

MASTER PLAN

Historic Highway 90 Corridor Washington County, Florida

**Washington County Tourist Development Council
P.O. Box 450
Chipley, Florida**

2015

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I. Introduction

The Historic Highway 90 Corridor through Washington County, Florida, is unique because it is divided into two segments by a part of Holmes County. The easternmost of these two segments centers on Chipley, the county seat and largest city in Washington County, while the westernmost segment passes through the city of Caryville on the Choctawhatchee River.

Officials in Holmes County are now considering the advantages of joining the five-county corridor project. If they elect to do so, the two Washington County segments will be connected by a continuous corridor passing from Chipley through the Holmes County city of Bonifay and then back into Washington County near Caryville. Likewise, the development of the corridor through Washington County will assist Holmes County's efforts by linking the two segments of that county that are divided by the section of the former county surrounding Caryville. The result would be a collaborative effort to develop and promote a continuous Historic Highway 90 Corridor stretching from Gadsden County on the east to Walton County on the west.

For greater simplicity and ease of planning, each of the two Washington County segments will be considered individually with attention also given to the overall concept of the entire five-county corridor. Specific recommendations for the planning and development of both segments were obtained during a stakeholders' meeting held at the Washington County Historical Society Museum in Chipley on January 15, 2015.

The key recommendations of the stakeholders were as follows:

- Promotion, interpretation and development of historic sites and eco-tourism attractions.
- Promotion of the Choctawhatchee River as a major ecological and historical resource, with particular focus being given to possible sightings of the Ivory-billed woodpecker by researchers from Auburn University.
- Development of a guide promoting heritage-related sites, businesses and events along the corridor.
- Development of a program of hospitality training for local restaurant, hotel and retail employees.
- Enhancing the experience for bicycle riders that pass along Historic Highway 90. It is one of the major cross-country routes for cross-country bike rides.

- Promotion of the county's springs and paddling trails.
- Cooperation between agencies to help attract additional RV capable campgrounds to the corridor.
- Creation of side loops from the main corridor that will encourage visitors to remain in the county longer and allow them to experience such noteworthy points of interest as Moss Hill Church, the site of the Battle of Vernon, and Falling Waters State Park.
- Creation of literature providing maps and other information on the points of interest in Washington County.

II. Historical Background

The dream of a paved highway that would link St. Augustine, Florida, to San Diego, California, began with a meeting at the historic Battle House hotel in Mobile, Alabama, on October 27, 1915. Henry Ford had rolled his first Model T off the assembly line in Detroit just seven years earlier and the automobile was transitioning from a novelty toy of the rich to a product that every American could aspire to own.

With the development of the car came expanded dreams of travel. Tourism by automobile ignited a fire that spread across the continent and the attendees at the Mobile meeting of 1915 sought to capitalize on that fire by proposing the development of a “motor trail” that would stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific. To be called the “Old Spanish Trail” in recognition of the shared Spanish heritage of Florida, Texas and California, the road would eventually become Historic Highway 90. Until the completion of Interstate 10 in 1990, it was the southernmost transcontinental highway in the United States.

Although the road crossed or followed portions of the routes of the original “Old Spanish Trails” that led through Florida, it was a new highway built to provide improved travel conditions. It commemorates the earlier roadways, but does not always follow them and this is the case in Washington County, Florida. The original Spanish trail through the county led from Orange Hill southeast through Holmes Valley to the so-called Cowford near Ebro. The modern highway, called the Old Spanish Trail since its inception, cuts through the two northern projections of Washington County and generally runs within site of the CSX railroad.

It is noteworthy that Washington County was involved in the development of Historic Highway 90 from the date of its inception. Representatives from Chipley were among the 419 enthusiasts that gathered for the 1915 meeting to discuss their mutual dream of a highway that would stretch from coast to coast. The meeting ended with a decision to push forward in advocating an improved road that would initially extend from Florida to Texas, Although the promoters hoped that the road would eventually extend to California, Historic Highway 90 still ends today in Van Horn, Texas.

The official dedication of the project came just one month after the Mobile meeting on January 21, 1916:

Fourteen thousand happy school children of the gulf coast of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, inspired by the glories of as perfect a day as the sunniest region of Sunny California ever produce, on January 21, midwinter everywhere but on the sunkissed coast, with flowers, and trees and

song, became the first children founders of a National Highway in America, when they gathered at the same hour of the afternoon in every city and hamlet from New Orleans to Tampa, Fla., and placed the sanction of childhood endeavor upon the Old Spanish Trail. Reports received at headquarters of the association in Mobile, show that through the state of Florida half holidays were observed in all of the cities.

Chipley and Caryville, with the Holmes County city of Bonifay in between, took part in that inaugural celebration. Children sang in each community as dedication ceremonies took place. Over the decade that followed, Florida invested heavily in its section of the “Old Spanish Trail” and by 1929 the highway was a reality.

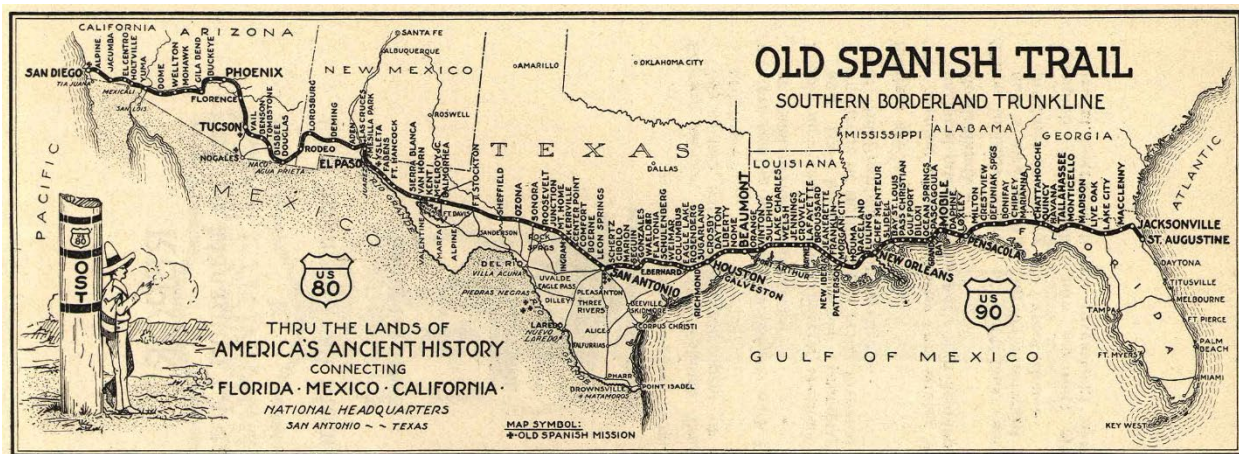


Figure 1. 1920s promotional map of the Old Spanish Trail National Highway

Washington County, like many North Florida counties, had no paved roads when the project began in 1915. Until just four years earlier, in fact, the vast majority of its roads were little more than trails through the pine woods. Railroads provided the only means of fast transportation. The L&N even formed the center of Chipley and the city was named for Col. W.D. Chipley, the developer of the railroad. The city’s business district faced not a major highway but the railroad, just as it does today.

In 1911, however, the need for improved roads became a major issue in the county. The introduction of the Model T three years earlier was changing the South and county commissioners realized that Washington’s economic future depended on the implementation of a large scale road construction project.

The result was the approval of a \$300,000 bond issue that would not be paid off until 1952. The bonds allowed for the construction of improved roads linking all of the major communities in the county.¹

The roads built using the 1911 bond issue were not paved, but they were straight, packed and graded. Built at a cost of around \$775 per mile, two of the construction projects covered the entire length of the eastern segment of what is now Historic Highway 90 through Washington County. The Chipley to Bonifay road was built west to the Holmes County line at Holmes Creek, while the Chipley to Aycock road ran east to the mill town of Aycock on the Jackson County line. When the “Old Spanish Trail” project was launched in 1915-1916, this improved road was quickly identified for use as a segment of the new national highway.²

There was no natural barrier separating Washington County from Jackson County to the east and the completion of the Chipley to Aycock road created a link to westward construction by the latter county that allowed the opening of the entire section of the new national highway between Chipley and Marianna. To the west, however, the building of the highway encountered greater difficulty. Not only did a section of Holmes County – literally given away in 1915 to get rid of an unpopular politician – extend south across the route between the Washington County cities of Chipley and Caryville, but the Choctawhatchee River was unbridged. It was one of the two widest streams between Tallahassee and Pensacola.

Even as cars began to travel the Florida sections of the Old Spanish Trail, the only way to cross the Choctawhatchee at Caryville was a wooden ferry, commonly called a “flat” by local people. Cables pulled it back and forth across the river and its deck rode only eight or ten inches above the surface of the river. A scary enough proposition for carrying horses and wagons across the river, it became nothing less than terrifying when the weight of a Model T was added.³

The need for a modern bridge was apparent from the beginning and Florida’s State Road Department (today’s Florida Department of Transportation) authorized the expenditure of nearly half of its total road and bridge construction budget for 1921 on the project. The successful bidder was the Pensacola Ship Building Company which estimated the total cost of phase one construction at \$136,740.00. The U.S. Congress followed with authorization to build the bridge over waters of the United States.⁴

A second appropriation of \$142,006.12 was needed to complete the Choctawhatchee River bridge, with both Washington and Holmes Counties each adding another \$25,000 to the project. Even as major

construction moved forward in 1922, the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* was already reporting that thousands of people were using the Florida sections of the new highway. H.B. Ayres, the managing director of the Old Spanish Trail Commission, drove through Washington County in April of that year and reported that dramatic improvements were underway:

*...Mr. Ayres covered 500 miles discomfort or car trouble, except one puncture from a nail on a paved street in Marianna. The return from the Apalachicola river, 232 miles, was made in an average running time of twenty-four miles per hour, with the driver allowed to follow his own wish for there was no pressure of time anywhere on the return.*⁵

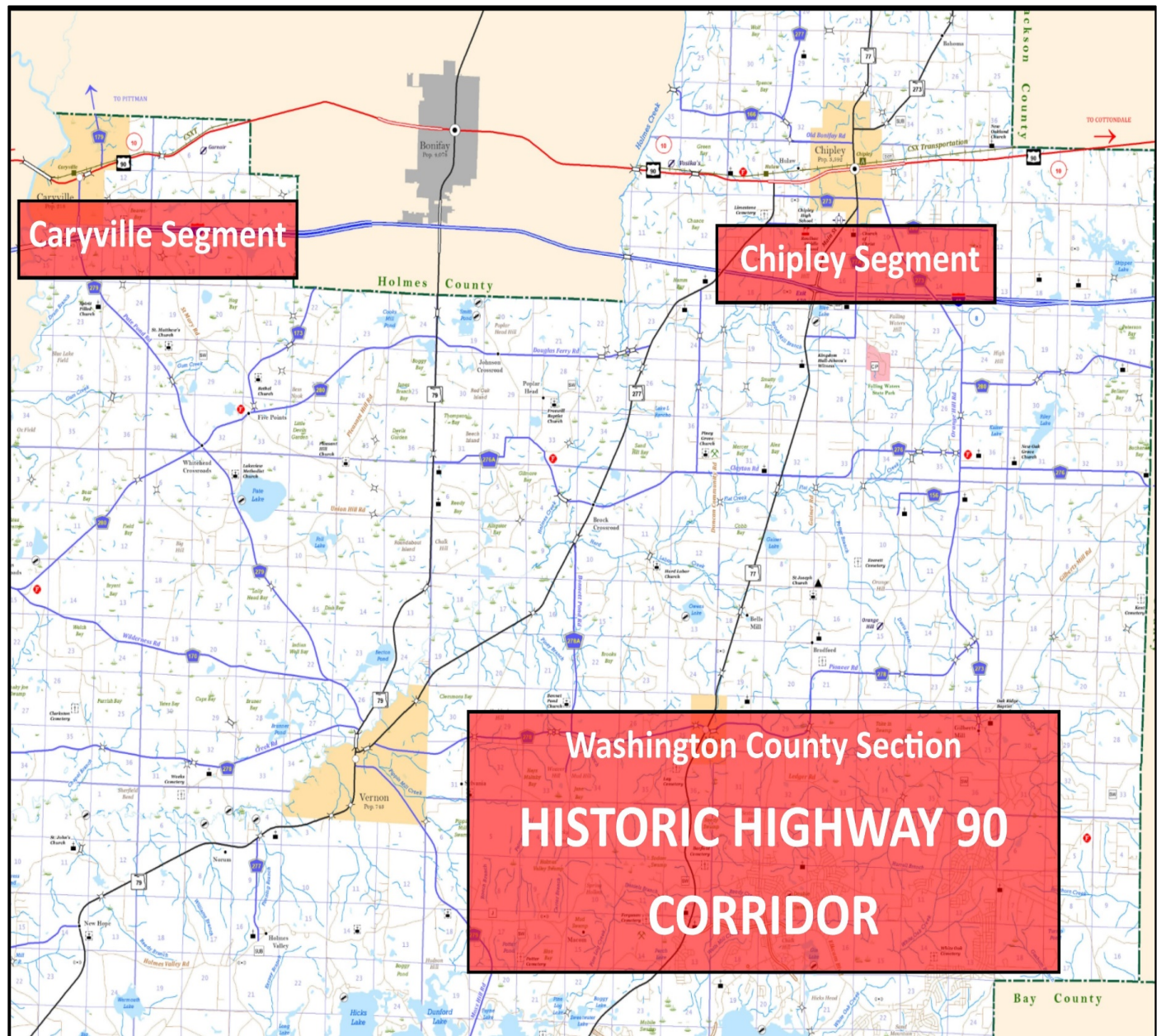
Ayres reported seeing tourists traveling all along the new still largely unpaved highway, even though most of the Northwest Florida counties had been holding back on promoting the route due to continuing construction. Every crossing between Pensacola and the Apalachicola River could be crossed on some sort of bridge except for the Choctawhatchee River and Escambia Bay. Ferries still carried motorists across at those locations, although bridge construction was pushing forward in each place:

*...Two ferries were crossed; one at the Choctawhatchee river which consumes about five minutes. This ferry is free, continuous and safe, but it has a bad reputation because in floods a wide detour up into Alabama is necessary. C.R. Horne, the state engineer in charge of the road and bridge work of that district, said the ferry is in service 345 days a year. This shows, Mr. Ayres declares, how a small measure of interruption serves to condemn a large measure of good service...The Choctawhatchee bridge is under contract. A great fill is now being thrown up on the west side and the bridge and approaches will be about 8000 feet.*⁶

The bridge took three more years to complete but by 1925 it was finished. With its completion, the entire section of the Old Spanish Trail – today's Historic Highway 90 – through Washington County was opened to automobiles. The entire highway through Florida was completed four years later. Paving and widening followed in the decades to come and the Choctawhatchee River bridge was rebuilt during the 1940s and again near the end of the 20th century. It remains an important transportation route for tourists, commerce and industry, even though much traffic was diverted by the completion of Interstate 10.

