mainstay of Arran industry just as much as lumber and cattle. The turpentine industry was dependent on slash and long leaf yellow pines for their bounty of sap that was harvested, collected, and then distilled and turned into rosin and turpentine. The gummy sap, once processed, was vital to early Florida lifestyles:

The rosin was used to caulk wooden ships and was used in the production of paints and gunpowder as well as fine-tuning the strings on a violin. The turpentine was especially effective for the medical purposes—for sore throats and muscles and also as a disinfectant. In addition, it was used as a thinner for certain kinds of paint. Many an old timer wore a mask soaked in turpentine when around people who were ill during a contagious epidemic.

Many turpentine stills were set up near a water source for distribution and for cooling in the distillation process, but many other stills were isolated and lacked easy transportation. Residents of Arran were fortunate to have a train depot and turpentine still directly across from each other (see map #’s 28 and 23), and the pine forests were nearly in their backyards. A day’s work in the turpentine camps, however, was no easy assignment. More blacks than whites worked as turpentine hands in the field where underbrush had to be hacked away to reach the pines. Cuts were made in the pine trees to collect the sap, and gum was harvested first in cups then in barrels and toted back by horse, mule, or oxen to the main still for processing.

Turpentineing days were long, especially when the sap ran strong in the warmer months, and the pay was not always in cash. Employers offered daily pay, but the pay was often in tokens stamped with the company name and good only at the local commissary, although some nearby stores would honor tokens of neighboring companies. Arran’s commissary in 1936 was located directly behind the still. If a man knew he was soon departing, he could try to spend as much as possible at the store; but traveling and seasonal employees might find themselves with useless tokens once they arrived in another town. Old turpentine and lumber tokens are often found in the extinct camps.

The tokens usually identified a specific product for purchase, such as oysters,

flour, or sugar. Other tokens and cards simply mentioned a monetary value good for in-store merchandise. While the commissary proved limiting in some aspects, in other ways it offered the men a time to socialize and became a center of town activity.

Synthetic products eventually replaced turpentine stills and the products they produced; however, Arran’s community of lumber met an additional fate that contributed to the town’s gradual demise. The 1928 hurricane knocked down so many trees, many people just gave up the business and moved away. Enough trees were knocked down so that “you could almost jump from one log to another without ever touching the ground.”98 Turpentining managed to stay in Arran a little while longer, but the double impact of a highway arriving in 1936 and the railroad discontinuing service in 1947 marked the end of an era in the hopeful town of Arran. The wood buildings vanished and Arran’s residents moved to Crawfordville or surrounding communities. The train tracks from 1894 are now a sand road that vanishes into the distance.

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East Goose Creek or Wakulla Beach

On the shores of Goose Creek Bay in Wakulla County, lie the remains of the old Wakulla Beach Hotel. During high tide, the water’s edge laps within twenty to twenty-five yards of the crumbling foundation. A July trip to the location one week after Hurricane Dennis revealed debris lines where water surge breached well past the structure. Wakulla Beach Road, a two-mile sand road leading from US Route 98 and traveling south past the canopy of Live Oaks where east Goose Creek once flourished, was navigable up to the last quarter mile. From there, mounds of soft debris, of sea grass, leaves, and pine needles piled on top of small branches and limbs, almost made the sand

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99 The Wakulla Beach Hotel on Goose Creek Bay should be differentiated from the Wakulla Hotel that operated during an earlier time period in Newport on the St. Marks River near the Sulfur Spring. The East Goose Creek area is often referred to as Wakulla Beach.
road disappear. If not for the visibility of an elevated house (which turned out to be the
Lewis house—long time residents of the Goose Creek area) in the distance and another
house at an upcoming corner bend, the area was deserted. Return trips have proven that
the area is sometimes more active and busier with people seeking a fishing spot or a boat
ramp for a shallow draft skiff. Clean up after Hurricane Dennis kept many people at
home. The entrance steps to the old hotel, built in the late 1920s, are still easily
recognizable. Fluted cement columns that supported a sunroom above the entranceway
are also quite visible. Pine trees once filled the hollowed space inside the columns.

The builders simply poured cement around the wood. A water pump and piping system
still stands in the floor and sports a modern sanitation system.

Miss Daisy Walker initiated the town of East Goose Creek sometime after June
26, 1915. Daisy was the wife of Senator Henry N. Walker and it was her dream to create
a community situated near the bay. Wakulla County public records show the land located
“in Lot Number One Hundred Twenty (120) of Hartsfield Survey on lands in Wakulla
County Florida, and being the property of Mrs. Daisy A. Walker.”

The selected town existed among a large grove of Live Oaks. The main road was Hotel Avenue—the current Wakulla Beach Road. Other street names included Walker Street, Crawford Street, Hall Street, Lewis Avenue, Hagan Avenue, Culbreath Street, Breckenridge Avenue, and Griscom Avenue.

While Daisy planned the community, her husband, Henry N. Walker, Sr., acted as foreman, overseeing construction on the first hotel. There were actually a series of three hotels built for the town. The first structure was made of wood and sat directly on Hotel Avenue. Henry Walker later converted this hotel into his full-time residence and began a new hotel directly on the water. The life of the second hotel was short-lived. The 1928 hurricane, the same storm that wreaked havoc on Arran’s lumber and turpentine industries, obliterated the Walker’s second attempt as tenured hoteliers. However, the Walkers were undaunted and rebuilt the structure on approximately the same area ravaged by the hurricane. Remnants of an outhouse from the second building were supposedly identifiable in 1993, although a 2005 trip proved unsuccessful at finding any remains from the second resort.

East Goose Creek became a sportsman’s paradise. The Walkers promoted their new area as Walker’s Point and solicited for tourists and hunters. A postcard from the town’s heyday shows three separate photos of men holding up to three geese each while drawings of oranges, sailfish, egrets, and alligators artistically surround a map of Florida. An arrow on the postcard directed visitors to their hunting lodge and in the bottom right they used the following slogan:

The WALKERS
Where the “HONKERS” Spend the Winter
Wakulla Beach, Florida

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101 Ibid
102 Mays Leroy Gray, “Third Hotel Was Famous,” *Wakulla News*, 21 January 1993. The 1993 article states the remains of two outdoor toilets existed 100 feet from the old hotel. This distance is only slightly greater than the trip to the bay. I searched until the brush was too thick. Summer growth may have concealed them.
Senator Henry Walker, Sr., was born in 1868. His friends and associates knew him as an outspoken man who walked the neighborhood in a wide-brimmed hat. Walker was active until shortly before his death in 1958. He owned and operated the *Wakulla Times* for ten years. He became a cattle rancher and his herd roamed throughout the Wakulla Beach area. The barbed wire fence law was not enacted until 1949, so cattle were often seen roaming across the sand roads and even the paved highways. A cow walking down the road was not only common, but also quite normal, and becoming problematic to drivers. The Federal Writer’s Project, conducted in the 1930s under the Works Progress Administration, complied a tour book for Florida during this time period. Each chapter, or tour, offered opening remarks on the area. Tour number fourteen in the Florida Panhandle, which took travelers from Tallahassee through Wakulla and Crawfordville and onto Apalachicola, commented to potential tourists, “Hard-surfac ed roadbed, except for occasional short stretches of improved clay road; watch for cattle along the highway.”

When it came time to dip the cattle (the process of herding livestock through an arsenic solution to rid them of parasites), a former guest of the lodge recalled, “He had a big bunch [of cattle]. He really didn’t know how many he had, and they were wild, and when it was dipping time they had one dickens of a time getting them penned up to dip ‘em.”

In addition to working as newspaper editor and cattle rancher, Mr. Walker organized a local militia in preparation for the Spanish American war, but the Wakulla Home Guard was never called into service. As a Wakulla County teacher, Walker stressed English, Latin, and Algebra.

Walker found his next calling in public service, first as county sheriff, then as a state senator. Walker served Florida’s legislature four times between 1925 and 1939. Walker’s Point and the succession of hotels became a favored spot for some of the lawmakers and statesmen, especially as a hunting lodge. Even those not in politics recalled the abundance of wildlife found in and around East Goose Creek. James Lawhon was 99 years old when he was interviewed in 1993 and he easily remembered the multitude of game. “Those geese would come by the thousands every winter. They’d

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just start along about October and they begin to come. You hear them at night coming over at night and they’d be filling those waters from Carrabelle to St. Marks with geese and ducks.”

A family relative of Henry Walker, who lived in Tallahassee at the time, visited her cousin and his wife Daisy in 1919, when the second of the three hotels, and the first one on the water, was the resort in use. “We spent most of our time at the beach. There was not a paved road in Wakulla County then. There was sand all over. We bogged down a lot—you didn’t go down there from Tallahassee in 30 minutes.”

By the time Henry Walker was in his eighties and the Fence Law ended the days of open range cattle, the senator had turned most of his financial interests over to his youngest son George. An older son, and Henry’s namesake, died unexpectedly while serving in the 1931 session of Florida’s legislature. The family business was left to George. Like his father, George spread his business from cattle and hunting clubs to hotel management and mullet fishing, the last venture developed by George alone.

The entire Goose Creek Bay area, about six miles Southwest of St. Marks, was a recognized salt-work production area and mullet-seine fishery before, during, and after the Civil War. West Goose Creek became the premiere fish yard, while East Goose Creek became better known as a tourist resort; however, East Goose Creek also saw a share of the mullet industry. A flyer from the 1930s advertised both fresh and salted mullet for sale at 5 cents per pound at Wakulla Beach. The fee included loading the mullet onto the patron’s truck. The name at the bottom read Geo. R. Wallace.