A drive along Historic Highway 90 through Washington County today is scenic in the extreme. The highway passes numerous historic sites and structures, while spanning the ecological treasures of Holmes Creek and the Choctawhatchee River. Four of the five highest points in Florida can be seen within a few

miles of the route. Chipley and Caryville, the two incorporated cities along the highway, each provide a variety of amenities.



¹ E.W. Carswell, *Washington: Florida's Twelfth County*, Carswell Publications, Chipley, Florida, Page 198.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁴ *Tampa Tribune*, June 30, 1921, Page 1.

⁵ *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, May 7, 1922, Page 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*

III. Vision Statement

The long and short Vision Statements for the Historic Highway 90 Corridor were developed in consultation with stakeholders in both Washington and Jackson Counties. It is recommended that these statements be adopted in common by all five counties in the corridor:

(Short)

An unforgettable drive through history, nature and culture.

(Long)

The Historic Highway 90 Corridor will be an unforgettable drive through the unique history, natural wonders and remarkable culture of Washington, Jackson, Gadsden, Holmes and Walton Counties. Expansion of interpretive opportunities and the use of modern technology to help visitors locate and learn about points of interest will make the corridor one of the most unique in the nation.

IV. Chipley Segment

The Chipley segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor stretches through Washington County from the Jackson County line on the east to Holmes Creek on the west. The total length of this segment is approximately 9.5 miles, with 4.5 miles of highway being east of the City of Chipley and just under 5 miles of the highway to the west of the city. Chipley is the only incorporated city along this section of the corridor.

Historic Highway 90 extends roughly east to west through this part of Washington County and is known as Washington Avenue within the city limits of Chipley. It passes one block south of the historic main street area of the city, which was built using today's CSX railroad as its primary transportation artery. The highway was opened through the county four decades after the completion of the railroad.

Despite its relatively short length, the Chipley segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor is extremely rich in historic resources. The following planning items will help develop this segment into a major heritage attraction with excellent potential for encouraging both planned visits by vacation travelers and shorter departures from Interstate 10 by tourists:

1. Highway Signage

The placement of suitable and attractive highway signage will be a vital part of identifying the Historic Highway 90 Corridor for visitors and will require a cooperative effort between the City of Chipley, Washington County and the Florida Department of Transportation. Placement of signage as follows is recommended:

- A. Large highway signs welcoming visitors to the Washington County segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor should be placed on U.S. 90 east at the Jackson County line and U.S. 90 West at or near the Holmes Creek bridge. Large highway signs should also be placed at or near the point where State Road 77 enters the Chipley city limits from the north and on the same highway just north of the Interstate 10 exit. It is recommended that these signs be based on the large informational signage utilized along such scenic highways as the Natchez Trace and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

- B. Smaller signs designating U.S. 90 as the “Historic Highway 90 Corridor” should be placed at intervals along the highway. It is recommended that these signs be placed at least every two miles along the corridor. These signs should be designed along a pattern similar to the “DeSoto Trail” signs utilized in Florida.
- C. Additional signage is needed along U.S. 90 directing travelers to key points of interest, including the Washington County Historical Society Museum and interpretative stations to be placed as part of this project.
- D. The Washington County Tourist Development Council should consider placement of a digital billboard along Historic Highway 90 in Chipley to promote upcoming events of interest to travelers and to provide other tourism information.

2. Interpretive Signage & Recommendations

This study identified 30 key historical and ecological points of interest along the Chipley segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. Included among these are one state park and one National Historic District. To fully develop the tourism potential of the corridor, additional interpretation is necessary to improve the experience of traveling Historic Highway 90 for visitors. From the total of 30 points of interest, 19 were identified as key resources to be included in this plan.

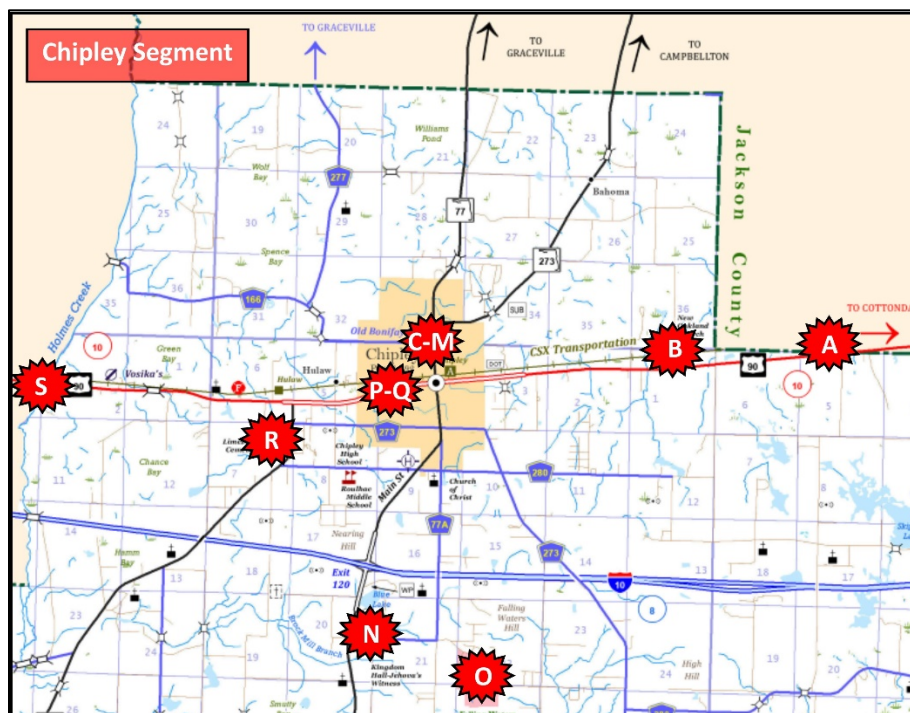


Figure 2. Chipley Segment of Historic Highway 90 Corridor

A. Aycock

Aycock was a sawmill “factory town” of the early 20th century. It was located on both sides of the county line where U.S. 90 crosses from Jackson County into Washington. While visible traces of this Florida ghost town are few today, its impact on Florida and U.S. history lives on. A terrible fire at a remote camp located south of the main community claimed the lives of 5 men and left 6 others with horrible injuries. Most of the victims were convicts leased by the Aycock Bros. Lumber Company from Jackson County and investigations indicated they had been chained to their bunks in the company “stockade” when the fire took place. The wave of publicity over the tragedy ignited a movement that eventually brought the practice of “convict leasing” to an end in Florida and the entire nation.

It is recommended that an information kiosk be placed at the site of Aycock, where it is believed that the victims of the 1905 fire are buried. This kiosk should include panels that interpret both the Aycock story and the Historic Highway 90 Corridor as a whole. Because the site is bisected by the county line, both Washington and Jackson County could cooperate in the placement of this kiosk. Cooperation will be needed from the Florida Department of Transportation. It is additionally recommended that a metal historical marker be placed in conjunction with the construction of this kiosk.

Estimated cost: \$4,500

B. National Egg Laying Test

The brick structures of the Florida National Egg Laying Test stand on the north side of U.S. 90 at its intersection with New Prospect Road east of Chipley. This test was the site of important poultry research that led to dramatic improvement of both chicken and egg production in the United States. Established in 1926, it is likely eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

It is recommended that a Florida Master Site File form be completed and submitted to the Division of Historical Resources for this site and that a permanent metal historical marker be placed facing U.S. 90 on the east side of New Prospect Road.

Estimated Cost: \$2,500

C. Washington County Historical Society Museum

Located at 685 Seventh Street in Chipley, the Washington County Historical Museum is located in a railroad-themed structure that features exhibits, artifacts and other information on the rich history of Washington County. It is currently open to the public on Fridays.

An information sign on U.S. 90 is needed to direct visitors to the museum. This will require cooperation between the Florida Department of Transportation and the City of Chipley.

D. W.D. Chipley Monument

Located on the grounds of the Washington County Historical Society in Chipley, this monument honors Col. W.D. Chipley. The colonel was a Civil War veteran turned railroad promoter who directed the expansion of the P&A railroad (later the L&N and now the CSX) eastward through Washington County from Pensacola. The coming of the railroad led to the founding of Chipley in 1882.

No additional interpretation is needed at this site.

E. CSX Railroad

Originally named the P&A and later the L&N, the railroad was the lifeblood of Chipley for many years. Its completion through Washington County in 1882 led to the founding of the city, which bears the name of railroad promoter Col. W.D. Chipley. The railroad has remained in continuous use since its completion.

An informational kiosk and fenced viewing area should be placed in the park adjacent to the Bill Lee Station on 6th Street. The kiosk should interpret the history of the railroad and its role in the founding of Chipley, while also providing information on adjacent historical resources including the Chipley main street area, the Washington County Historical Society Museum, the historic train caboose adjacent to the museum, the train museum in the Bill Lee Station and the exterior railroad artifact exhibits. The viewing platform should consist of an adjacent and attractive fenced viewing platform where visitors can safely view passing trains. If possible, a train schedule from CSX should be posted so visitors will know when to expect the next train.

Estimated cost: \$5,000

F. Chipley State Bank Building

Built in 1905 as the home for the newly-chartered Chipley State Bank, this structure is an excellent example of Masonry Vernacular commercial architecture. It continues to serve commercial purposes and the shops in its interior can be visited during regular business hours.

A small interpretive panel is recommended for either pedestal or exterior wall mounting to provide details on the architecture and history of the building.

Estimated Cost: \$1,500.

G. Farrior-Huggins House

This structure, located on Sixth Street in Chipley, was built in 1885 by Dr. Farrior just three years after the founding of Chipley and completion of the railroad through Washington County. It is believed to be the oldest standing structure in the city and is an excellent example of Frame Vernacular architecture.

It is recommended that a small pedestal or fence-mounded plaque be placed to provide information on the history of the structure.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000.

H. Old City Hall (Visitor Center/Chamber of Commerce)

Completed in 1929, this beautiful brick structure was built in the Mediterranean Revival style with a hip roof, square corner tower, arched window opening, curved parapet and iron gates. It originally served as the Chipley City Hall but now functions as Washington County's official Visitor Center and the home of the Tourist Development Council and Chamber of Commerce. It is open to the public on weekdays during regular business hours. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

It is recommended that a permanent metal marker be placed in front of the building to interpret its history and architecture. The Florida Division of Historical Resources offers a grant program that will fund 50% of the cost of placing markers at sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Old City Hall structure is an ideal candidate.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000.

I. Chipley, Florida

The historic and unique city of Chipley was founded in 1882 by developers interested in capitalizing on the transportation availability provided by the newly-completed P&A (later L&N and now CSX) Railroad. Noted for its unique railroad-oriented downtown and the Queen Anne architecture of its South Third Street National Historic District, Chipley is a charming and historic Northwest Florida city in the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. Named for railroad magnate Col. W.D. Chipley, who built the P&A Railroad (later the L&N and now the CSX) through Washington County in 1882, the city is the seat of government for Washington County and the gateway to Florida's tallest waterfall at Falling Waters State Park.

It is recommended that a metal historical marker telling the story of Chipley be placed in the small park adjoining the Old City Hall (Visitor Center). This would be an excellent base for a walking tour of the historic railroad-oriented historic area. Since this area is likely eligible for designation as a National Historic District, contact should be made with the Division of Historical Resources to request recommendation. An existing architectural survey of the historic area provides excellent information on its history, architecture and recommendations for a National Historic District listing.

Estimated Cost: \$2,500

J. Porter Building

Located at 1368 North Railroad Avenue in Chipley, the Porter Building is one of the most unique commercial structures in Northwest Florida. Built in 1900 using the Masonry Vernacular style, it features a façade that rises two-stories to a stepped parapet with decorate pinnacles, a center gable and oculus vents. The structure is likely eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

It is recommended that a master site file form be filed for the Porter Building with the Division of Historical Resources and that a wall plaque interpreting its history and architecture be placed on the front wall of the structure.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000.

K. First United Methodist Church of Chipley

This sanctuary was built in 1903 to replace an earlier frame structure that was destroyed by a storm or tornado. The original wooden pews remain in use and the art glass windows were manufactured in Antwerp, Belgium, while the blocks for the

construction of the building were manufactured on the grounds. One of the great religious movements in Florida history took place here in 1916. Called the Cates Union Revival, it was a local version of the Great Awakening that had swept Europe and the United States during the previous year. On December 17, 1916, a meeting of 600 new converts was held at the church, which was followed by a parade through the streets led by a singing choir. By the end of the revival, 700 people in the city which then had a population of only 1,500 had been converted.

The First United Methodist Church of Chipley faces directly on U.S. 90 and is likely eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It is recommended that a master site file form on the church be submitted to the Florida Division of Historical Resources and that a metal historical marker be placed in front of the sanctuary.

Estimated Cost: \$2,500.

L. South Third Street National Historic District

This National Historic District extends from Jackson Street (Historic Highway 90) south to South Boulevard in Chipley and was designated on February 2, 1989. It is the only National Historic District along the Washington County segments of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. The district features 13 contributing structures, several of them built using the rare and beautiful Queen Anne architectural style of the Victorian era.

A metal historical marker should be placed at the Historic Highway 90 entrance to the National Historic District to interpret the history and significance of the area. Funding for this should be available in part (50%) through the National Register grant program administered by the Division of Historical Resources. In addition, a permanent walking tour of the district should be developed with maps, brochures and a cell phone app to give visitors more information as they enjoy the beautiful architecture, trees and gardens. Small identification markers with numbers for each of the 13 contributing structures should be placed, with those marker locations then tied into printed and online material.

Estimated Cost: \$5,000

M. Butler House

Located within the South Third Street National Historic District, the Butler House is a remarkably well-preserved example of Queen Anne style architecture. This style of architecture was popular in 1880-1910 across Northwest Florida, but most examples have been lost over the years due to expanding downtown commercial districts and neglect. The Butler House was built in ca. 1902 and features a unique roof system with cross-gables, an octagonal turret, Doric columns and double-hung sash windows. It is a private residence today.

The Butler House is likely eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. A master site file form should be submitted to the Florida Division of Historical Resources and a metal historical marker should be placed in front of the house. If the house is accepted for the National Register, the DHR administered grant program could be a resource for the funding of 50% of this marker.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000-\$2000.

N. Blue Lake

Located at 1865 Florida 77 just south of Interstate 10 in Chipley, Blue Lake is one of Florida's unique "disappearing lakes." This unusual phenomenon is caused by the unique karst topography that underlies the state. Water passing through underground limestone slowly erodes caves and caverns, some of which eventually collapse to form sinkholes. Such a sinkhole is located at the bottom of Blue Lake and the large bottom of water has been known to completely disappear overnight. The sink then becomes plugged with debris and the pond slowly refills.

Blue Pond offers an excellent opportunity for geological interpretation along the Historic Highway 90 Corridor and it is recommended that a small interpretive panel be placed on the pier at the park area adjoining State Road 77. This panel should interpret the nature of Florida's disappearing lakes and the geology of Blue Pond in particular. The park also offers a great picnic area along the corridor. It is recommended that the Florida Department of Transportation in cooperation with Washington County place highway signs directing visitors into the park.

Estimated Cost: \$1,000.

O. Falling Waters State Park

This beautiful park at 1130 State Park Road in Chipley is home to the tallest waterfall in Florida, a 73-foot high fall that disappears into a unique lime sink that is 100-feet

deep and 20-feet wide. The park also protects the Falling Waters Sinks State Geological Area, an area of sinks and caves created by Florida's karst topography. Other features include the site of one of the state's first oil wells, a butterfly garden, picnic area, swimming beach and lake, and a campground.

Current interpretation at Falling Waters State Park is well-designed and well-maintained.

P. Ghost of the Lime Sink

Washington County's best known folk tale, the store of the Ghost of the Lime Sink is based in historical fact. Netta McMillan was 18 years old when she and two friends – Graymore Pridgeon, 18, and Nannie Callaway, 14 - went wading in the lime sink during the spring of 1890. The three stepped off a ledge into deep water and vanished. Jeff McMillan, Netta's 14-year-old brother, was able to save Pridgeon, but Netta and her friend Nannie Callaway drowned. Nannie's body was recovered by rescuers who flocked to the scene, but that of Netta McMillan was never found. Local legend tells that the sobbing figure of the woman can be seen moving across the water on foggy nights. The lime sink is not currently accessible to the public and is located roughly at the center of a block bounded by Historic Highway 90, 1st Street, Coleman Avenue, and 2nd Street in Chipley.

The Lime Sink Legend offers a great opportunity to provide visitors with a folklore experience along Historic Highway 90. At minimum an interpretive panel should be placed to detail the story, but consideration should be given to applying for funding through the Florida Greenways and Trails initiative to acquire either part or all of the vacant property bordering the lime sink off 2nd Street. This property could be developed into a greenway with a boardwalk leading to an overlook at the lime sink itself. Such a project would provide opportunities for additional interpretive signage, tours and create a story-telling venue similar to the Bellamy Bridge Heritage Trail in Jackson County.

Estimated Cost: \$2,000 - ?

Q. Kudzu Marker

This fascinating state historical marker stands directly by Historic Highway 90 in front of the Washington County Agricultural Center at 1424 West Jackson Street in Chipley. Placed in 1967, this historical marker notes that kudzu, "the vine that ate the

South,” was introduced to the United States as a commercial crop at Chipley in 1902. The leguminous plant is of Asian origin and was first shown in the country at the U.S. Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1876. It was occasionally used as an ornamental over the years that followed and in 1902 Charles and Lillie Pleas set some out near an outbuilding at their home. The vine grew rapidly and Mr. and Mrs. Pleas soon noticed that horses were rubbing the hair from their manes as they reached through a fence trying to graze on it. They wrote to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to determine if the vine was poisonous and a danger to their horses. The USDA wrote back that kudzu was safe, but expressed doubt as to whether livestock would actually eat it. The couple then expanded their plantings of the vine and engaged in a national marketing effort to promote kudzu. The idea caught on in 1934 when the Soil Conservation Service championed the production of kudzu and the rest is history. A small sample of live (but carefully cultivated!) kudzu grows at the base of the marker.

No additional interpretation is needed at the marker, but the kudzu story has the potential to be a great draw for the Washington County section of Historic Highway 90. Consideration should be given to creating an exhibit of kudzu products at either the visitor center or agricultural center.

R. Indian Oak

This old live oak grows near the intersection of Florida 277 and Brickyard Road in Chipley on the site of the former Glen Arden Nursery. It is called “Indian Oak” due to a legend dating from the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). On August 31, 1842, a party of Creek warriors attacked the home of the Perkins family at Orange Hill southeast of Chipley. The house was burned and only one survivor, a 7-year-old boy, survived. A company of local volunteers led by Captain Stephen Daniel pursued the war party along a trail that led northwest from Orange Hill through today’s Falling Waters State Park and finally to a sink hole near Chipley. There they found a warrior and his wife. Legend holds that Daniel and his men shot the warrior and dumped his body in the sink. Distraught by the death of her husband, the Creek woman committed suicide by hanging herself from the branches of the “Indian Oak.”

It is recommended that a metal historical marker be placed on Florida 277 adjacent to the oak.

Estimated Cost: \$2,500.

S. Holmes Creek, Hagerman & Mahs Farm

Going from east to west, the Historic Highway 90 Corridor passes out of the Chipley segment where it crosses the bridge over Holmes Creek into Holmes County. The creek itself, once called Weekaywee-Hatchee (Weeki Wachi) by the Creek Indians, is a major tributary of the Choctawhatchee River. Rising near the Alabama line, it flows in a generally southwesterly direction and is one of the most beautiful spring-fed creeks in Florida. A large section of the creek in Washington County has been designated a state paddling trail. Adjacent to the bridge is the site of Hagerman, a sawmill community that operated from 1894 until around 1901. The creek and hand-dug canals fed logs to the mills where they were cut into lumber. The L&N railroad then provided transport to cities across the nation for use as building material. Also nearby is the Mahs Farm Site (8WS8), a significant archaeological site. The Mahs Farm site was located in 1955 and appears to date from the Deptford Time Period (500 B.C. – 200 A.D.). It is a small village or habitation site where prehistoric American Indians lived while hunting, gathering and growing some crops on the rich lands along Holmes Creek.

An interpretive kiosk should be placed at a suitable intersection east of the Holmes Creek bridge to provide information on the creek, Hagerman and Mahs Farm as well as the Chipley segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor.

Estimated Cost: \$2,000.

3. Additional Recommendations

Recommendations for marketing, additional interpretation, web presence, printed materials, cell phone apps and more are included later in this document as part of the final summary of the Washington County Section Master Plan.

V. Caryville Segment

The Caryville segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor runs through northwestern Washington County, Florida, from the Holmes County line to the Choctawhatchee River. The total road-length of this segment is approximately five miles and the only incorporated community along the route is Caryville.

The direction of the highway through this segment is roughly northeast to southwest, with approximately 20% of the total mileage being within the floodplain of the Choctawhatchee. This floodplain is one of the most important in the Southeast from an ecological perspective. Caryville's location on the proposed Choctawhatchee Watershed Paddling Trail bodes well for the economic future of the community as the eco-tourism effort is expected to attract the interest of large numbers of outdoor enthusiasts.

The following recommendations will help develop the Caryville segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor into a vital part of the overall project. Eastbound travelers on the corridor will enter this part of the Washington County section via either Highway 90 itself or by way of the Caryville exit from Interstate 10.

4. Highway Signage

The placement of suitable and attractive highway signage will be a vital part of identifying the Historic Highway 90 Corridor for visitors and will require a cooperative effort between the Town of Caryville, Washington County and the Florida Department of Transportation. Placement of signage as follows is recommended:

- E. Large highway signs welcoming visitors to the Washington County section of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor should be placed on U.S. 90 east at the Holmes County line and U.S. 90 West at or near the Choctawhatchee River bridge. A large highway sign should also be placed at or near the point where County Road 279 enters the Caryville town limits just north of the Interstate 10 exit. As noted above in the recommendations for the Chipley section, these signs should be based on the large information signage

- F. Smaller signs designating U.S. 90 as the “Historic Highway 90 Corridor” should be placed at intervals along the highway. It is recommended that these signs should be placed at the mid-point of the Caryville segment to inform drivers from both directions that they are traveling the corridor. The signs should be designed along a pattern similar to the “DeSoto Trail” signs utilized in Florida.
- G. Additional signage is needed along U.S. 90 directing travelers to key points of interest, particularly Caryville Landing and the proposed welcome kiosk at Caryville Town Hall.

5. Interpretive Signage & Recommendations

This study identified four key historical and ecological points of interest along the Caryville segment of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. Included among these are the Choctawhatchee River and the Town of Caryville. It is recommended that four sites be interpreted as part of the Washington County section.