A man who worked at Emanuel Raker’s fish yard (Raker fish yards were predominately West Goose Creek and Shell Point) in the Goose Creek area, once made it to the facilities of the second hotel. Emory Evans, who cooked mullet for Emanuel Raker, recalled they had to tote water into the house from a well. A front porch faced the bay side. The Cypress structure was at least three feet above ground, but “There wasn’t no running water, and I don’t believe they even started making toilets and bath tubs and things then. If they did, there wasn’t none in my country at the time that I was there. It

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106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Eddie Page, Images of America: Wakulla County, 91.
was the early 1920s. It was about 1922.”

The second hotel washed away in the 1928 storm and was replaced by the structure still visible today.

One of the legacies of Senator Henry N. Walker, Sr., was his proclivity to create a better highway system in Florida and certainly in Wakulla County. He pushed hard to achieve a paved roadway stretching from Leon County, past Wakulla Springs, through Tiger Hammock (literally named for the numerous big cats and panthers) and terminating in East Goose Creek. Plans were underway when Senator Walker lost his bid for reelection in 1939, the last of his four terms in the legislature. Once Walker was unseated, the roadway project unraveled. His wife Daisy had died three years earlier in her late fifties. Additional plans to expand the town started to fade.

Some of the houses in East Goose Creek and Wakulla Beach are still occupied, but only a few residents remain. Daisy Petty, the granddaughter of Henry and Daisy Walker, named after her grandmother, grew up and lived in the old Walker homesite before moving to Crawfordville. She spent time in the third hotel during its glory days. The hotel had indoor plumbing by the 1930s and had a first-story lobby with a lounge area. “The interior of the hotel was beautifully planned. The rooms had French doors. There was a big water tank down there, and they had a Delco electric generator for lights.”

The third hotel lasted longer than its predecessor, but it, too, had numbered days. The federal government purchased and traded lands in 1931 to initiate a migratory bird sanctuary that eventually transformed into the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, but all the land was not acquired simultaneously, and the refuge is still not contiguous. The primary area is located around the St. Marks Lighthouse and extends from the St. Marks River into neighboring Jefferson County. Additional acquisitions targeted the areas west of the Wakulla River toward Spring Creek. The second unit of the refuge, known as the Wakulla Unit is mostly hardwood hammocks, swamps, and pine flatwoods. Within this area was the land owned by Henry Walker.

Walker’s granddaughter remembered a land swap occurring between her grandfather and the U.S. Wildlife Service sometime after 1949. The town of East Goose Creek and the Wakulla Beach Hotel were turned over to the federal government. Part of the land sale swap, according to Daisy Petty, called for her grandfather to demolish the hotel since the U.S. Wildlife Service did not want the structure on the refuge. “So my grandfather had the old hotel demolished and hauled away, and that was the end of the old hotel.” 113

The demolition was not total, but it was good enough to prevent residency by humans or large animals. The man who three times created the hotel must have found it difficult to order its destruction. The structure that once entertained legislators, hunters, tourists, and even soldiers coming home from World War II was left to be reclaimed by nature.

West Goose Creek

The history of West Goose Creek spans from a pre Civil War salt works era to the 1980s, but the area’s boom period was most notable from 1930 to the mid 1940s when the mullet seine yards swelled with commercial fishermen and social activity. The fifteen-year span also marked the greatest economic contribution of mullet fisheries to the overall economic welfare of Wakulla County. 114

West Goose Creek was a seasonal community that rose and fell with the spawning, or “run,” of the mullet. Permanent houses used on a temporary basis by commercial fishermen were vacant in the spring and summer, but in the fall they sprang back to life with ferocity. Even the men who fished during the run season did not always consider themselves fishermen. Instead, they considered mullet seining a part-time occupation until their main jobs again commenced. In early October, selected men began to arrive and cast large nets in the salt marshes along the shoreline—an area known as the seine yard. The season originally lasted through December. At least ten other seine yards have been identified along the shores of Wakulla County with another four in

114 David Rodenberry, “Historic Seine Fisheries of Wakulla County and Eastern Franklin County Florida,” 2001, 20. Monograph obtained through Wakulla County Historical Society President Betty Green. This report admittedly made some assumptions in calculations since much of the necessary data does not exist, such as separate worth of roe (eggs), mark-up value from wholesale dealers and Franklin County impact. Details from his calculations are available from pages 16-20.
Franklin county and each carries a unique history of ownership, employees, and huge catches of mullet known as “licks.” ¹¹⁵

None of the predominant and historic seine fisheries of Wakulla County are operational today. Individual fishermen may still engage in mullet fishing under contract with a restaurant or marina, but the amount of mullet caught is negligible compared to the take of the seine yard days and all the primary structures have vanished. The commercial aspect of the industry gradually diminished and ultimately became extinct by 1989 through the impacts of more modern conveniences, inclement weather, land purchases, and legislation. Hurricane Kate in 1985, coupled with increased restrictions from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, ultimately proved too difficult an obstacle for West Goose Creek’s continued existence. Willie Spears, an experienced fisherman with over twenty years of management experience at West Goose Creek, attempted to revive the operation after the hurricane, but prevailing federal laws made it too difficult. “They just made it impossible for us to continue what with all the regulations, so we just got out of

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 15.
Figures 23-25 clockwise from upper left. 23. Tumbled brick pillars at West Goose Creek. 24. View from seine yard to bay. 25. Remains of the last West Goose Creek structures from the 1980s. Photos by author.
What remains in 2005 from the West Goose Creek fish yard is the last of the buildings and structures from the last two decades, and even those are washing away.

West Goose Creek, as the name implies, is on the west side of Goose Creek Bay and only ¾ of a mile from East Goose Creek by boat. A journey by car from the east to west location necessitates a six-mile trip back to U.S. Highway 98 followed by a southward journey on County Road 367 and 367A to an unmarked and overgrown dirt road on St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge property. The hike is easier and much shorter than the three-mile trek to Port Leon (also within National Refuge lands), but the underbrush is thicker here and mosquitoes swarmed from tall grasses enough to make a quail hunter ecstatic—if mosquitoes had only been quail. Jeans, a cotton shirt, and a full can of 23% DEET failed to offer full protection, but once the bay is reached the problem subsides considerably with a light breeze. Fishermen often burned fires even on humid evenings—the heat, smoke, and draft of the fires was preferable to the insects and aided in keeping away the bloodthirsty creatures. Since access to the area is now limited because the refuge owns the land and the insects are just too anxious to see humans, the best method of viewing the area is certainly by boat.

The earliest history of the entire Goose Creek Bay area as a mullet seine yard dates back to an antebellum period when salt production was prolific along the coast. Salt production was more complicated than just boiling salt water—which was produced was a yellow salt unsuitable for curing meat. More complicated salt works were required to produce the white salt necessary for preservation. Salt was so vital to early Florida lifestyles that a Union captain of the U.S.S. Tahoma ordered his soldiers to destroy all the salt operations along and near the St. Marks River in 1864. The intended result was to cut off food production to the Confederates. The Union raid at Goose Creek and Shell Point confiscated company books that showed a daily salt production of 4,800 bushels valued at $12.50 per bushel. During the raid “the troops had also destroyed seine

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yards, tools, cattle, mules, and captured quantities of food and supplies. The economic loss of the entire assault along the coast was valued at about two million dollars. The Union mission had successfully destroyed literally hundreds of kettles and brick furnaces along with dozens of sheet-iron boilers used to refine the salt. Piles of brick rubble and shards of blasted kettles may still be found today.

By the 1870s, Goose Creek was back in business as evidenced by a federally commissioned report known as the Goode Report. The Wakulla section of the report included “two seining stations and one gill net station at Goose Creek.” From this premiere report on Goose Creek as a thriving fishery, West Goose Creek repeatedly appears in journals, newspapers, and publications as a prime location to catch and buy mullet.

Daniel Ladd, the Newport entrepreneur, owned the Goose Creek fishery for a brief time in 1857 before turning it over for a small profit to Mrs. M.A. Gilchrist. The consummate businessman was distressed when the buyer still owed a remaining $288.00 from the original purchase price three years later. Daniel Ladd’s agency in West Goose Creek existed well before the Goode Report, but his involvement lends credibility to the area’s significance. If a product or a place could be bought and sold for profit, Ladd was involved. West Goose Creek was producing so many mullet that Ladd opened a cooperage to make cypress barrels for transportation of the mullet.

The popularity of West Goose Creek continued to increase over the decades. During every fall run season when the mullet developed a good layer of white fat and the females were heavy with red roe and schools of mullet numbered in the tens of thousands, people would flock to the West Goose Creek site in a frenzied mass much like the mullet they were seeking to take home. The fishermen who caught mullet in seine

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119 Ibid, 12
120 It is against the law to remove artifacts from federally protected lands. Photographs are permissible.
121 Edward L. Page, Jr. “A Short History of the West Goose Creek Seine Yard” Apalachee, Vol. XI (1991-1996), 11; David Rodenberry, “Historic Seine Fisheries of Wakulla County and Eastern Franklin County Florida,” 2001, 2. Both these sources refer to two seine yards, but there is some question as to whether East Goose Creek is indeed the premier second yard. We do know that some mullet fishing occurred at East Goose Creek from the handbill of George Walker; however, it may not have been the one mentioned in 1879-80 and it was never the showcase of fisheries like WGC. Therefore East Goose Creek received the definition of resort Ghost town and West Goose Creek is the seine yard ghost town.
nets along the shore created a festival atmosphere, especially once the lookout man, or striker, spotted a good school of mullet with “right eye to shore.” A striker kept lookout for a mullet run while seated on an elevated platform. Some men were in skiff boats while others waded in the water holding the lead line to bottom while corks kept up the netting. They stood as a team in a half arc from shore to shoal and waited to strike and scoop up potentially thousands of fish. The largest single catch, or lick, ever recorded at West Goose Creek was 34,000 pounds of fish in the 1980s.

Men who wanted to be successful in seine fishing had to have patience. They could go hours or an entire day without a catch. The men could also haul in three loads and thousands of pounds in one day. When a school was spotted everything changed. The bleak faces of the crew suddenly lit up like a Christmas tree and the entire “world turned to mullet.” The black vegetarian fish that is fed on by porpoises, pelicans, eagles, osprey, alligators, most fish in the ocean, cormorants, seagulls, and humans has held, and continues to hold, a special fascination for those who seek to catch them. It fires me up every time, no matter how many times I’ve done it. Mullet so thick that a dozen jump over the staff when it hits the water. Mullet so thick that they’re beating the sides of the boat like a drum when you’re winding ‘em down. . .Fish so thick that they jump in the boat. Fish so thick that they hit you in the back, the head, you have to dodge ‘em to keep ‘em out of your face. So many fish, that some primordial instinct takes over and a sound, a whoop, a yell comes from somewhere deep inside; a sound you can’t duplicate under controlled and civilized circumstance.

The fish were hauled in and sold on the spot to the waiting throng “where the crowd was sometimes 300 to 400 people” lined up along the road leading to the station. The fish were split and salted on wooden tables and placed in barrels ready to be toted back by wagon, and then by automobile, to Tallahassee and South Georgia. The fish were placed on hand-shaved ice shipped in block form from the capital when available. Families made campsites under the live oaks while they waited for their own

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123 David Rodenberry, “Historic Seine Fisheries of Wakulla County and Eastern Franklin County Florida,” 2001, 7. Mullet travel the coast from east to west with “right eye to shore.”
125 Leo Lovell, Spring Creek Chronicles: Stories of Commercial Fishin’, huntin’, workin’ and people along the North Florida Gulf Coast (Spring Creek, Florida: Spring Creek Restaurant, 2000), 11,17.
batch of fresh fish. Sometimes the campsites, cookhouse, and fish stations took on a air of decadence as patrons turned their excursions into a weekend revelry aimed more at lawlessness than a food festival and business transaction. During the earlier part of the twentieth century, many parents packed up their children and made a family vacation out of traveling by wagon from Georgia to West Goose Creek and camping along the way in pursuit of cheap and nutrient rich bulk food in the form of black mullet.  

The price of mullet by 1954 ranged from 7 to 10 cents per pound. The scant operational records for expenditures and profits in the surrounding years seem to indicate the business was barely self-sustaining. Omission of profits from the many on-site sales and fish fries probably added significant revenues as suggested by historian David Rodenberry, but the job was seasonal and success never guaranteed. Crewmen were grateful for the $15 to $25 monthly salary they earned in the 1940s. By 1955, the average monthly pay was raised to about $150 a month.

The operational procedures at the West Goose Creek seine yard began a dramatic change in 1938 when owners Bert and Daisy Thomas sold 380 acres of their Goose Creek land to the federal government for the St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge. The transactions included a stipulation for a special twenty year commercial fishing lease agreement that ultimately went to George Nesmith and later a partner, Dalton Raker. The government ran a yearly lease after the initial term expired. Nesmith’s tenure in the fish yards would last 26 years and the Raker family witnessed several generations in the business.

In 1947, the Florida legislature implemented another change that affected both the seine and gillnet industries. The stationary seine nets and the mobile and deeper water gillnets were mandated to observe a fishing moratorium for a forty-day period from December through January. This was the beginning of a multitude of legislative changes that owners and managers of the local seine yards fought as long as possible. In

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the last decades of the site’s existence, the company was required to carry $200,000 worth of personal injury insurance, install bathrooms and tables, and discontinue allowing campers on the premises as they had done for over sixty years.\textsuperscript{131}

Modernity was also altering the way seine fishing was conducted. Lighter nylon nets required less manpower than heavy cotton nets, and redesigned and motorized shallow draft boats could be operated with fewer people. Refrigeration and packaged goods also decreased the demand for fresh mullet. One of the huge attractions of West Goose Creek had always been the sociability of the fish fries and the on-site retail sales, but that, too, was waning by the 1950s as a service economy started to compete with an agricultural economy.

By the late 1970s, only three of the eleven Wakulla County seine yards were operational: West Goose Creek, Shell Point, and Bottoms. West Goose Creek maintained the most elaborate facilities at this time, but Hurricane Kate in 1985 effectively put an end to structures from the 1960s. The fish yard functioned for only a little over one more year before it closed up shop forever, and by 1989 the last two remaining areas closed.

The older men still alive from the rein of the seine yard days are bitter over government legislation that they believe forced them out of business. Additional laws passed and amended both before and after the area became a ghost town included more restrictions on hours of operation and length of season. The footage of the seine and gill net changed along with the size of the openings on the net. The hurricane coupled with laws on both a state and federal level helped drive West Ghost Creek into extinction.

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Arran depended on a constant source of lumber and labor for survival, especially during the town’s boom time in the early 1900s. The first families of Arran mainly farmed. The agrarian economy expanded to include Turpentineing and sawmills. The labor pool of Arran attracted a fair amount of migrant workers who established only a temporary residency in a still growing town. The population of Arran, therefore, never

contained a significant proportion of local political leaders to lobby for, and sustain, growth. Their representative reliance was on other political figures at the county or state level. Permanent residents occupied their time with livestock, construction, and daily farm responsibilities.

Arran retained notoriety until after World War II when Crawfordville surpassed the faded railroad stop as a population center: but why Crawfordville? Crawfordville had something Arran lacked: strong politicians in high offices. Dr. John Crawford moved to Wakulla County in 1845 and almost immediately began his tenure in the Florida legislature. By 1866, Dr. Crawford commanded enough recognition to have the county seat moved to Crawfordville and named in his honor. Dr. Crawford moved from the Florida House to the senate and continued to serve in the capacity of Florida’s Secretary of State for over twenty years. The cabinet seat once held by the father passed immediately to his son, Henry Clay Crawford, when he died. No election, no votes. Governor Jennings handed the secretarial reigns to Henry Crawford at 46 years of age and Henry held the post for 27 years until he died in 1929. Arran had no such person of power to represent his or her town. The symbolism of power, state, and government all resided in the Crawfords, and the town reaped the benefits. Arran did sustain damage from the 1928 hurricane, but greater influences than weather led to Arran’s disappearance: the introduction of a paved highway, discontinuation of the rail hub, and decisions made by neighboring town officials. Arran barely stood a chance of survival or recognition compared to the political clout heaped on Crawfordville.

If Arran suffered from a lack of representational power, East Goose Creek might have suffered from too much power. The entire strength of the town seemed to lie in the hands of Henry and Daisy Walker. Henry Walker served in the Florida legislature four times and used all his possible strength to secure a paved roadway into East Goose Creek while he lobbied for a more modern roadway system throughout Florida. The plan might have worked, but Daisy died and Henry lost his reelection bid. No one was left to carry on the initiations of the town founders. Walker also twice built a hotel on land ravaged by hurricanes and his insistence on building in an area repeatedly damaged by tropical cyclones is an example of man’s agency in the demise of towns rather than simple attribution to weather. The federal government would have a much harder time
attempting to buy a boom town in the height of success than to solicit land from a town already feeling the winds of decay.

The decline of West Goose Creek is a more contemporary event, occurring in the 1980s. Local, independent, commercial fisherman lost the ability to maintain their livelihoods as federal and state legislation brought their industry to a standstill. The select local commercial fishermen of Goose Creek believe the laws are weighted in favor of the sports fishermen, while the occasional weekend hunters believe only commercial men overfish the waters. The popularity of fresh mullet declined with the availability of refrigeration and supermarkets, but a demand for mullet and weekend rendezvous still pervaded the area when legislation found no room for the small enterprising fish houses and their advocates.
LEVY COUNTY IN WHITE AND BLACK: CEDAR KEY AND ROSEWOOD

Cedar Key is a second-tiered ghost town when classified and compared with the villages studied in Wakulla County. The once thriving nineteenth-century shipping port remains the most populated area of this paper’s selected sites. However, as mentioned in the introduction, Cedar Key’s boom-to-bust lumber, pencil, and fishing industries, along with the increases and decreases in population, allow its inclusion as a Florida Gulf Coast ghost town. Additionally, parts of the original town of Cedar Key established on Atsena Otie Key were totally abandoned after a hurricane struck the islands in 1896. The town reemerged only on nearby Way Key, where a good portion of the business section had previously existed, but the pencil factories never returned. The population dropped to less than half its previous number of residents within several years.132

Just nine miles to the northeast of Cedar Key is the ghost town of Rosewood. Rosewood’s heyday corresponds with Cedar Key’s, from the 1870s to the 1890s and then to the town of Sumner after Cedar Key’s decline. The little town emerged when Florida became a state. It evolved into primarily a black community after the turn of the century. Residents mostly worked as self-sufficient farmers, or laborers to the nearby sawmills and turpentine operations. Both towns survived into the twentieth century, but the railroad stop once called Palmetto was obliterated during the “Rosewood Massacre” race riot in 1923.133 Nothing much remains of Rosewood today. A trip down the sandy side roads of Rosewood in 2000 revealed just a few mobile homes occupied now by whites and several more solid structures. A rather ominous reminder of past history was observed on a leaning road sign that enforced “No shooting from Road.” The sign was riddled with bullet holes. There are no black people in Rosewood today. Even Cedar Key, with 790 inhabitants in 2000, claimed only one black resident.134


Rosewood as a ghost town is dependent on the history of Cedar Key, and the histories of both cities are forever tied to race relations. The town of Cedar Key is currently undergoing a revival as an art and tourist community; however, the whistle stop setting of Rosewood never recovered.