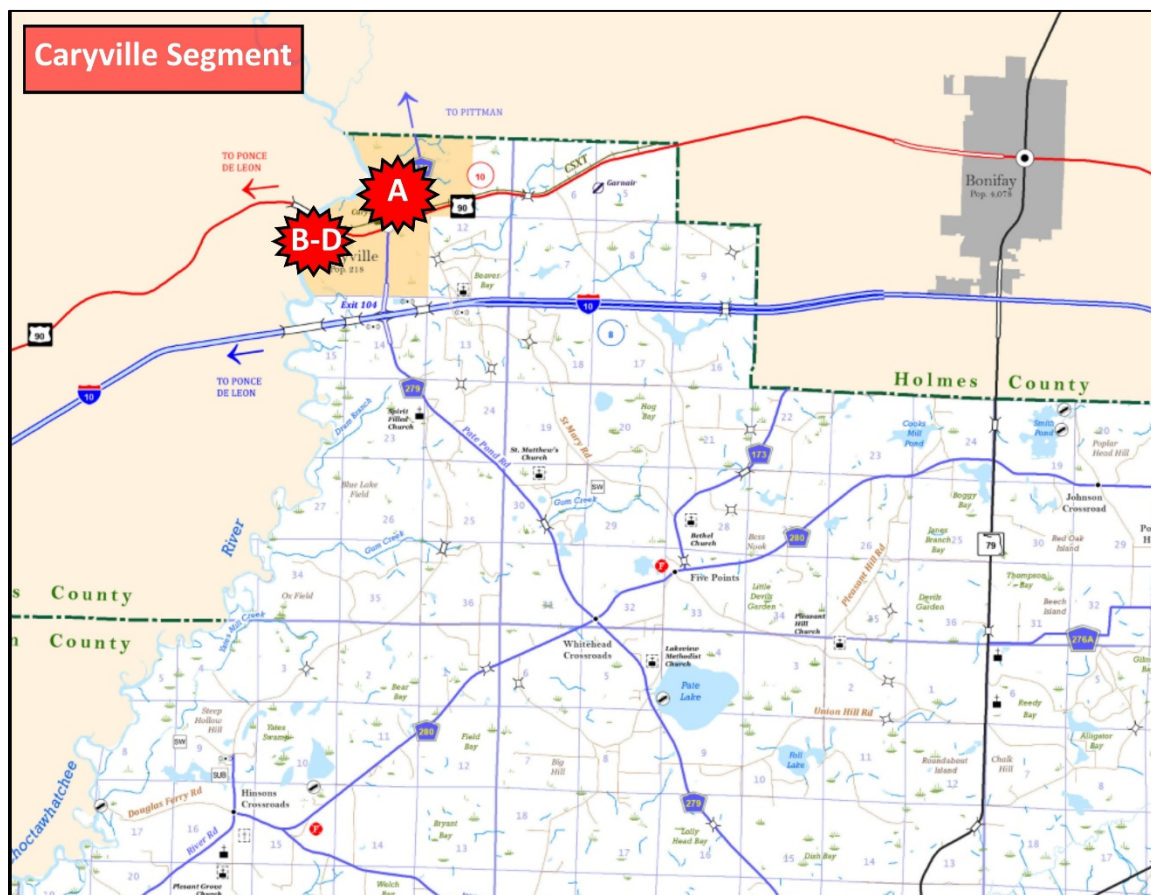


Figure 3. Caryville Segment, Historic Highway 90 Corridor

A. Town of Caryville

Originally called Half Moon Bluff, Caryville was established as a sawmill community in around 1882 as the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad (later the L&N and now the CSX) was completed across the Choctawhatchee River. It was named in honor of railroad executive R.M. Cary. In the years that followed, the community became a major industrial center noted for massive sawmills and a booming timber industry. The mills made use of the Choctawhatchee River to bring logs downstream from the vast floodplain swamps in neighboring Holmes County and nearby South Alabama. As a sign of its early prosperity, Caryville in 1903 became the first community in Washington County to receive electricity. The town was incorporated ten years later and a major boom was anticipated when the Choctawhatchee River was bridged for the Old Spanish Trail national highway in 1925. Severe floods struck in 1928 and 1929, however, devastating the community. A combination of the destruction caused by the 1929 flood, when waters rose above the rooftops of the town, and the beginning of the Great Depression that same year destroyed the economy of Caryville. The large mills were dismantled before World War II and the completion of Interstate 10 through Washington County coupled with more floods in the late 20th century forced the entire community to move to higher ground.

The grounds of the Caryville Town Hall are recommended for the placement of a large interpretive kiosk that will serve both to tell the story of the town and to welcome visitors to the Washington County section of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. This kiosk should be coupled with a metal historical marker detailing the history of Caryville.

Estimated Cost: \$4,500.

B. Choctawhatchee River

The Choctawhatchee River is believed to take its name from the Chacato Indians who lived in Northwest Florida when Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived in the region in 1674. Early maps spell the name “Chactohatchee.” The name Chacato is similar to Choctaw and British mapmakers converted the name to its current spelling during the 18th century. One of the largest rivers in Northwest Florida, the Choctawhatchee served as an important transportation artery for thousands of years. Prehistoric American Indians paddled it in dugout canoes, as did their descendants

the Creeks, Yuchi, Chacato and other tribes. English traders established themselves along its banks in 1763-1783 and American settlers brought barges and paddlewheel steamboats during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Caryville was an important port for paddlewheel steamers until their commercial viability ended following the completion of what is now Historic Highway 90 in 1925. The river is an ecological treasure and flows undammed for its entire length through Florida.

Since Caryville Landing is prone to flooding, necessity dictates that interpretive signage there be made from durable material. The two options are metal historical markers or painted metal panels similar to those used at the site by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Estimated Cost: \$500-\$2,500 depending on type of signage selected.

C. The Bloomer Raid

The captured Confederate river steamer *Bloomer* was piloted past Caryville Landing on December 28, 1862 by a raiding party of Union soldiers and sailors. The soldiers were from the 91st New York Volunteers, while the sailors were from blockade ships off Choctawhatchee Bay. They were assisted in the operation by Unionist civilian volunteers. The raid up the Choctawhatchee had been launched four days earlier after a scouting expedition reported that the 130-ton sidewheeler was tied up on the river just below its confluence with the Pea River near Geneva, Alabama. The owner of the vessel, James L. Brady, was away serving in the Confederate navy as one of the crew members of the Mississippi River ironclad CSS *Arkansas*. Led by Acting Master Elias D. Bruner of the USS *Charlotte* and Lieutenant James H. Steward of the 91st New York, the raiders moved inland by land and seized the *Bloomer* on the afternoon of December 27, 1862. It took them 24-hours to get the steamer ready to go but at 8 a.m. the next morning the boat started down the river. They carried the paddlewheel boat down to Choctawhatchee Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. Renamed the USS *Bloomer*, the vessel saw service along the Northwest Florida coastline for the rest of the war.

Interpretive signage should be placed to tell the story of this unique amphibious raid. As noted above, however, Caryville Landing is subject to flooding so the sign must be made of durable material. The two most viable options would be a metal historical marker or a painted metal panel similar to those currently used at the site by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Estimated Cost: \$500-\$2,500 depending on the type of signage selected.

D. Ivory-billed Woodpecker Sightings

Dr. Geoff Hill, an ornithology professor from Auburn University, was on the Choctawhatchee River south of this point with two research assistants when he spotted what the trio believed to be an ivory-billed woodpecker on May 21, 2005. One of the largest woodpeckers every to exist in North America, there had not been a confirmed sighting of an ivory-billed since 1944. The team conducted extensive research along the Choctawhatchee over the months that followed and reported thirteen additional sightings. With the help of Dr. Daniel Mennill of the University of Windsor, the Auburn researchers also made 300 recordings of sounds they believe to be those of ivory-bills. Despite the fact that highly trained scientists made the discovery, the Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee has declined to accept the validity of the sightings. The search for definitive proof continues at this time.

It is recommended that an interpretive panel be placed in the picnic area adjacent to Caryville Landing to provide information on the possible sightings, as well as photographs and other information on Ivory-billed woodpeckers. This kiosk should include information on what birders, paddlers, fishing parties and others should do if they spot what they believe to be an Ivory-billed woodpecker.

Estimated cost: \$1,000.

6. Additional Recommendations

Recommendations for marketing, additional interpretation, web presence, printed materials, cell phone apps and more are included later in this document as part of the final summary of the Washington County section Master Plan.

VI. Special Tour Loops

A specific recommendation of Historic Highway 90 Corridor stakeholders in Washington County was the creation of special tour loops that would give visitors the opportunity to branch out from the main corridor itself and see more of the county's attractions. It was the feeling of the participants in the stakeholders' meeting that the development of these loops would benefit both visitors and the community for the following reasons:

- The tour loops would enhance the experience of visitors traveling the corridor by taking them to the most significant historic sites, eco-tourism destinations and points of interest in Washington County.
- The loops would benefit the economy of a larger area of the county by increasing traffic in rural areas and the county's other incorporated areas.
- The loops would benefit the economy of Chipley and Caryville, the incorporated communities in the Historic Highway 90 Corridor itself, by encouraging travelers to stay overnight in order to see more of the county. Overnight stays would benefit the hotels, restaurants and retail establishments while also adding to the gasoline and hotel bed tax collections for the county.

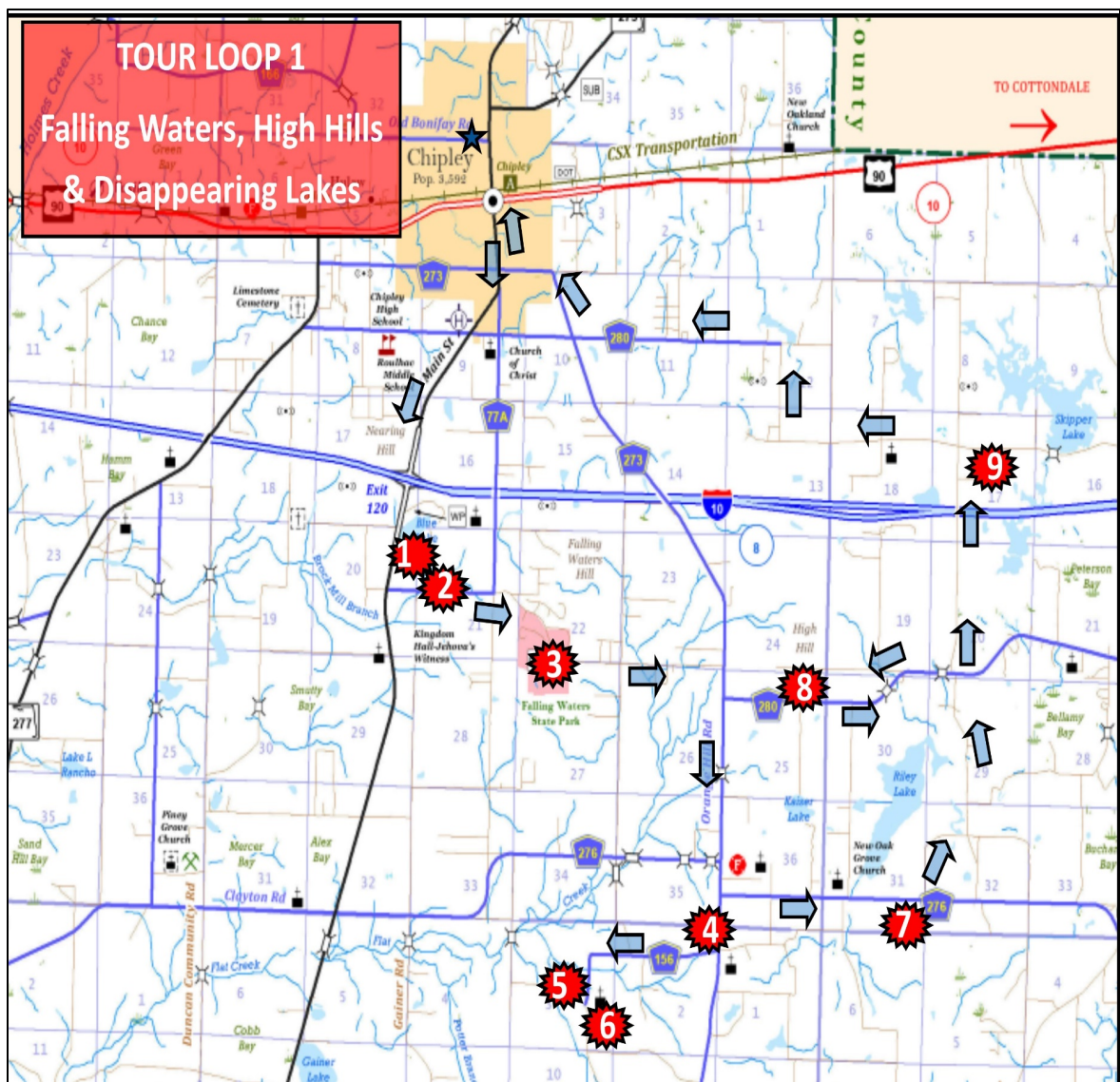
In keeping with this recommendation from multiple stakeholders, four special tour loops were designed. Three of these depart from and return to the Historic Highway 90 Corridor at Chipley, while the fourth departs from and returns to Caryville. The special tour loops are described below:

1. Falling Waters, High Hills & Disappearing Lakes

This special tour loop takes visitors to some of Washington County's most unique geological features, as well as to a number of significant historic sites. It begins and ends at the Visitor Center in the historic Old City Hall building in Chipley, allowing drivers the opportunity to explore nearby areas of Washington County while returning to Chipley in time to enjoy its restaurants, hotels and other amenities.

The northeastern corner of Washington County features some of the most spectacular scenery in the State of Florida. Four of the state's five tallest points can be seen here, along with the state's tallest waterfall and one of Florida's famed "disappearing lakes." Historically, this section of the county was home to Civil War events, early pioneer settlements, antebellum plantations and the predecessor of one of Florida's major private universities.

From the Visitor Center, the tour loop follows Church Avenue east one block and then turns right (south) onto Main Street/State Road 77. The route then follows Main Street/State Road 77 south to Earl Gilbert Landing at Blue Lake.



Tour Stop #1 – Blue Lake

Blue Lake is one of Florida's unique "disappearing lakes." This unusual phenomenon is caused by the unique karst topography that underlies the state. Water passing through underground limestone slowly erodes caves and caverns, some of which eventually collapse to form sinkholes. Such a sinkhole is located at the bottom of Blue Lake and the large bottom of water has been known to completely disappear overnight. The sink then becomes plugged with debris and the pond slowly refills.