The city of Sumner was even more directly linked to the white and black history of Rosewood; however, Sumner, like Rosewood, was dependent on the port of Cedar Key and Cedar Key residents were involved with the Rosewood racial violence. Sumner still exists.

Figure 26. Photograph taken near the extinct city of Rosewood during the spring of 2000. Photo by author.
Indians inhabited the Cedar Keys long before Europeans arrived. Shell mounds located throughout the numerous keys suggest occupation by the Weeden Island Indian Culture more than 2500 years ago. Archeologists discovered copious amounts of Indian artifacts during one of the construction periods of the Cross Florida Barge Canal in the 1930s. The Atlantic-Gulf Canal was supposed to exit into the Gulf of Mexico south of Cedar Key, but the route traversed other parts of Levy County and surrounding areas and

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so brought the topic of historical Indian preservation into the forefront. Shell Mound and Hog Island are located 6 miles northwest of Cedar Key.  

Creeks and Seminole Indians later occupied the same areas. Early Florida settlers during territorial days had growing concerns about the Seminole Indians. The Treaty of Moultrie, which moved Florida Indians inland and to the south, was superseded by the Treaty of Payne’s Landing in 1832. This time, though, the move was actually a total removal to the west and many Indians resisted; the Second Seminole War began in 1835. Forts sprang up all over Florida as pioneers competed with the Indians for land and chastised the Native Americans for harboring their slave property. General Zachary Taylor established and occupied a military post on Atsena Otie Island in 1839. A second commander added a hospital to the outpost the following year. Cedar Key served as a depot through the rest of the war in 1842, although this was certainly no boom period for Cedar Key. However, this time period does provide documentation of the abundant natural resources found along the shores and in the bay areas of the greater Cedar Key region.

Lieutenant Henry Prince led a scouting expedition along the Waccasassa River in 1841. His regiment traversed miles of swampland in search of Indian hideouts. The 44 men under his command were often sick with fevers and chills. In a letter to Major Samuel Cooper, Prince described a “Cypress swamp so deep that my men were obliged to carry their cartridge boxes around their necks.” His quest for Indians only turned up “foot and shoe tracks” that continually disappeared into the water. His letter described Otter Creek, Fort Jennings, rough palmettos and underbrush, and miles upon miles of cypress swamp and hammock. The July journey also brought the men frequent

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137 Levy County Journal, “Interesting Relics Are Dug From Island Near Cedar Key Recently,” 7 January 1932; Polk County Record, “Engineers Not to Overlook Relics While Excavating,” 11 October 1935; Florida Times Union, 29 January 1932.

138 The term “Seminole” should be recognized as a European and Americanized phrase to place all separate Indian tribes under a common umbrella, when in fact there were several tribes known as Seminoles.

139 The Cedar Keys are made up of at least a dozen main keys as identified in both the Florida Atlas and Gazetteer, 2002 and the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge Brochure, 2004. The main area of Cedar Key usually refers to either Atsena Otie Key or Way Key, where the town now exists.

encounters with “muskittos.” That particular journey never turned up any Indians. Instead, the expedition served as testament to the plentiful cypress trees that would be milled along with the area’s cedar trees in the coming sawmill-and-pencil-factory boom years.

An entrepreneur who made earlier voyages up and down the west coast of Florida had been eyeing the Cedar Key Islands for possible development. Augustus Steele, the former newspaper publisher from Magnolia, Florida, had relocated to the Tampa region after his paper went bankrupt. Steele reinvented himself in Tampa: he gained political notoriety, published another paper, and speculated in real estate. Steele purchased for $277 the army buildings and the entire island of Atsena Otie Key (known then as Depot Key) not long after the official ending of the Second Seminole War. By 1850, Judge Steele was a member of the Florida legislature from Levy County, where he resided with his wife Elizabeth and his four-year-old daughter Augusta. Steele hoped to establish a resort community on the island.

Another politician also had his sights on Cedar Key in the 1840s. David Levy Yulee, one of Florida’s first two United States Senators and the first Jewish senator in the country’s history, envisioned Cedar Key as the terminus for his cross-Florida Railroad. David Levy Yulee’s background is fantastic even if the story has reached exaggerated proportions. His father, Moses, was born into a Moroccan harem to Rachel Levy and the Sultan’s Grand Vizier, Jacoub ben Youli. Rachel and Moses escaped the sultan and lived in the West Indies. Moses married while on the island of Saint Thomas and had a son named David Levy in 1810. The family soon decided to move to Florida, where Moses obtained a Spanish land grant in the present day Ocala National Forest. Once in Florida, David Levy prospered. He purchased land and became active in politics. At the age of 28, David Levy attended Florida’s first constitutional

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{Charles C. Fishburne, Jr.,} \text{ The End of the Line: Cedar Keys} \text{ (Cedar Key, Florida: Sea Hawk Publications), 1982, 4-5.}\]
\[\text{United States Census, 1850.}\]
Levy’s charisma and charm proved beneficial in the political arena. He served twice as a territorial delegate, and when Florida became a state in 1845 he was elected to the seat of United States Senator. Levy County, formed in 1845, was named in his honor. The young senator entered politics with the name of David Levy, but he soon formally added the surname Yulee through an act of the state legislature.

Yulee believed a rail route from the Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico would make Florida an international shipping and railway state. The line would extend from Amelia Island and Fernandina in the east to Cedar Key and Atsena Otie Key in the west. His plans included the purchase of shipping fleets on either side of the railway that would extend his transit line from New Orleans to New York. Yulee chose Cedar Key because of its deepwater port, its closer proximity to New Orleans than Tampa, and its more convenient location to his newly purchased land and home near the Homosassa River. Senator Yulee used his political clout to assure federal lawmakers that his selected route was the best choice; however, a growing consensus of members wanted the western location in Tampa and not Cedar Key. Augustus Steel had meanwhile influenced state legislators to issue a charter for the railroad, but the terminus debate forced an amended charter stipulating a primary Tampa terminal with a Cedar Key spur line. Yulee publicly accepted the amended charter, but the first term senator secretly eschewed the Tampa mandate and proceeded with plans toward Cedar Key first: toward his home, his land, and his sugar plantation just a little further south. His reelection bid did not go well. “The controversy over the railroad route cost Yulee his senate seat in 1850, but he made a political comeback in 1854.” 147 Yulee served the length of his second term.

During Yulee’s political hiatus, he remained president of the Florida Railroad Company and worked on securing lands and right of way for the railroad. Back in office, Yulee continued to push forward with construction. Yulee, as president of the Railroad Company, and Joseph Finegan, as head of the construction company, signed papers in Jacksonville, Florida in June of 1855 for railroad construction. The entire process of building the railroad had been fraught with numerous false starts and unfinished

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contracts. The 1855 contract was simply another course of development. Florida’s legislature had approved the structural progress during the most recent general assembly in order “to provide for and encourage a liberal system of internal improvements in this state.” 148 This contract did not omit the very necessary item of specifying Finegan & Company to provide for locomotives, passenger, and freight cars for the route as Richard Keith Call had neglected to do on his line to Port Leon. The financial arrangements of the contract called for construction not to exceed predetermined amounts: depot buildings, not more than $10,000; a single mile of railroad, not more than $20,000 (with $10,000 secured through bonds); and the bridges from land to island, not more than $100,000 each. 149 Yulee struggled constantly in securing money for the new line, and at one point he acquired a loan by borrowing against some of his own railroad land and slaves on his sugar plantation.

As the railroad took shape, a small town grew and prospered on Atsena Otie Key. A few residents moved onto the island and established wharves and warehouses. Similar development took place on Way Key. The partnership of Augustus Steele and David Yulee is seen again in the development of post offices and postmaster assignments in the greater Cedar Key area. Senator Yulee was chairman of the Committee on Post Office and Post Roads and secured several mail routes along his rail line. 150 Augustus Steele served as postmaster when the first post office opened on Atsena Otie Key and even renamed the island Cedar Key for a brief period. By 1852 the post office moved to Way Key and Atsena Otie became the official name for the island southwest of the larger main island. 151 Both islands had begun to prosper.

“Atsena Otie,” the Creek word for Cedar Island, had captured the attention of northern capitalists including Eberhard Faber. In 1855, the leading pencil manufacturer purchased large tracts of land just south of Cedar Key in the area of Gulf Hammock: the same area surveyed by Lieutenant Prince in the 1840s. Soon, the company would build a

148 Florida Railroad Company Papers, written by the secretary of the Florida Railroad Company, 18 June 1855, Special Collections, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Box 146, Item 9.
149 Ibid.
mill on Atsena Otie Key and begin depleting the trees at a record-breaking pace. The Eagle Pencil Company would follow the successful path of Faber and situate itself on nearby Way Key; but before the boom days of Cedar Key occurred, two other events needed to transpire: the completion of the railroad, and the Civil War.