From Blue Lake the tour loop continues south on State Road 77 for 0.5 miles then turns left onto State Park Road.

Tour Stop #2 – Magnolia Memorial Lane

The road, as it leads to Falling Waters State Park, is lined with beautiful magnolia trees. These were planted in 1960 to honor the men of the 13th Field Artillery Brigade who died in Europe and Africa during World War II. The original planting of 1,000 three-year-old magnolias was the idea of journalist, historian and World War II veteran E.W. Carswell, who had seen similar plantings in Europe. The Chipley Kiwanis Club, Florida Department of Transportation, Falling Waters State Park and others have helped to maintain them over the years.

The tour follows State Park Road for 1.6 miles to Falling Waters State Park.

Tour Stop #3 – Falling Waters State Park

This beautiful park at 1130 State Park Road in Chipley is home to the tallest waterfall in Florida, a 73-foot high fall that disappears into a unique lime sink that is 100-feet deep and 20-feet wide. The park also protects the Falling Waters Sinks State Geological Area, an area of sinks and caves created by Florida's karst topography. Other features include the site of one of the state's first oil wells, a butterfly garden, picnic area, swimming beach and lake, and a campground. Falling Waters Hill, on which the park is located, is the fourth highest point in the State of Florida.

Leaving Falling Waters State Park, the tour loop backtracks on State Park Road from the park entrance for 0.2 miles then turns right onto Joiner Road. The route continues straight on Joiner Road for 1.9 miles and then turns right onto Orange Hill Road. Follow Orange Hill Road south for 2.2 miles to the intersection with Sunday Road.

Tour Stop #4 – Orange Hill

Orange Hill is one of four hills in Washington County that rank among the twelve highest elevations in the State of Florida. The hill rises to just over 300 feet above sea level. Early travelers reached this height after following an old trail through the Holmes Valley area, where elevations of less than 50 feet above sea level are common. The sudden ascent up the rugged ridge was so dramatic that Rt. Rev. Michael Portier, the Catholic Bishop of Florida, believed he had reached a mountain when he arrived at Orange Hill in 1827. He described Orange Hill, then called Hickory Hill, as “this grand mountain peak shaded by the finest trees in the world.”

From the intersection of Orange Hill Road and Sunday Road, the tour loop turns right onto Sunday Road and continues for 1.6 miles to the grounds of the Orange Hill United Methodist Church.

Tour Stop #5 – Orange Hill Academy

The Orange Hill Academy was an Antebellum era predecessor of Florida’s well-known Stetson University as well as the Baptist College of Florida in nearby Graceville. Rev. David Porter Everett owned a large plantation at Orange Hill. A graduate of what is now Mercer University in Georgia, he dreamed of establishing a similar Baptist-affiliate institution of higher learning at this site. A boarding school had existed at Orange Hill as early as 1847, but in 1851 the Orange Hill Male and Female Academy was founded here. Classes began in a temporary building until a large new academy building could be completed by Rev. Everett. Rev. John Newton was one of the earliest headmasters and was followed in this position by Rev. Joseph Wombell, who arrived at Orange Hill following a mission trip to the western frontier. The Orange Hill Academy operated until the outbreak of the War Between the States or Civil War. It never reopened, but Rev. Thomas E. Langley of Orange Hill later made the motion for the creation of today’s Stetson University.

In the same location is the Everett Plantation.

Tour Stop #6 – The Everett Plantation

These grounds were once part of the Everett Plantation, the largest antebellum farm in Washington County, Florida. Arriving as frontier settlers in the 1820s, the Everett family by 1827 had built a rectangular log home on top of the hill by 1827. Rt. Rev. Michael Portier, who visited the family that year, described it as built using “pine logs of uniform size...laid one above the other and strongly bound together.” He called it a “delightful dwelling.” The size of the plantation grew over the following decades and by the eve of the War Between the States it was a large operation that produced cotton and other crops for the export market using the labor of enslaved African American workers. The plantation buildings were used as quarters for Confederate troops in 1864. Union troops under Brigadier General Alexander Asboth passed down this road on their return march from the Battle of Marianna, ate their midday meal on these grounds and then continued on to the plantation center where they burned barns and destroyed harvested crops.

The tour loop retraces its route on Sunday Road for 1.6 miles back to Orange Hill Road. Turning left onto Orange Hill Road, it continues for 0.4 miles and then turns right onto Alford Road. The loop then continues straight on Alford Road for 2.0 miles to Rooks Circle.

Tour Stop #7 – Oak Hill

This intersection is on the northern slope of Oak Hill, the second highest elevation in the State of Florida. South of Alford Road the Hill rises to a peak of 331-feet above sea level. Second only to Britton Hill in Walton County, Oak Hill is the highest point in Washington County. Called an outlier by geologists, the top of the hill was originally level with the surface of the surrounding area. Over thousands of years, however, the land-level around Oak Hill was lowered by erosion and the slow dissolution of the karst topography below ground. The limestone of the hill eroded more slowly leaving it a prominent feature of the Florida landscape.

From the intersection of Alford Road and Rooks Circle, the tour loop turns left onto Rooks Circle and continues for 0.8 miles to Jarous Road. The route turns left onto Jarous Road and continues straight for 1.3 miles to Corbin Road/County Road 280. The route turns left onto Corbin Road/County road 280 and continues west for 1.5 miles.

Tour Stop #8 – High Hill

To your north are the slopes of High Hill, the third highest elevation in Florida. Rising to a peak at 323 feet above sea level, this hill is a geological outlier like nearby Oak, Orange and Falling Waters Hills. The limestone beneath the hill was more resistant to erosion and dissolution than that beneath the surrounding area. As a result, the land surrounding the hill eroded away over thousands of years leaving High Hill as a unique Florida landmark.

From High Hill, the tour loop retraces its route back east on Corbin Road/County Road 280 for 1.4 miles and turns left onto Overpass Road. It then follows Overpass Road straight for 1.5 miles to Rock Hill Church Road. The tour turns right on Rock Hill Church Road and continues 0.1 miles to Rock Hill Church, which is just ahead on the right.

Tour Stop #9 – Rock Hill Church

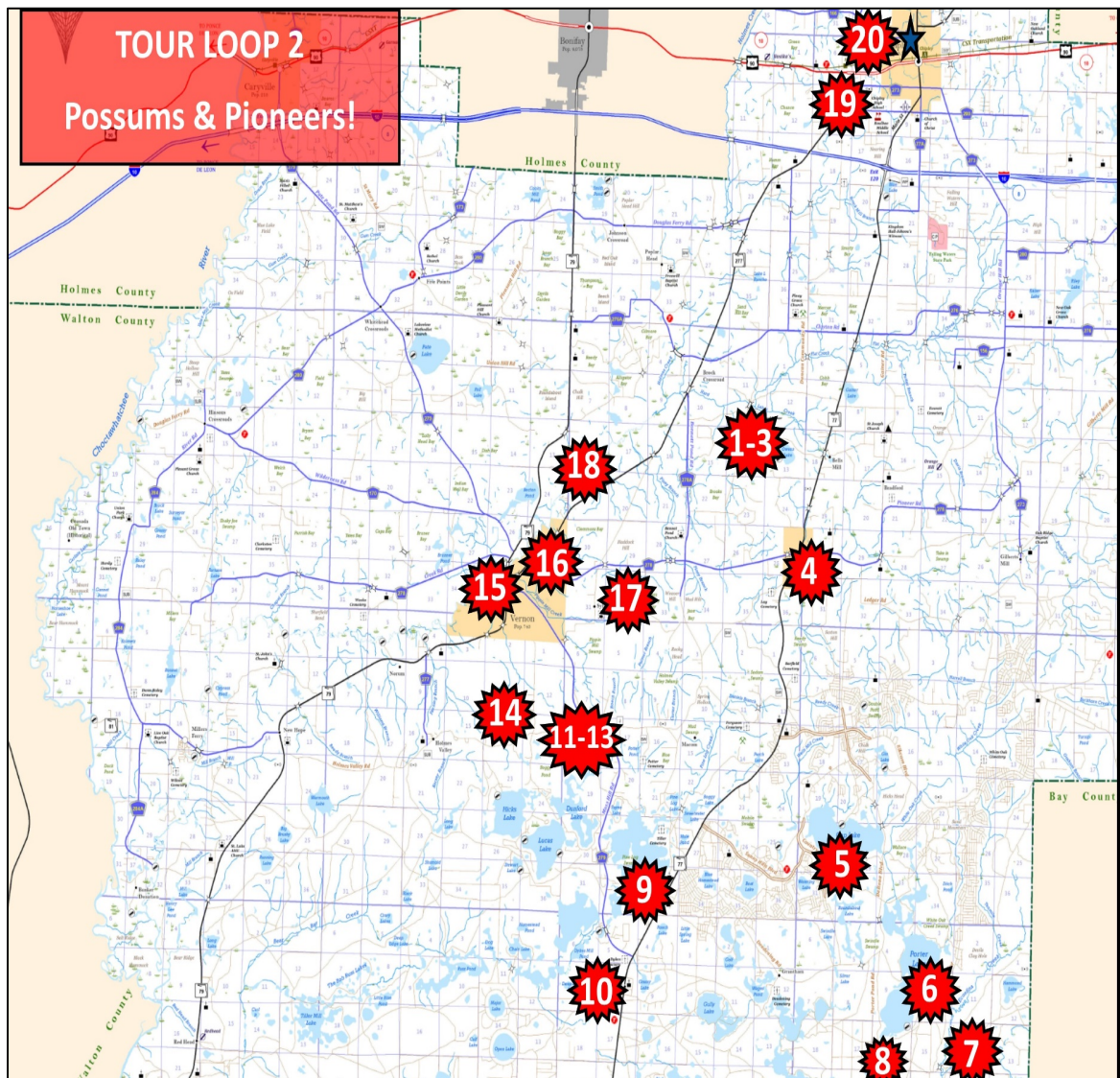
This historic church stands near another of the tallest points in Florida. Rock Hill rises to an elevation of more than 300 feet and is known for its massive formations of natural stone. Rock from the hill was used to build many of the stone buildings in Chipley. The hill itself is now a natural preserve owned by the Nature Conservancy, but is not open to the public due to the rare and unique species that live there. Rock Hill Methodist Church is in the center of what was once the citrus belt of Washington County. Large orchards of Satsumas once grew in this area, but were destroyed by freezes and diseases during the 1930s. The church congregation was founded in the 19th century and the adjacent cemetery includes graves that date to the 1800s.

Leaving Rock Hill Church, the tour route turns west on Rock Hill Church Road and continues for 1.8 miles. The road makes a sharp right turn at this point and the route also turns right on Rock Hill Church Road and continues straight for another 0.8 miles to Brickyard Road. The route turns left on Brickyard Road and continues for approximately 2.5 miles to Main Street/State Highway 77. It turns right on State Highway 77 and returns to the beginning point at the Visitor Center.

2. Possums & Pioneers

This special tour loop carries visitors from the Historic Highway 90 Corridor to some of the most unique and significant historic sites in Washington County. It begins and ends at the Visitor Center/Old City Hall at the intersection of 5th Street and Church Avenue in Chipley.

Among the points of interest along the loop are Washington County's famed Possum Monument, large natural lakes, beautiful Econfina Creek, a Civil War battlefield, historic churches, a haunted cemetery, historic roads, Chipley's Kudzu Marker and legendary Indian Oak.



From the Visitor Center, the tour loop follows Church Avenue east one block and then turns right (south) onto Main Street/State Road 77. The route then follows Main Street/State Road 77 south

for 8.8 miles and turns right onto Owens Pond Road. The tour loop continues straight on Owens Pond Road for 2.2 miles beneath beautiful canopy oaks and through deep cuts worn down by more than 150 years of travel to Washington Church.

Tour Stop #1 – Washington Church

This historic Primitive Baptist Church was organized in 1848, just three years after Florida gained its statehood. It stood near the old Marianna to Vernon road, which crossed Hard Labor Creek nearby. The Battle of Vernon, a Civil War skirmish, was fought at the creek crossing on September 28, 1864, when the Vernon Home Guard battled a large Union column that was returning from the Battle of Marianna. One of the casualties of that skirmish, Stephen Pierce, is buried in the adjacent cemetery. Also buried there are veterans from many of America's conflicts, including the Seminole and Civil Wars, along with many noted pioneers of Washington County. The existing structure was completed in 1931 and restored in 2012 in a community-wide effort.

Directly across the road from the church in its cemetery is:

Tour Stop #2 – Grave of Stephen Pierce

Stephen Pierce was born in 1818 and lived as a farmer in Washington County before the Civil War. He served in the Confederate army as a private in Company H, 4th Florida Infantry. This unit, nicknamed the "Washington County Invincibles" was raised with men from the county and included many of Pierce's friends and neighbors. Discharged from the army due to disability, Pierce was at home in 1864 when a call went out for all available men to assemble with the Vernon Home Guard in response to the reported attack on Marianna by Union troops. On September 28, 1864, he was with this unit when it fought the Federal column at the nearby Battle of Vernon. Pierce was killed in action and buried here after the Union soldiers continued on their way. Legend holds that he was executed, but eyewitnesses reported that he was killed in the first round of fire from the Union troops. Buried nearby are other soldiers of the Civil War, both Confederate and Union.

The tour continues from Washington Church for another 0.1 miles to its dead-end with Hard Labor Road. It then turns right on Hard Labor Road for 0.1 mile to the quaint wooden bridge over Hard Labor Creek and the site of the Battle of Vernon.

Tour Stop #3 – Battle of Vernon

This is the site of the Battle of Vernon, a Civil War skirmish fought on September 28, 1864. The encounter took place when a column of 700 Union soldiers reached the Hard Labor Creek crossing on its way back to Pensacola from the Battle of Marianna. The Vernon Home Guard, unaware that it was heading for Marianna on the same road being used by the returning Federals, reached the crossing from the opposite direction at the same time. The lead units in the Union column were from the 1st Florida Cavalry (U.S.), a regiment formed from Confederate deserters and Southern Unionists. Recognizing many of the men in the Home Guard as former friends and neighbors, the Union soldiers urged them to return to their homes. As Captain W.B. Jones was deliberating the situation, one of his men – Stephen Pierce – said something that angered the Federals. A shot rang out, followed by a volley from the Union cavalry. Captain Jones and his men returned fire. Pierce was killed and one other Confederate was wounded before the Federals stormed the crossing, capturing Captain Jones and a number of his men. The others engaged in a fighting retreat as far west as Vernon.

The tour route retraces its route for 0.1 mile on Hard Labor Road and turns left onto Owens Pond Road. It then retraces its route for 2.3 miles to State Road 77 and turns right. It continues south on State Road 77 for 2.3 miles to its intersection with 2nd Avenue in Wausau, Florida. Washington County's famed Possum Monument stands at this intersection.

Tour Stop #4 – The Possum Monument

One of the most unique monuments in the United States, this quaint memorial honors the Opossum. A marsupial and distant relative of the kangaroo, the possum – as it is known in the South – is memorialized here for the role it played as food for area families during the dark days of the Great Depression. The monument bears the inscription of a family of possums cavorting in a tree and notes that the first Saturday of each August has been declared Possum Day in Florida by resolution of the state legislature. It was placed by the Wausau Community Development Club on August 7, 1982. The community holds its annual Fun Day & Possum Festival on the first Saturday of each August. Events include a parade, food, entertainment and other activities.

From Wausau the tour continues south on State Road 77 for 2.9 miles and turn right on Firetower Road. It continues east on Firetower Road for 1.3 miles to Rosetta Drive where it turns right. The tour follows Rosetta Drive for 0.5 miles and turns right onto Deltona Boulevard. It then continues south on Deltona for 3.5 miles and turns right on Gap Boulevard. It follows Gap Boulevard for 1.2 Miles and then turns right onto Harbor Place for 0.2 miles to Washington County's Gap Lake Park, which features a boat ramp, picnic areas and beautiful views of this large natural lake.

Tour Stop #5 – Gap Lake

Washington County is known for its sweeping and magnificent natural lakes. Described by noted Florida historian and folklorist E.W. Carswell as being “unlike any other lake in Florida,” Gap Lake is more than one mile long. This area was settled by Henry Hamilton Wells and his wife, Prudence Catherine Reaves Wells, in 1846. The Wells family operated a water-powered mill that was patronized by their neighbors and also engaged in cattle ranching, sheep herding and other pursuits.

From Gap Lake the tour retraces its route along Harbor Place and Gap Boulevard for 1.4 miles and turns right onto Deltona Boulevard. It continues south on Deltona for 0.8 miles and then continues straight as the road name changes to Porter Pond Road. It then follows Porter Pond Road for 3 miles and turns left onto Hampshire Boulevard. The tour then follows Hampshire Boulevard for 1 mile and then turns left onto Lakeside Drive and continues for 0.6 miles to Porter Lake Park.

Tour Stop #6 – Porter Lake

Another of Washington County's magnificent large natural lakes, Porter Lake is a popular recreation spot today. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, however, it was part of an important cattle ranching area. These were the days of “free range” livestock in Florida. Ranchers would brand or otherwise mark their cattle and then turn the animals loose to range freely and feed themselves. Pristine bodies of water like Porter Lake provided water for the herds while the natural grasses that grew on the surrounding hillsides provided food. The state began to change this method of ranching in the 1920s by requiring ranchers to “dip” their livestock in concrete vats filled with chemical-laden water as part of an effort to eradicate ticks. One of the vats was

located near Porter Lake. The days of free range cattle in Florida came to an end in 1949 when the state legislature passed a law requiring that all livestock be kept behind fences.

From Porter Lake, the tour follows Lakeside Drive south along the shores of Porter Lake for 1.2 miles and turns left. It continues east for 0.6 miles to Walsingham Bridge Road. Just ahead on Walsingham Bridge Road is Walsingham Bridge over Econfinia Creek. The small Walsingham Camp Site is located on the west of the bridge while Walsingham Park is just across on the east bank.

Tour Stop #7 – Walsingham Bridge & Econfinia Creek

This historic little bridge has long served as a way to cross Econfinia Creek, a beautiful spring-fed stream that flows from its head in nearby Jackson County south to St. Andrew Bay. This stream, called a river by some early settlers, was crossed by Christian Apalachee Militia from Fort San Luis (Tallahassee) during a 1677 raid on a village of Chisca (Yuchi) Indians then living west of the Choctawhatchee River in what is now Walton County. In their account of the campaign, the Apalachee leaders mentioned crossing the creek several times and likely passed near this spot. In later years, still before Florida became part of the United States in 1821, the first settlers of the region used pole boats and small barges to carry cotton, sugar, timber and other commodities down the creek for shipment out to waiting markets. The word “Econfinia” means “natural bridge” in several of the Creek Indian dialects. It was named for a now collapsed natural crossing downstream from this point. Known for its cold, clear water, rapids, springs and rocky bluffs, Econfinia Creek is a major natural resource. More than 43,770 acres along the creek are owned by the Northwest Florida Water Management District and are open to the public. Walsingham Park on the east side of the creek is one of the launch points for the state-designated Econfinia Creek Paddling Trail.

From Walsingham Bridge, the tour returns west, retracing its route along Walsingham Bridge Road for 0.5 miles and then turns right to continue for another 1.4 miles. It then turns left onto Porter Pond Road and continues for 2 miles. Directly ahead from this point is the small drive leading to Gainer Cemetery.

Tour Stop #8 – Gainer Cemetery

This historic cemetery is one of the oldest in the interior of Florida. It was established by the Gainer family, early settlers of Washington County, and its oldest graves are not marked. These historic burials were originally marked with wooden crosses or memorials, but they rotted away over the more than 150 years that this cemetery has been in use. The oldest graves marked today are those of James Brown and his wife, Annie Brown, both of whom died in January 1858. He had served as the adjutant of a regiment of Florida mounted militia during the Second Seminole War. Other graves include those of Confederate soldiers and many early residents of this area.

From Gainer Cemetery, the tour returns along Porter Pond Road for 0.7 miles and turns left toward Greenhead Road. It follows Greenhead Road west for 8 miles to State Road 77. It turns right on State Road 77 which it follows north for 2 miles to a left turn onto Razorback Road. After only about 80 feet the tour keeps left onto Daniel's Lake Road which it follows to Washington County's Daniel's Lake Park. The park features picnic areas, covered pavilions, a boat ramp and views of beautiful Daniel's Lake.

Tour Stop #9 – Daniel's Lake

Another of the beautiful natural lakes that characterize the terrain of southern Washington County, Daniel's Lake is the focus of an old legend about the Creek Indian leader Holms (sometimes spelled "Holmes") and the First Seminole War of 1817-1818. Holms was the leader of a band of Red Stick families, so named because they posted a red war club or "red stick" in a prominent place of their village when they were at war. The chief led his people to Florida after the Creek War of 1813-1814 and joined the Creek and Seminole towns that went to war against the United States in 1817-1818. His town on the Choctawhatchee River was attacked by U.S. troops under Captain Thomas H. Boyles in 1818. The chief was reportedly killed and his town destroyed, but legend holds that he survived and escaped with a handful of followers to an island in Daniel's Lake. The truth of the legend is unclear, but it preserves the history of a war that soon led to the cession of Florida from Spain to the United States.

From Daniel's Lake, the tour retraces its route east on Daniel's Lake Road and turns right (south) onto State Road 77. It continues just over one-mile to the Greenhead community and Dykes Cemetery on the right.

Tour Stop #10 – Grave of John David Dykes

John David Dykes was a well-known businessman and political leader during the early 20th century, but met his fate at the hands of a lynch mob on April 15, 1916. The incident took place during an outbreak of fury that followed the ambush murder of turpentine company foreman S.A. Walker. Dykes and Walker had been engaged in disagreements for some time and Dykes accused the turpentine company man of attempting to shoot him on April 14, one day before his own death. He escaped injury by hiding behind a tree. Within 24 hours, however, someone shot and killed Walker and suspicion focused on Dykes, the postmaster of Greenhead and a well-known speaker at meetings of the Populist-party allied Farmer's Alliance. A coroner's inquest was convened and the finger was pointed at Dykes, who responded with pleas of innocence pointing out that he had been fishing with family members at the time. Arrested and charged with murder, John David Dykes was taken to the county jail in Vernon, which was then the county seat. A mob entered the jail at 1:30 a.m. on April 16, 1916, took Dykes by force, dragged him a short distance from the jail and killed him with a volley of gunfire. It is a common misconception that lynchings involved hanging, but as the murder of Dykes demonstrates, the term actually refers to any extra-legal mob violence that ends in the death of a targeted individual. Although modern historians usually associate lynchings with the deaths of minorities, John David Dykes was white. He was buried here at Dykes Cemetery and legend holds that the vicinity of his grave is haunted by his restless spirit. Drivers on State Road 77 sometimes claim to see mysterious blue lights in the cemetery.

The tour continues by turning back north on State Road 77 from Dykes Cemetery for a short distance and then turning left onto Moss Hill Road/County Road 279. The route follows this road approximately 6 miles to Moss Hill Methodist Church and Cemetery on the left.

Tour Stop #11 – Moss Hill Church

This beautiful old sanctuary was built in 1857 by a congregation that had been active since the early 1830s. Services were originally held in an old log fort that stood nearby, but in 1857 the current structure was built. The site was then public land and Igdaliah "Eagle Eye" Wood obtained title to 40 acres which he then deeded to the church. In a unique footnote of history, Wood's land patent was signed by President Abraham Lincoln on December 5, 1861, even though Florida was then part of the Confederacy and at war with the United States. Said to have been the second structure in Washington County to be fitted with glass windows, the church was

built by its members using lumber cut from the surrounding area. Both white and black members attended services here before and during the Civil War. A unique architectural feature of the church are the footprints on its ceiling. When the lumber was stacked on the ground as construction was underway, people – as well as bears, raccoons and other animals – walked along the pine boards leaving their footprints behind. The footprints are still there and can be seen by examining the sanctuary ceiling. Services are held at Moss Hill on the 4th Sunday of each month and are open to the public. The church also hosts a unique 19th century Christmas service each December. The church is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Adjacent to the church is the Moss Hill Cemetery:

Tour Stop #12 – Moss Hill Cemetery

This large and historic cemetery is actually older than the 1857 church structure. Early settlers of the Holmes Valley area established set aside this hilltop as a burial ground and many of its oldest graves are unmarked today. The original wooden crosses and markers were destroyed by the elements over time. Of special note is the row of markers that commemorate some of the local men captured by Federal troops at the Battle of Vernon on September 28, 1864. Among these were Nathaniel Miller and Freeman B. Irwin, the latter of whom represented Washington County at Florida's Secession Convention in 1860. He voted against the move to have the state leave the Union. Miller, Irwin and others died in northern prison camps and never returned home. The headstones here serve as poignant reminders of their deaths in the hands of the United States Government.

The tour returns to the front of the church and faces across the highway to the site of the historic Fort at Moss Hill:

Tour Stop #13 – Fort at Moss Hill

This mysterious fort was one of the first structures ever built in what is now Washington County. Likely constructed by the early settlers who drifted into the Holmes Valley area in 1819 when Florida was still a Spanish colony, the small log fort or blockhouse was a prominent landmark. It is shown on survey plats from the early 1820s and on later military maps from the era of the

Second Seminole War (1835-1842). Tradition holds that Moss Hill Church first met in the fort. The log structure eventually rotted away.

The tour leaves Moss Hill by turning left onto County Road 279 and continuing a short distance to Holmes Valley Road. Turning left onto Holmes Valley Road, the tour continues until it reaches Ebenezer Baptist Church on the right.