The Cedar Key Train Depot opened on Way Key on March 1, 1861. The Civil War began at Fort Sumter the following month. The Florida Railroad barely had time to begin operations before Union ships gained control of the islands. Federals first took over the lighthouse on Seahorse Key, then proceeded to storm Atsena Otie Key, and finally controlled the downtown area of Cedar Key. Troops destroyed salt works, burned buildings to the ground, and frequently took part in local raids for prisoners, cattle, and other livestock. By 1864, Union forces, including some colored infantry, claimed Cedar Key as a headquarter location. The growth of Cedar Key came to an abrupt halt.

One of the Union raiding parties captured William Yearty, a man of at least 70, who worked as a farmer in the neighboring mainland village of Sumner. Federals marched their prisoners, including the area’s only physician, Dr. James Howard, and Charley Howard, Matt Cannon, and William Yearty back to a prison camp set up on Cedar Key. Yearty’s two sons, Jacob and Bill, were away from home, fighting in the war, but his only daughter, Meriah, went in search of her father. When she reached the Confederate stronghold Meriah “used some strategy by making love to the commander” in order to secure the release of her father. Meriah married the commander and had a son named Thomas, but she would never live to see her son grow up. Meriah died near the end of the war and William Yearty adopted his grandson. Some townspeople believed Meriah was poisoned by her husband because he had another wife back home and needed to unburden himself of double domesticity. Meriah had insisted on traveling back to New York with her husband and child, and she soon died of unknown causes one night after supper. Meriah is buried on Seahorse Key.

William S. Yearty III recorded three generations of Yearty family history in and around the Cedar Key region during the first half of the twentieth century. The Yearty genealogy may at first seem a little confusing since the grandfather, the father, and the grandson were all named William Yearty, but the father was usually known as Bill. For clarification in this paper, the oldest Yearty discussed will now be referred to as Grandfather Yearty, his son—the second William Yearty—as Bill Yearty, and the grandson and journalist as William Yearty. The youngest, William Yearty, was the man who witnessed the boom time of Cedar Key and worked in the mills and factories.

Jacob Yearty died in battle, but Bill Yearty returned from the war to start a family. Bill Yearty had fought in over a dozen Civil War skirmishes including Chickamauga and Oulstee. Bill married Felicia Worthington and within a few years moved away from Sumner, Florida, to Cedar Key, where he “ran the ferry boat from Way Key, now Cedar Key to Atsiniota (sic), the island south of the dock.” Bill and Felicia called Cedar Key home intermittently throughout their lives in Levy County.

![Yearty Family Tree](image)

Figure 28. Yearty Family Tree, Illustrated from Yearty Papers, UF Special Collections

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154 Ibid.
Figure 29. Cedar Key docks with railroad visible on far left. Circa early 1900s. Photo: State of Florida Photographic Collection

Figure 30. Remains of old Cedar Key railroad into Cedar Key. This location is closer to the mainland than the railroad in figure 29. Spring, 2000. Photo by author.
With the war over, Cedar Key once again started to prosper. Way Key became the center of Cedar Key proper and Atsena Otie maintained a subservient role to the larger island. Cedar Key was incorporated under Florida law in 1869. The town essentially moved from the outer island to Way Key after the war. New owners of The Florida Railroad, so badly damaged in the Civil War, fully reconstructed the line into Cedar Key. David Yulee was jailed for a brief time on grounds of treason, but was later released at the request of General Grant. Some evidence suggests that Yulee did try to play both the North and the South while he was still a United States senator and the war drew near; however, he flatly refused to disassemble his rails for use in Georgia, a request made after secession by Florida Governor John Milton. Whether his refusal was due to a disagreement of principles or simply to save his personal investments is speculation, but the majority of Yulee’s efforts always focused on a successful railroad. The new company retained David Yulee as board member and railroad landowner. By 1869 the railroad charged $11.00 for a trip across the peninsula. The corporation then called the railroad operation the The Atlantic, Gulf, and West India Transit Company. Cedar Key, like many other areas of the post Civil War South, witnessed a rise in black politicians and voters during Reconstruction. Just over half of the registered voters in 1873 were black and the town elected a black police chief and two black councilmen. Black equality, however, was short lived. White southern democrats again began to take control and a white mayor was elected in 1875. Mayor Hale replaced black appointed officials wherever possible. Black residents quickly lost political ground but did maintain a population of up to 37-percent in Cedar Key up through the early twentieth century. Freedmen found work on the railroad and both whites and blacks were employed in the timber, sawmill, and turpentine industries. Fishing reached new market heights and the docks on both Atsena Otie and Way Key were packed with steamers, passengers, cargoes, and stevedores. The city council lifted license fees for the oyster, fish, and turtle businesses to encourage expansion. Green sea turtles could be kept alive for extended durations on their way to New York and both the meat and the eggs were considered

\[\text{155} \text{ Thomas R. Dye, “Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Economic Development,” 34.} \]
\[\text{156} \text{ “Yulee Railroad Days,”< www.yuleerrailroadays.org > (1 October 2005).} \]
\[\text{157} \text{ Jesse Walter Dees Jr. and Vivian Dees, Off the Beaten Path, 55.} \]
\[\text{158} \text{ Thomas R. Dye, “Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Economic Development,” 40, 12.} \]
excellent table fare. Bill and William Yearty fished the areas of Shell Mound and Live Oak Island to the northwest and northeast of Cedar Key. Wagonloads of families came for the fresh mullet, just the same as their counterparts in West Goose Creek. “On one occasion we had wagons wanting 5000 fish and there were no fish,” but the local men knew the fish would soon appear. By the next evening mullet covering over an acre were spotted coming out of Dennis Creek as they looked toward Cedar Key. The fishing party claimed a total of over 6,300 fish. 159

The forest was the biggest new commodity. William Yearty was just a small boy in the mid 1880s, but he remembered the sights and scenery of the lumber industry.

Quite a number of people back just after the war made their living cutting cedar in Gulf Hammock; Otter Creek, and Rosewood were the two stations on the railroad where they sold it. Tom Yearty bought at Otter Creek and a Jew by the name of Jacobs at Rosewood. I have seen cedar logs in piles on each side of the track two hundred yards long and eight feet high. The cutters would use oxen and wagon to take it to the buyer . . . some cutters would go in the hammock make up lots, build palmetto camp and haul their logs to a landing on some of the creeks raft it and take it to the mills, saving railroad freight 160

Families involved with the lumber industry stood a better chance of surviving the economic hardships in the post-war south. “Timber cutters made from $20 to $30 per

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160 Ibid.
month with the best pay being offered in the cedar swamps around Cedar Key. The lumber business generally prospered after the war despite slumps in 1867 and 1873."

The Eberhard Faber Company owned huge tracts of Cypress and Cedar swamp in Gulf Hammock even before the boom time, but laborers simply cut the trees and shipped timber back to Faber’s company in New York prior to the existence of a factory on Atsena Otie Key. After the Civil War, Eberhard Faber increased its profits through the construction of a pencil mill in Florida. The Eagle Pencil Company appeared in the late 1870s to compete with Eberhard Faber and was even larger than the Eberhard Company. F.A. Wolfe and Co. rounded out the three heavyweight champions of timber cutting and pencil manufacturing on and around the Cedar Key islands and nearby hammocks.

A majority of the land in Cedar Key was owned by the Florida Town Improvement Company—the company that controlled the Florida railroad lands. Builders, storeowners, and manufacturers often found themselves leasing or buying land from a company owned by David Yulee and managed by Edward Lutterloh. When Lutterloh became Mayor, there was an obvious conflict of interest between his desires (and Yulee) and those of Cedar Key residents. The goals of one did not necessarily coincide with the desires of the others; Lutterloh eventually stepped down, but continued to manage the partnership and practice law. The Eagle Company bought land from the Florida Town Improvement Company and bought up entire downtown blocks between 1877 and 1885. Block 19 bordered the west side of the island, where rafts brought the freshly cut cedar. The offices faced east. Eagle purchased additional lots on nearby keys and land on the mainland.

When historian Floyd Monk researched Cedar Key in the late ’fifties, he sent letters of inquiry to numerous officials and presidents of companies to find out about the origins and workings of Eagle. A domino-effect of inquiries eventually led once again to William S. Yearty. William Yearty observed much of the cedar slat mill operations as a young boy in the early 1890s. Yearty described how the cedar logs were floated on rafts

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made of cabbage palm logs and “a raft was about 150 foot and 50 feet wide.” The company employed more than 125 people including women and teenage girls who graded the cedar slats. Sawing of the block wood was done on the upper floor and the “slats average width was 2 to 2 ½ inches wide, length that of a pencil.” Yearty also recalled “piles of cedar logs 20 feet high that covered an acre or more.” This number is an increase from Yearty’s last statement of 8 feet high, but the difference is between a pile of logs at a railway depot awaiting sale or transportation to the sawmill versus piles of logs at the actual mill. The height of logs would likely be greater at the final destination and place of manufacture.

The pencil companies often lobbied together to protest increased property tax assessments. Eagle Pencil Company petitioned for and received clearance to construct a tramway on prime downtown lots “for the purpose of landing and measuring Cedar and other logs” as long as other wheeled vehicles could still pass. Town council members usually acquiesced during the boom time. The Faber Company was actually on Atena Otie Key but still owned land in Cedar Key. All of the pencil companies wanted as much freedom as possible to attain industry supremacy. Unification was only for specific needs. During other times the companies were quite possessive over their time and resources. An Eberhard Faber Announcement in the Cedar Key Commercial of 1890 warned people to stay away from logs marked with the “E.F.” Brand. “All persons not authorized are cautioned against handling cedar branded as above, W.F. Clough, Agent.” Presumably some unscrupulous cutters might try to lighten their own workload and increase their pay by picking up logs from a nearby raft and claiming them as their own.

Correspondents from big city newspapers and journals, such as New Orleans, usually wrote glowing editorials about Cedar Key and forecasted only good news in the boom years. “Its importance as a business port, and its beautiful and healthful location are beginning to attract considerable attention. Numerous stores and residences are growing up rapidly, no less than thirty-five new buildings being in process of

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164 Ibid.
165 Ibid
167 Faber’s Cedar Mill Collection, Special Collections, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Box 146
erection.” Promotions for the healthy atmosphere of Cedar Key might have been a little overrated. Yellow fever epidemics mandated the construction of an infirmary on Snake Key to quarantine people suspected of carrying the disease, although this concern was common to most port cities intent on adhering to the law. Cedar Key, however, did not always follow the law. A visit by the United States Surgeon General proposed federal oversight for quarantine procedures, but action was never taken. Authorities in Jacksonville were so appalled by the unsanitary conditions of Cedar Key and their lack of an enforced quarantine, that the city “invoked a land quarantine against the place” until the situation was rectified. The quarantine was lifted by 1880 and sanitary conditions improved.

The 1870s and the 1880s were Cedar Key’s glory days: gas lamps graced the streets, fire wagons preserved property, churches and schools flourished for both black and white citizens. William Yearty attended school in Cedar Key and recalled moments of his education when he could ‘show-off’ to the ladies. The children recited speeches every Friday evening. Some of William’s favorite speeches provide evidence of the variety of cure-alls and medicines so prevalent at the time.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am Dr. Puff Stuff, the Great and Mighty Physician of Hyan Kyan. I left that country and came to this which may be reconed one of the greatest events that ever happened to humanity for I have brought with me the following inestimable never to be matched remedies. The first is called the great Perrymaudno whap skinum from whaug de whaug whaug one drop of which if injected in your gums if you should happen to loose your teeth will cause new set to sprout like mushrooms from a hot bed. . . 

Yearty’s speeches were such a hit that children told their parents and one girl gave a party in honor of William. However, plenty of the speeches were full of racial slurs and epithets. The racial tensions were so volatile that the question of whether William was being honored for his oratory skills or the content of his speeches is difficult to discern. William might have been young enough just to be content with pleasing his teacher and fellow students, but he was still repeating what he heard at home and around the sawmills.

168 Faber’s Cedar Mill Collection, Special Collections, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Box 146; New Orleans Journal of Commerce, 29 January 1884.
170 William S. Yearty papers.
and businesses of the town. He had, with or without his knowledge, contributed to the increasing stress between the races.

Cedar Key held the status as premier port on the Gulf Coast for at least two decades, but a rival appeared in the mid 1880s in the person of Henry Plant, along with his railroad, and the location of Tampa. Henry Plant absorbed rail lines in need of refinancing and built his own lines with resorts dotted along the way. The Plant System, soon to become the Plant Investment Company, acquired the Atlantic Coast Line and the Florida Transit and Peninsular Railroad that included many parts of the original Yulee line. The Plant Empire ran from the northeastern coast of Florida to Tampa. Henry Plant considered building Cedar Key into his dream destination and approached David Yulee about such prospects, but a deal never materialized. When Plant later assessed ownership records in his network of east coast tracks, he realized all but the Cedar Key spur had been purchased. Plant again attempted to buy the remaining spur line and a small plot of land in Cedar Key, but was too frustrated when landowners repeatedly raised the price on him. Instead, Henry Plant’s railroad arrived in Tampa in 1884 to a population of only 800, compared to a population of approximately 1,800 in Cedar Key. Plant owned steamers that traveled around Florida and recognized Cedar Key as a busy port ready for development but was denied access to the island. Many people speculated that Cedar Key could have been a continuous boom town if not for Plant’s investment in Tampa. But Cedar Key—especially David Yulee and his following land development company and their owners—never welcomed Plant’s advances. Yulee died in 1886 and never saw the decline of his port town on the west coast.

Tampa grew fast. By 1890 the city counted 6,000 residents. Meanwhile, the town of Cedar Key’s population plateaued for a few years and then shrank by 20 people. The downward spiral had commenced, but other events besides Plant’s new southern city contributed to Cedar Key’s decline. The pencil factories were stripping the land bare and less and less work was found. Advertisements by the town in the Florida Times Union

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171 Jesse Walter Dees Jr. and Vivian Dees, Off the Beaten Path, 47.
172 Mark Derr, Some Kind of Paradise, 103; Charles Fishburne, The Cedar Keys in the 19th Century, chart, 149. Population figures are for 1,458 people in Cedar Key in 1880 to 1,887 people in 1885, so the 1884 figure is an estimate, but still substantially larger than Tampa at 800.
stated “Much land besides town lots is unoccupied and for sale.” Legal documents from elected officials started to use the term “town” rather than “city,” and businesses requested lower tax assessments on property. Council members tried to attract new industries. An ominous portion of the Florida Times Union ad hoped to entice new businesses by touting the success of all three pencil factories. “Suppose the three factories consume say 300 logs a day—100,000 logs a year. . . this makes 1,157,000 miles of lead pencils annually—enough to go around the earth lengthwise, more than forty eight times. In ten years, laid longitudinally, they would build a corduroy road around the globe forty-one feet in width.” The ad instead foreshadowed one aspect of the town’s departure from a successful community: natural resources would soon be gone.

Depletion of trees and jobs did not quell Cedar Key’s boom time, nor did the lack of a huge railroad magnate entirely stop progression. Florida’s climate, however, ended mass production in Cedar Key. A massive hurricane swept through the Cedar Keys on September 29, 1896. The pencil factories had already scaled back production schedules, but the storm effectively shut them down permanently. The Faber mill was gone from Atsena Otie Key and it was the end of commercial enterprise on that island. Cedar Key was also a town in ruins. William and Bill Yearty had been camping about twelve miles from Cedar Key and awoke at 4 a.m. Large oaks and pines had blown down. Their camp blew away. When William came out of an oak grove, he “noticed the water on the west side of the hill in a solid wall about ten feet high. I suggested we run from it.” Both father and son survived and helped bury the dead who were found up to six weeks later.

Cedar Key’s population plummeted after the hurricane and has never yet attained the same numbers, although the town has reemerged as an artist community. Fishing was still a means of making a living for many decades, but that too declined in the 1980s and 1990s as new laws and regulations subverted the industry much like the drop of production at West Goose Creek in Wakulla County. What is left on Atsena Otie Key is the foundation of the old Faber Mill and a cemetery.

174 Ibid, 169.
175 William S. Yearty papers
Figure 32. Faber Mill Foundation Ruins on Atsena Otie Key. Photo: US Fish and Wildlife Service

Figure 33. Cedar Key residents after the 1896 hurricane. Photo: State of Florida Photographic Collection.
Charles Fishburne refuted the ghost town terminology for Cedar Key in a 1982 publication when the town’s population was even lower than today. Cedar Key, however, is certainly a ghost town on Atsena Otie Island, where the town once existed even if only for a brief nine years. The town’s site on Way Key, a relocation made in 1852, is less of a ghost town than the prior rise and fall on Atsena Otie, but even Cedar Key from the 1880s saw a huge drop in economy and population.

**Rosewood**

The study of Levy County ghost towns would seem incomplete without mentioning Rosewood, and yet the once-thriving community of both whites and blacks is an anomaly within this paper’s set of observed locations. The rise of Rosewood is similar to other extinct towns; but unlike the others, its ending was tragically unique.

Rosewood, like the previous areas, had a boom time that corresponded to some degree with the height of lumber, sawmill, and pencil factories in Cedar Key. When Cedar Key started to decline and the businesses moved away, a population shift occurred that allowed some of Cedar Key’s residents to relocate in the sawmill town of Sumner between Cedar Key and Rosewood. Likewise, some blacks from Rosewood filled the spaces left behind in Cedar Key. The hurricane wiped out Cedar Key’s school, several hotels, churches, businesses, and residences. Some institutions, such as the school, rebuilt their structures in Sumner. Residents of Rosewood not operating their own business or farm operation often found employment in Sumner. The height of Rosewood now flowed with the rise and fall of another incarnation of Cedar Key up the rail line from its original site: that of Sumner. The difference between Rosewood and the other ghost towns is that the area did not vanish because of depletion of resources or lack of jobs (which may have occurred in time if not for the tragic circumstances), nor did it disappear due to the actions or non-actions of a group of elected officials, nor from insolvency or debt. Instead, Rosewood disappeared almost overnight due to a weeklong frenzy of racial violence aimed at blacks by whites. White mobs murdered black

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176 Charles Fishburne, *The Cedar Keys in the 19th Century*, chart, 149.
residents and burned the homes of black families in a tragedy known as the Rosewood Massacre.