Tour Stop #14 – Ebenezer Baptist Church

This historic Baptist church was formed in Vernon prior to the Civil War but the original sanctuary was destroyed by a hurricane in 1856. Meetings were then held in the courthouse at Vernon for a short time and then in 1857 at the new Moss Hill Methodist Church. Services continued at Moss Hill until after the Civil War when they were moved to a one-room schoolhouse on the present site. The school continued to double as a church until 1894 when a new sanctuary was completed. This structure was replaced by a new, larger building in 1918. It is the 1918 sanctuary that can still be seen today. Badly damaged by a tornado in 1936, the building was repaired and expanded.

The tour retraces its route back north on Holmes Valley Road and turns left onto County Road 279. It continues on County Road 279 for 3.3 miles and turns right onto Church Street in Vernon, Florida. Continuing north on Church Street a short distance, the tour turns right onto Court Street and the historic Vernon Cemetery.

Tour Stop #15 – Vernon Cemetery

This historic cemetery was established during the 19th century as the settlement of Roche's Bluff, as today's Vernon was once known, began to grow atop a bluff overlooking beautiful Holmes Creek. Among those buried here is Stephen J. Roche, an early settler for whom the original settlement was named. Also buried in the cemetery is Captain William B. Jones. Originally a lieutenant in Company H, 4th Florida Infantry – the "Washington County Invincibles" – he was sent home due to disability and became the captain of the Vernon Home Guard. Jones was among

the men captured by Federal troops at the Battle of Vernon on September 28, 1864. Other graves here include those of many early residents and merchants of the historic city on Holmes Creek.

From the cemetery, the tour returns to Church Street, turns right and then immediately left for one short block to the Vernon Square.

Tour Stop #16 – Vernon Square & Vernon Historical Museum

This square, now greatly reduced in size by the expansion of Main Street/State Highway 79, was for many years the center of life in Vernon. A courthouse was built here in around 1850 and Vernon remained the County Seat until it was moved to Chipley in 1927. Holmes Creek was a navigable stream and paddlewheel steamboats regularly made their way up to Vernon where they took on cargoes of cotton, lumber, sugar and even gopher tortoises. The latter were prized as a delicacy in northern markets and by ship's captains who would put the live tortoises in the holds of their vessels to provide fresh meat for the crews during long voyages. Vernon was the "World's Leading Gopher Shipping Port" between 1885 and 1930. A mass (legal) hanging was held here on July 5, 1901, when four convicted murderers were put to death on a scaffold. Three of the men had been convicted of murdering a local citizen. The fourth prisoner had been convicted in a different murder case. The four climbed the scaffold steps chained together and met their fates after saying "Good Bye, Cap'n" to Sheriff J.A. McKeithen who sprang the trapdoor on the scaffold and sent them to their deaths. The Vernon Historical Society Museum, just one block west across Main Street/State Highway 79 in the old high school on Yellow Jacket Drive, features exhibits on the history of the city. It is open to the public on Wednesdays from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Leaving the Vernon Square, turn north on State Highway 79 and cross the bridge over Holmes Creek to Vernon Park/C.E. Miller Landing, just ahead at 2899 Highway 79.

Tour Stop #17 – Holmes Creek

This beautiful spring-fed creek is one of the most pristine in Florida. It was originally called the Weekaywee Hatchee – "Spring Creek" or "Spring River" – by the Creek Indians. The name is recognizable in Florida today as Weeki Wachee, best known for the famed spring downstate that is known for its living "mermaid" shows. The name was changed to Holmes Creek during the

early 1800s. The origin of the name is debated, with some believing it honors the Creek Indian chief Holms, who migrated to the Florida Panhandle after the Creek War of 1813-1814. More recent research, however, suggests that the name actually honors Dr. Holmes, an early settler of nearby Jackson County. The creek was an important shipping route during the early days of Florida's history as a U.S. Territory. Paddlewheel steamboats came up to this point to take on cargoes of cotton, lumber, sugar and even gopher-tortoises. The creek is now a state designated paddling-trail.

From Vernon Park the tour loop returns back across the bridge into Vernon and turn lefts onto Court Avenue/State Highway 277. It continues on 277 for 0.4 mile and turns onto right onto Pioneer Road. The tour then follows Pioneer Road for 2 miles and turns right onto Sylvania Road. It then runs south on Sylvania Road for 1.1 miles to Sylvania A.M.E. Church.

Tour Stop #18 – Sylvania A.M.E. Church

This historic church was founded by African-American members from nearby Moss Hill Church during the Reconstruction years that followed the Civil War. After gaining their freedom from slavery in 1865, these men and women began to consider forming a church of their own. The Freedman's Bureau, an office of the U.S. Government, recommended that African-Americans separate themselves from the churches they had previously attended. The result was the founding of churches such as Sylvania, which have a long history of service in the South. Many of the church's founders had been baptized during the years that they attended Moss Hill and members of that congregation assisted in securing land for and building Sylvania A.M.E. Church. The church was represented at meetings of the A.M.E. denomination by the 1870s. The church's historic cemetery is located adjacent to the sanctuary.

From Sylvania A.M.E. Church, the tour retraces its route back up Sylvania Road to Pioneer Road and then left for 2 miles on Pioneer to State Road 277. There it turns right and continues for 13.3 miles on State Road 277 to Indian Oak near the highway's intersection with Brickyard Road.

Tour Stop #19 – Indian Oak

On August 31, 1842, a party of Creek warriors attacked the home of the Perkins family at Orange Hill southeast of Chipley. The house was burned and only one individual, a 7-year-old boy,

survived. A company of local volunteers led by Captain Stephen Daniel pursued the war party along a trail that led northwest from Orange Hill through today's Falling Waters State Park and finally to a sink hole near Chipley. There they found a warrior and his wife. Legend holds that Daniel and his men shot the warrior and dumped his body in the sink. Distraught by the death of her husband, the Creek woman committed suicide by hanging herself from the branches of the "Indian Oak."

The tour continues north on State Highway 277 to Historic Highway 90, where it turns right onto U.S. 90/Jackson Street. The tour then continues a short distance to the Washington County Agriculture Center at 1424 West Jackson Street, home of the Kudzu Marker.

Tour Stop #20 – Kudzu Marker

Placed in 1967, this historical marker notes that kudzu, "the vine that ate the South," was introduced to the United States as a commercial crop at Chipley in 1902. The leguminous plant is of Asian origin and was first shown in the country at the U.S. Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1876. It was occasionally used as an ornamental over the years that followed and in 1902 Charles and Lillie Pleas set some out near an outbuilding at their home. The vine grew rapidly and Mr. and Mrs. Pleas soon noticed that horses were rubbing the hair from their manes as they reached through a fence trying to graze on it. They wrote to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to determine if the vine was poisonous and a danger to their horses. The USDA wrote back that kudzu was safe, but expressed doubt as to whether livestock would actually eat it. The couple then expanded their plantings of the vine and engaged in a national marketing effort to promote kudzu. The idea caught on in 1934 when the Soil Conservation Service championed the production of kudzu and the rest is history. A small sample of live (but carefully cultivated!) kudzu grows at the base of the marker.

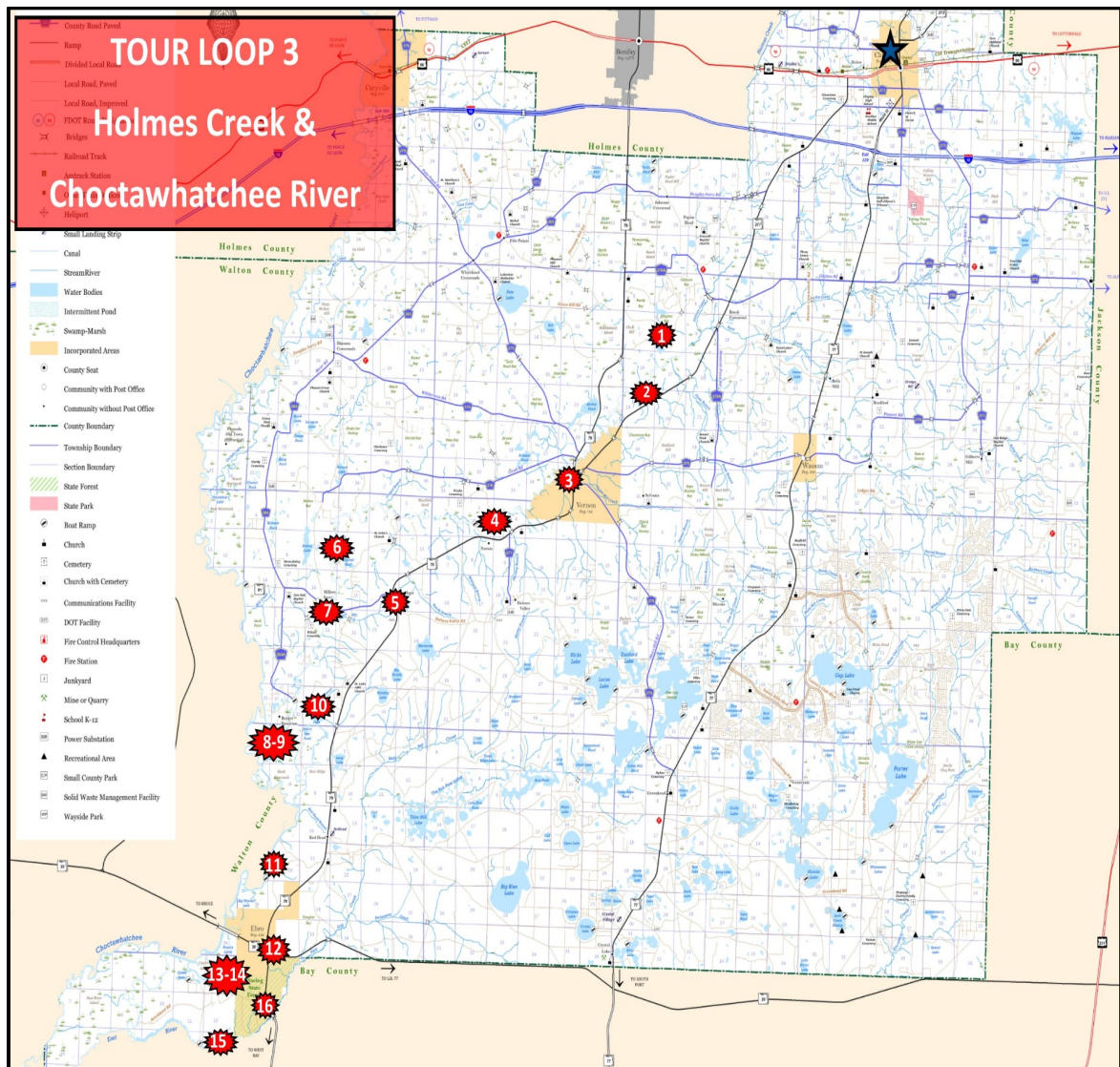
From the Kudzu Marker the tour continues east on Jackson Street/US 90 to its intersection with Main Street/State Highway 77. It then turns left on Main Street and continues back to its beginning point at the Visitor Center.

3. Springs, Creeks and the Choctawhatchee River

This tour loop carries visitors on a land journey along some of the most significant natural waters in the United States. It leaves from and returns to the Visitor Center at 672 5th Street in Chipley.

Highlights of this tour include natural springs, uniquely named Burnt Sock Landing, Holmes Creek, the Choctawhatchee River, a fiddling ghost, stories of Civil War raiders, the wreck of a paddlewheel steamboat, and Florida's first state forest.

From the Visitor Center, the tour follows 5th Street south for 250 feet to Jackson Avenue/U.S. 90. It turns right onto Jackson Avenue/U.S. 90 and continues for 1.7 miles to a left turn onto State Road 277. The route follows State Road 277 south for 7.3 miles, turns right onto Clayton Road/County Road 276-A and then continues 1.1 miles to a left turn onto Johnson Road. Ahead on Johnson Road will be Burnt Sock Landing and Burnt Sock Spring.



Tour Stop #1 – Burnt Sock Landing & Burnt Sock Spring

One of the more unusually named places in Florida, this landing and spring supposedly takes its name from the practice of hunters to enjoy a bit of liquid refreshment and a warm fire after hunting trips in the floodplain swamps of Holmes Creek. On one occasion they allowed the warmth of the fire to lull them to sleep with their feet extended in the direction of the fire so their wet socks would dry. They awakened to the smell of their scorched socks and the name Burnt Sock has been applied to the place ever since! The landing now is the site of a park featuring a landing, picnic area and views of pristine Holmes Creek. Adjacent is Burnt Sock Spring, a third magnitude freshwater spring.

The tour continues by retracing its route to County Road 276-A and then 1.1 mile back to State Road 277. It turns right onto 277 and continues south. Tour participants should watch for the brown sign leading to Cotton Landing on Holmes Creek.

Tour Stop #2 – Cotton Landing

This landing, four miles above Vernon on Holmes Creek, was an important shipping point for naval stores and other commodities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Brock & Company, a naval stores firm, operated a turpentine still here prior to the year 1900. The barrels of rosin were carried by barge from here downstream to Vernon where they were transferred onto paddlewheel steamboats. This is one of the highest points on Holmes Creek ever to be served by regular commercial navigation. Captain Wyatt Parish operated the barges as early as 1899. The site today is a pleasant park developed by the Northwest Florida Water Management District. It features a picnic area, playground and boat launch.