Rosewood, also called the Palmetto Post Office stop until 1875, was once a mixed race community of white and black people, but by 1920 most of the whites were gone except for merchant John Wright and a few others. Rosewood, like Cedar Key, took its name from the many red cedar trees in the area, but by 1920 a great deal of the trees had been cut and the pencil factories all closed forever after the hurricane in 1896. The 1920s also saw a resurgence in the KKK and southerners “developed a fortress mentality” in the wake of World War I. Adherents of a Klan mentality rose to several million and “40 percent of the Klan’s membership at its peak in the early 1920s were southerners.” Whites may have left to distance themselves from the perceived foreignness of blacks or to look for more lucrative work, but the black population continued to rise even as the town started to decay in terms of area resources.

Families in Rosewood owned their own homes and were owners of large tracts of land from one to twenty or more acres. Some houses were two-story structures with pianos or organs. Citizens formed a community baseball team that competed with other counties and their children attended a black school. The area also had its share of lean-to’s and one-room shanties. Some black people worked for themselves while many others worked at the turpentine camps in Wylly (another ghost town), or at the sawmill in Sumner. In other words, the town of Rosewood—although it never actually incorporated—was similar to many other rural communities in Florida during that time period. There were at least 25 to 30 homes in Rosewood at the time of the incident.

What happened on the morning of January 1, 1923, changed the shape and the lives of Rosewood and its residents forever. 22-year-old Fannie Taylor, a white married woman, emerged from her Sumner residence with a battered face and claimed that a black man had beaten and raped her. Democracy and jurisprudence were thrown to the wind as an all-white self-deputized posse searched for an unknown black assailant. Later accounts from blacks on and near the premises told a different story. Sarah Carrier,

\[\text{178} \text{ Michael D’Orso, } \text{Like Judgment Day: The Ruin and Redemption of a Town Called Rosewood (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1996), 89.}\]


\[\text{180} \text{ Michael D’Orso, } \text{Like Judgment Day, 89.}\]
Fannie’s black once-a-week maid, along with her granddaughter Philomena, had seen a white man leave the house, not a black man, but their accounts went unheard as the perception of the white gang shaped reality. Sam Carter was the first man killed by a small mob. Black residents feared for their lives while white officials at the Cummer and Sons Sawmill, the nearest and largest employer for both blacks and whites in the area, tried to keep blacks at work and refused to let them leave town during the day.

Searches continued for a black suspect named Jesse Hunter for two more days without further bloodshed. Meanwhile, at least 15 members of the Carrier family had moved into Sarah Carrier’s two-story house for added protection. When rumors circulated that the suspect’s whereabouts might be known by Sylvester Carrier, one of Sarah’s sons, a white patrol of men from throughout the region stormed the Carrier household on the evening of January 4th. Two Cummer and Sons Sawmill officials knocked down the door to the Carrier house and Sylvester fired in defense of his family and children. The two white mill men lay dead on the front porch. Shots rang out for hours until approximately four in the morning. During a lull in the firing, remaining family members ran for the cover of the swamp and the hammock. Sarah and Sylvester were dead inside the house. Hundreds of angry white men sought revenge. The mob torched the house during a return trip.

Figure 34. Rosewood home after fire. Photo: State of Florida Photographic Collection.

Florida Governor Cary Hardee was notified of the unrest and inquired of Levy County Sheriff Robert Elias Walker whether National Guard troops were needed. Sheriff Walker convinced the governor’s office that no state control was necessary; however, the sheriff reported to the Associated Press that “more trouble was imminent,” thus contradicting himself and showing that he hoped to gain control of a situation already past simple reproach. Governor Hardee evidently felt the situation was under control and later that afternoon he “felt comfortable enough to go hunting despite the many verified deaths at Rosewood.”

When news of white men murdered by blacks reached nearby towns, another mob returned to Rosewood and torched the remaining black homes. More than seventy years after the riot, one of the children in the Carrier house recalled "All our houses [were destroyed] they burned every house in that town." James Carrier, Sarah’s brother-in-law, tried to seek refuge in the mill, but was ultimately turned over to angry whites that supposedly took him to the gravesites of Sarah and Sylvester and forced him to dig his own grave before they shot him. Many of the women and children of Rosewood had sought escape with the help of some whites who refused to participate in the bloodbath. A train was sent to take them to Gainesville.

One white sympathizer was John Wright, who harbored Lee Ruth Bradley and her sisters in his spacious house. His house was never razed because the vigilantes knew a white man lived there. However, even as he and his wife attempted to protect the Bradley women and children, they made the decision to leave them unattended while they went to the funeral of Poly Wilkerson—one of the two white men shot at the Carrier house. The Bradleys ultimately escaped to Gainesville, but the difficult loyalties of the Wrights are put into question. When the black community was long gone, it was the white families who bought up the deserted land once owned by blacks. John Wright bought up many of those properties. The final chapter of Rosewood in the 1920s resulted in a jury finding insufficient evidence to prosecute even one person.

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182 A Documented History, 48.
183 Ibid, 49.
185 Michael D’Orso, Like Judgment Day, 197.
The history of Rosewood received more attention in the mid 1980s and the 1990s than it had since its extinction in 1923. St. Petersburg reporter Gary Moore wrote an article on Rosewood in 1982 that was followed by Ed Bradley’s report on “60 Minutes,” in 1983. Philomena, the young girl in Fannie Taylor’s house in 1923, had wished to keep the heartbreak and loss within the scope of her own family, but with her death came a desire for her son Arnett to speak out and speak up on the injustices of Rosewood.

Survivors of the massacre made a claim against the state of Florida and the state then hired a team of researchers to conduct a fact-finding mission on Rosewood. The result of the scholarly effort was *A Documented History of the Incident Which Occurred at Rosewood, Florida, in January 1923*. The report was presented to the legislature in December of 1993. A bill passed the next year and was signed by Governor Lawton Chiles. Compensations were given to the victims of Rosewood in the amount of $150,000 to each of the eleven survivors and various lesser amounts to at least 70 descendents for a total of just over 2 million dollars. Even more books and articles were published on the town that had once been forgotten. *Rosewood* became a film in 1997, although this version takes many liberties in telling a story that is best understood through documentation contained in the 1993 report to the legislature or in the 1996 book *Like Judgment Day*.

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186 Ibid, 67.

Figure 35. John Wright House, Rosewood. Photo: Rosewood website

Figure 36. Rosewood Volunteer Fire Department Photo by author
What remains of Rosewood today are the only structures not burned in the 1923 massacre: the Wright house that once had “its porches trimmed with filigree and flowers,” and a well where some of the children hid from the wrath of the posse.  

Rosewood’s swift and tragic ending at the hands of mob violence gives it a distinct aura as a ghost town separate from Cedar Key or the others towns reviewed in Wakulla County. The apparitions of Rosewood scream louder than the fading Magnolia Cemetery or the streets of Port Leon. The images relived at Rosewood focus on specific violent scenes and people rather than the passing of an industry and the throngs of workers who made it tick.

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The ghost towns of Levy County are certainly greater in number than described here. Many towns once prospered along the railroad established by David Levy Yulee. Wylly, mentioned earlier as a turpentine camp, was two miles northeast of Rosewood. Wylly faded with the turpentine industry and there is nothing left. When the Cummer and Sons sawmill burned in the late 1920s their next mill sprang up in Lacoochee, but both Sumner and Lacoochee show little resemblance to their prime days associated with the timber industry—an industry that seemed limitless to the sense of American capitalism of the time. The two cities that demand attention in Levy County as prime boom to bust ghost towns were, and still are, Cedar Key and Rosewood.

The National Wildlife Refuge absorbed the original Cedar Key on Atsena Otie Island after its initial formation in 1929 under President Herbert Hoover. Atsena Otie became a complete ghost town after the 1896 hurricane. The federal lands of the refuge include over 100-million acres on over 13 islands. The refuge allows limited public use on some islands, including Atsena Otie. Present day Cedar Key still contains some town structures from the town’s heydays of the late 1800s, and the abandoned railroad bed is visible toward the end of town, although construction takes place nearby. Cedar Key may be one of the towns that makes another comeback and surpasses its previous high water mark of just over 1,800 people on a permanent basis. Artists, naturalists, retirees,

187 Ibid, 12.
and generational families currently call Cedar Key home, but the black population is practically non-existent.

Rosewood, as author Michael D’Orso so succinctly states, is “just gone.” Even if resurgence occurs under the current landowners, the texture of the land would lack the original culture of black inhabitants. Some brave survivors from the racial strife did move back within 10 miles of Rosewood, but the Rosewood of the 1920s is simply gone forever.

Levy County ghost town history over the past 150 years necessitated a study in white and black race relations. While all towns from America’s Civil War contain some history of segregated strife and violent bias, not all had entire communities disappear, and the connection between the two areas of Cedar Key and Rosewood remains undeniable. Populations fluctuated between the two towns depending on economic prosperity based on natural resources. Some of the same people moved up and down the railroad line from Cedar Key and Sumner to Rosewood and Wylly and the population centers became segregated. Cedar Key served as a gathering place for the racial tensions prior to the Rosewood riot and was a source of communication to and from newspapers, reporters, and the public during the weeklong battle. Residents of Levy County, and especially Cedar Key, resented the intrusions into their privacy and family histories during the early 1990 investigations and complained to elected representatives and the press, but the story had been told.
CONCLUSION

Florida’s Gulf Coast ghost towns from Wakulla and Levy Counties each contain unique histories, but they share several commonalities in their downfall patterns. The extinctions of selected areas reveal at least three similarities: one town in each section fell into ruins from the direct result of a hurricane, each area had at least one politician who rose to the rank of state lawmaker and influenced key decisions in the future of the town, and all settlements relied heavily on one primary natural resource.

Freezes, fires, and droughts wreaked havoc and contributed to the demise of other Florida ghost towns, but none of the areas in this study mentioned those conditions as significant problems. The primary weather concern for the communities in this study remained hurricanes and floods. Tracking systems for hurricanes began in the 1890s and adequate warning systems were still another decade away.\(^{188}\) The coastal towns wiped out by hurricanes in the nineteenth century, well in advance of scientific information, could do little to prevent loss of life and property in the face of cyclonic force winds. Still, reporters and newspapers carried the news of where and when hurricanes hit, and people were aware of the wind’s power. The only prevention, with such limited information, was to not rebuild on land where wind strength and storm surges continually gutted all structures in the storm’s path. Governor Call never rebuilt Port Leon after the hurricane in 1843, and Augustus Steele never rebuilt Cedar Key on Atsena Otie Island after the 1896 hurricane. Senator Henry Walker, however, quickly rebuilt the Wakulla Beach Hotel at East Goose Creek after the 1928 hurricane—at a time when tracking and warning systems were in place. Apparently, Walker, like thousands of contemporary developers, seemed to believe that inclement weather was a small drawback to the panoramic vistas and hunting access available by constructing directly on the shoreline. Man’s eagerness to live near accessible waterways was not so much a luxury in the nineteenth century as a necessity for transportation by rivers, gulsfs, and oceans; however, the structures erected on barrier islands not only became more susceptible to hurricanes as growth continued, but altered the functions of barrier islands for the mainland as protections and buffers. Criticism cannot be placed too forcefully on earlier town

\(^{188}\) Jay Barnes, *Florida's Hurricane History*. 34-35.
founders and developers for building along Florida’s coast, but a willingness to absolve public officials from blame for continuing to build in flood-prone areas should decrease as scientific knowledge increases.

Numerous books, pamphlets, and travel guides attribute the demise of many of Florida’s boomtowns to an assumed natural progression of technological improvements, especially in transportation: railroads surpass steamships, cars surpass trains, and highways surpass county roads. Some of the websites used for this paper to initially locate now-vacated towns give brief and simple reasons about why a town disappeared. Understandably, electronic travel guides attempt to give as much information as possible in the most condensed space, and a brief explanation of “Bypassed in 1836 by the new railroad from Tallahassee to St. Marks, Magnolia was gradually abandoned,” adequately addresses basic questions.189 The real story, though, on why and how a town eventually falls into dormancy and a negative growth cycle requires more detailed explanations. Michael Wisenbaker’s article on Magnolia does acknowledge that “The desertion of the town had more than one cause,” although no book or article found so far attributes the fall of Magnolia directly to any one person or a specific group of people. Governor Richard Keith Call receives indirect responsibility as the impetus behind the railroad that bypassed Magnolia, but his influence was much more direct. Florida’s territorial governor decided to start a town and Port Leon was the result. The Hamlins had some political ties back in Maine, but nothing that could compete in the 1830s with the area’s top leader. Call could have aligned his port project with either St. Marks or Magnolia leaders to strengthen an already existing waterfront town rather than start from scratch.

East Goose Creek had the support of Senator Henry Walker and his wife Daisy. The four-term state senator and his wife laid the plans for a town intended as a hunting and beach resort on Goose Creek Bay. His plans to modernize Florida’s highway system included a paved road right down to his very own Wakulla Beach Hotel. Surely East Goose Creek would not be bypassed by modernity with such an advocate on its side—but it was. Senator Walker failed to build a strong consensus of supporters who could fulfill his visions without his presence, if such a group ever existed. The senator gave the appearance of being something of a maverick who accomplished goals as an individual

with a top-down management style, but his goals failed him without his personal involvement.

Some of Wakulla County’s towns were underrepresented in county and state politics and suffered for lack of recognition. Arran’s migratory work force, along with the strong political attractions of the nearby Crawford family, gave Arran an almost non-existent place in the county and state government. When railroads were discontinued and highways bypassed Arran, residents made no public outcry loud enough to hear; they made no cry at all. Most occupants of Arran just packed up and moved to Crawfordville. The temporary workers of seine fisheries also lacked adequate representation.

Generational families from the seine yard industries, such as the Spears and the Rakers, are on record as loudly protesting each new set of laws and regulations that curtailed their seine operations, but the commercial fishermen were shut out of Apalachicola Bay and the sports fishermen were allowed to stay.

Levy County’s history at Cedar Key is deeply tied to the momentum of U.S. Senator David Levy Yulee, and again the connection between an upper-level politician and the future of a fledgling town—like that of Governor Call and Port Leon—is difficult to ignore. Yulee, like Call, wanted a train to run to a port initiated by him. In Yulee’s more advanced years, he witnessed the progression of Henry Plant’s railroad canvassing the state and had the opportunity to allow Plant to enter Cedar Key. But Yulee refused and Tampa instead became the terminus for Plant’s newest line.

Levy County’s ghost town of Rosewood, like the Wakulla County ghost towns of Arran and West Goose Creek, never had any representation in politics, and Rosewood had the added distinction of being a primarily black community. During the 1920s, when Rosewood faced the misplaced and racially biased vigilantism of neighboring white communities, black representation was nearly impossible to achieve. Cedar Key officials had effectively blocked all black political figures from attaining office.

The last common trait of all three studied areas is their reliance on primarily one natural resource, and when that one resource was depleted, altered, or access to the resource was modified, the towns began to falter. Two subsets within this category are reliance on either indigenous or non-indigenous flora or fauna and a reliance on either
paid or slave labor; however, even within these subsets it may still be observed that when the agrarian based product was gone—the town diminished.

The ghost town trinity of ‘Magport’ demanded a heavy supply of cotton for sustenance and the cotton industry demanded slave labor. Cotton was not an indigenous plant, but had been brought to Florida from the colonies. Magnolia and Port Leon had already lived and died by the time of the Civil War, but Newport was under the leadership of Daniel Ladd, who traded in both slaves and cotton. The abolition of slavery during the Civil War mandated new labor and production practices from southern planters. Cotton distribution and trading points consolidated to a few select sites, and competition only intensified among the remaining ports. Cotton trading went to St. Marks after the war, and Newport’s lack of a diversified economy threw the town into its twilight years.

The Wakulla County communities of Arran, East Goose Creek, and West Goose Creek gained their livelihoods from harvesting nature’s bounty. Arran commanded the lumber and turpentine industry. East Goose Creek sold nature as a resort package for hunting, sunning, and swimming. West Goose Creek relied on the multitude of mullet in the bay. Each of these cities also had an aspect of seasonality, whether from migratory workers, migratory animals, or the availability of hunting seasons and hot or cold weather. The absence of a commodity, changes in regulations, or land purchases placed a weight on the town from which it could not recover. Levy County’s harvesting of red cedar is the most vivid example of depletion of a natural resource. Production occurred without concern for replacement of trees or the future consequences of bare land. Sawmills relocated or leased nearby land to maintain production.

The selected ghost towns from the Gulf Coast of Florida rarely disappeared overnight, with the exception of Port Leon. Ghost towns also did not readily yield to towns of better capability or with more technological advances. Human intervention in the form of overt political action from within the town or from a neighboring town greatly influenced the fate of a struggling community. The detriments of under-and over-representation are significant factors in determining the future health and status of a locality. Too little power offers bleak prospects, but too much power seems no more of a guarantee in ensuring the viability of a town. Lack of a diversified economy further
contributed to each area’s downfall. When towns relied too heavily on monocultures, or single production methods, the absence of that specialty doomed the financial stability of the entire town. Weather does contribute to the overall functionality of an area, but the human agency involved in determining town location and structural facilities should not be devalued. Ultimately, the transformation of a boomtown into a ghost town most often results from the activities of its residents.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Rebecca (Ruddock) Roberts was born in Port Clinton, Ohio. She has over twenty years of experience in the fields of media and communication. After graduating from the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale she worked for several television stations and video production companies as graphic artist, production editor, and show host. She joined the launch of a regional cable network in 1988 (Sunshine Network).

During her tenure at the regional network, the media industry recognized the work of Ms. Roberts in the field of original programming through numerous awards and nominations. She garnered two Suncoast Regional Emmy nominations for *Surviving the Flood* in 1994 and FAVA/CA (Florida Association of Voluntary Agencies for Caribbean Action) in 2002. Ms. Roberts also received numerous Telly and Aurora Awards for half-hour programs ranging in content from mentoring initiatives and environmental concerns to Florida's drug control programs and the state's emergency response systems. Ms. Roberts has been responsible for the promotion, production, and distribution of statewide live election coverage in 1990, 1994, and 1996. She has arranged and organized gubernatorial debates and covered inaugural ceremonies and celebrations.

The volunteer service of Ms. Roberts includes professional hosting and production services to FAVA/CA, the Florida Supreme Court’s Sesquicentennial Celebration Committee, and the mentoring programs of Take Stock in Children and First Serve Florida. She served as a tutor for Literacy Volunteers of America in Leon County from 1997-1998.

Ms. Roberts created a curriculum for the American and Florida Studies Program at Florida State University entitled “Florida Authors: Images of the Land,” during her graduate teaching assistantship. She now resides in Tallahassee, Florida, with her three dogs.