The tour returns to State Road 277 from the landing and continues south to the Vernon Square at the intersection of 277 and Main Street/State Road 79.

Tour Stop #3 – Gopher Shipping

Vernon, located at the head of steamboat navigation on Holmes Creek, was the “World’s Leading Gopher-Shipping Port” from 1885-1930. Gophers in this case were not the small rodents readily identifiable to visitors from many locations, but instead were large land tortoises that populated the piney woods of the Deep South. They were a prized delicacy in northern restaurants and popular with sea captains who stocked them live in the holds of their ships to provide their crews with fresh meat during long sea voyages. Today they are a protected species. When they were still a commercial commodity, however, gopher tortoises were so valuable that merchants in Vernon would accept them for trade instead of cash money. They were shipped by the thousands from the city during its heyday as a shipping port.

From the Vernon Square, the tour turns south on Main Street/State Road 79 and continues 4 miles to turn right onto Hightower Road. Ahead at 3107 Hightower Springs Road is Hightower Landing and Springs.

Tour Stop #4 – Hightower Landing & Hightower Spring

This landing on Holmes Creek is a great place to see the historic spring-fed creek. Paddlewheel steamboats once churned past this point on their way up to Vernon. Long before the first settlers arrived in the area, prehistoric American Indians hunted the forests around Hightower Landing and paddled on the creek in their dugout canoes. Adjoining the park is Hightower Spring, a third-magnitude spring that flows from active sand boils at the bottom of the spring pool. The spring is 21 feet deep and feeds a run or stream that flows 100 feet into Holmes Creek just down from the boat ramp. The park also offers picnicking, restrooms and a boat launch.

From Hightower Landing, the tour retraces its route back to State Road 79 and turns right (south). It then continues 3.4 miles to the community of New Hope and the site of Vallombrosa.

Tour Stop #5 – Vallombrosa

This site at the western end of the Holmes Valley escarpment provides a beautiful view of the lower lands that fade away to the coast. It was selected in 1821 by James Bright and his son-in-law, Nicholas H. Mitchell, who came in search of a place to develop their plantation. In addition to its view, the hilltop at today's New Hope offered access to good farm lands, plenty of timber and nearby freshwater springs that provided both water and power for mill wheels. Bright built a massive three-story mansion here. The entire third floor was dedicated to use as a ballroom. Mitchell built the Mitchell Mansion nearby. They named their community Vallombrosa, a name that appears in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Stagecoach lines connected Vallombrosa to Pensacola, where Bright and Mitchell maintained winter homes. The two men and their enslaved workers were called upon in 1832 to build Pensacola's beautiful Christ Church. The community fell into decline during the late 1830s. This decline accelerated after Bright died at his home on June 29, 1840, and Mitchell moved with his family to Mississippi. No trace of the once thriving community remains today.

The tour continues by turning right onto Millers Ferry Road/County Road 284 and continuing for 1.4 miles to a right turn onto Hammack Road. It then continues on Hammack for 1 mile to a left turn onto Live Oak Landing Road. Live Oak Landing is straight ahead.

Tour Stop #6 – Live Oak Landing

This landing was a shipping point on Holmes Creek during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Paddlewheel steamboats making their way to and from Vernon stopped here to take on cargo. Popular today with outdoor enthusiasts, the park offers a nice spot for a picnic, canoeing and wildlife viewing.

The tour retraces its route from the landing back down Hammack Road to Millers Ferry Road/County Road 284 and turns right. It then continues 1.2 miles to the community of Millers Ferry.

Tour Stop #7 – Millers Ferry

This community grew around a ferry established on Holmes Creek by William Miller in 1824. Ferry service at this site continued to operate until 1951 when the modern bridge was built. At one point in the late 19th century the community was home to the mercantile firms of F.W. Woodward, A.Q. Jones, Mobley & Brock, and J.W. Cravey & Company. The end of the ferry seemed to come in 1889 when the Washington County Commission approved the building of a wooden bridge over the creek at the ferry site. The bridge lasted only a few seasons before being declared unsafe, however, and travelers resumed using the ferry. A series of operators, including W.H. Carmichael, W.H. Fuller, J.J. Skipper, J.M. Fuller and others, ran the ferry until it was replaced by the concrete bridge in 1951. Paddlewheel steamboats stopped at Millers Ferry to take on cargo and commerce as they churned their way up and down Holmes Creek to Vernon. The community's post office operated from 1879-1953.

From Millers Ferry, the tour continues west on Millers Ferry Road for 1.1 mile and then turns left onto Shell Landing Road/County Road 284A. It continues south on this road for 3.1 miles and then turns right onto Boynton Cutoff Road. It then follows Boynton Cutoff Road until it dead-ends at Boynton Cutoff Landing.

Tour Stop #8 – Boynton Cutoff Landing

This area was the home of Moses “Mose” Boyington who relocated here from Alabama in the decades before the Civil War. His home was across the cutoff from the landing on Boynton Island

(the name was contracted from Boyington to Boynton over the years). The water that you see before you flows from the Choctawhatchee River across a narrow neck of land to Holmes Creek. Because of its natural levees, the Choctawhatchee flows at a slightly higher elevation than Holmes Creek. It slowly cut its way through this neck of land, creating Boynton Cutoff and Boynton Island. A Confederate camp was located in this vicinity during the early years of the Civil War, but it was abandoned and the troops moved to other points in 1862.

Directly across from Boynton Cutoff Landing is Boynton Island, known for the mysterious tale of the “Fiddling Ghost of Boynton Island.”

Tour Stop #9 – The Ghost of Boynton Island

Mose Boyington served for a time in the Confederate army but soon grew weary of military life and left without leave. He returned home to Boynton Island where he lived in his sprawling log house with other members of his family. The large isolated island became the hideout of a notorious gang of outlaws called Jim Ward’s Raiders. Most of these men were Confederate deserters although a few were Southern Unionists who fled into the swamps rather than serve the Confederate army. From its base on Boynton Island, the raiders struck homes and communities across Northwest Florida and South Alabama. In 1863 they burned the courthouse in Elba, Alabama, and in 1865 fought Confederate cavalry upstream at Douglas’ Ferry. After the war, Boynton resumed his trade as a logger, floating large cypress logs down the Choctawhatchee to the mills at Point Washington. He often entertained himself in the night by playing his fiddle and its sound became well-known to other loggers as they made their way down the river. After Boyington passed away and his house was abandoned, however, these tough men of the woods claimed that they could still hear the sounds of old Mose fiddling as they passed his island. The music was often accompanied by the sounds of ghosts dancing. Reclaimed by the swamps of the 2,200 acre island, the house no longer stands but the legend of the fiddling ghost lives on.

From Boynton Cutoff Landing, the tour retraces its way to State Road 79 via Shell Landing Road/County Road 284A and Millers Ferry Road. It then turns right (south) onto State Road 79 and continues for 3.7 miles and turns right onto Potter Spring Road. It continues along this road to Potter Springs.

Tour Stop #10 – Potter Springs

Potter Springs is one of a series of natural freshwater springs that feed Mill Lake and Spring Run before flowing into the Choctawhatchee River via the lowest stretch of Holmes Creek. Its waters powered the wheels of gristmills and sawmills over the years. It is now a popular recreation spot, noted for picnicking and its boat launch.

The tour continues by retracing its route back along Potter Spring Road to State Road 79 and turning right. It then follows State Road 79 for 6 miles and turns right onto Cedar Tree Landing Road. The road deadends at Cedar Tree Landing on the Choctawhatchee River.

Tour Stop #11 – Cedar Tree Landing

This landing offers a beautiful view of the pristine Choctawhatchee River. Used by paddlewheel steamboats during the 19th and early 20th centuries, it has been a landmark for many years. It was here in the 1930s that the paddlewheel steamboat Captain Fritz (Tour Stop #15) caught fire. Carrying a large cargo of highly flammable pine rosin, the boat was cut loose from shore and abandoned by her crew. She was engulfed in flames as she drifted down the river and finally sank one mile north of Cowford Landing. Now a popular recreation spot, Cedar Tree Landing is well known for the beautiful views it offers of the Choctawhatchee River. The landing features picnic areas and a boat ramp.

From Cedar Tree Landing, the tour retraces its route over Cedar Tree Landing Road and turns right (South) onto State Road 79 and continue into Ebro.

Tour Stop #12 – Ebro

This town has existed as a community since the 19th century and is believed to be named for the Ebro River in Spain. Its post office was designated in 1897 and the community incorporated as a municipality in 1967. It is best known for Ebro Greyhound Park, a large attraction located at 6558 Dog Track Road. The entertainment facility is known for its races, race simulcasts, poker room and dining facilities. Ebro Greyhound Park opened in 1955 and employs a work force of 200 people. Ebro is located on the Choctawhatchee River and originated as a center for the timber and

turpentine industries. It is unique among Northwest Florida cities in that American Indians make up its second largest demographic group.

From the intersection of State Road 79 and State Road 20 in Ebro, the tour turns right onto State Road 20 and continues for 0.7 mile before making a left turn onto Strickland Road. It follows Strickland for 1.1 mile before turning right on Little Acre Road for 0.1 mile and then left onto Cowford Road. The road ends at the Cowford, a spot famous in Florida history.

Tour Stop #13 – The Cowford

This spot gained its name because Cowford Island divides the Choctawhatchee River into two branches here, making it possible for early herders to ford or wade their cattle over the river. It was an important crossing point for American Indians long before the first Spanish explorers reached the area. A force of Christian Apalachee Indian Militia from the Spanish fort of San Luis (Tallahassee) crossed the Choctawhatchee here in 1677 on its way to attack a fortified village of Chisca (Yuchi) Indians to the west in what is now Walton County. The Chisca had been attacking the homes of the Catholic Apalachee and carrying away their family members into slavery. The British noted the Cowford on a map prepared during the American Revolution and by the time Florida became part of the United States in 1821 it was a well-known crossing point. The Old Federal Road, built by the U.S. Government during the 1820s to connect Pensacola with St. Augustine, crossed the river at this point.

Also at Cowford Landing is the tour stop for the Wreck of the Captain Fritz:

Tour Stop #14 – The Wreck of the Captain Fritz

Approximately one mile north of this point is the wreck of the steamboat Captain Fritz. The paddlewheel vessel was built at Moss Point, Mississippi, in 1892. She was 101 feet long, 21.6 feet wide and had a draft of 4.5 feet, shallow enough that she could travel on the Choctawhatchee River and Holmes Creek. Her name came from that of her owner, Fritz Lienhard. The boat was carrying a massive cargo of rosin when she caught fire at Cedar Tree Landing in the 1930s. Her crew cut loose her moorings and allowed her to float with the current of the Choctawhatchee. The rosin fed the fire and the boat was soon completely engulfed. She sank to the bottom one mile

north of Cowford Landing. The wreckage of the boat is still there and timbers, boilers and other parts can be seen during times of low water.

From Cowford Landing, the tour returns to Strickland Road, turns right and follows Strickland a short distance to Tyler Ferry Road. It turns left and follows Tyler Ferry Road until it dead ends at Pine Log Creek.

Tour Stop #15 – The Raid on Cedar Bluff

Downstream from this point is Cedar Bluff, an important early landing. Captain Gabriel Floyd's company from the 4th Florida Infantry was camped at Cedar Bluff on February 8, 1864. The Confederates were surprised at 10 p.m. that night by a raiding party of 35 men from the 7th Vermont Veteran Volunteers and what would become the 1st Florida Cavalry (U.S.), a regiment of Confederate deserters and Southern Unionists. Led by Captain James Galloway of the 1st Florida (U.S.) and Lieutenant James Ross of the 7th Vermont, the Union force surrounded Floyd's camp and demanded its surrender. Caught completely by surprise, two lieutenants and 50 Confederate soldiers surrendered without firing a shot. The Federals and their prisoners left camp at 4 a.m. on the morning of February 9, but at about noon were charged on by a company of Confederate cavalymen. The prisoners were freed and Galloway, Ross and 16 of their 32 men were captured along with their arms, ammunition and four teams of mules.

The tour retraces Tyler Ferry and Strickland Roads back to State Road 20, turns left and then follows 20 for 0.7 miles and turns right (south) onto State Road 79. It continues a short distance until it enters Pine Log State Forest and then turns right on Environmental Road to the state forest recreation area.

Tour Stop #16 – Pine Log State Forest

Pine Log State Forest is Florida's oldest state forest. Its original 6,670 acres were purchased in 1936 from the Henderson-Waits Lumber Company for only \$1.73 per acre. Two years later another 240 acres were purchased from Mr. Wiley Kemp and Mrs. Bessie Lee Kemp for \$3.50 per acre. The forest today contains approximately 7,000 acres in Washington and Bay Counties. The 2-mile Campground Trail, 5.5 mile Fay and Dutch Bike Trail and a portion of the Florida National Scenic Trail can be enjoyed in the Washington County section of the forest. The forest

protects a variety of endangered, threatened, and species of special concern. Among these are the flatwoods salamander, gopher tortoise, southern milkweed, white-top pitcher-plant and Chapman's crownbeard.

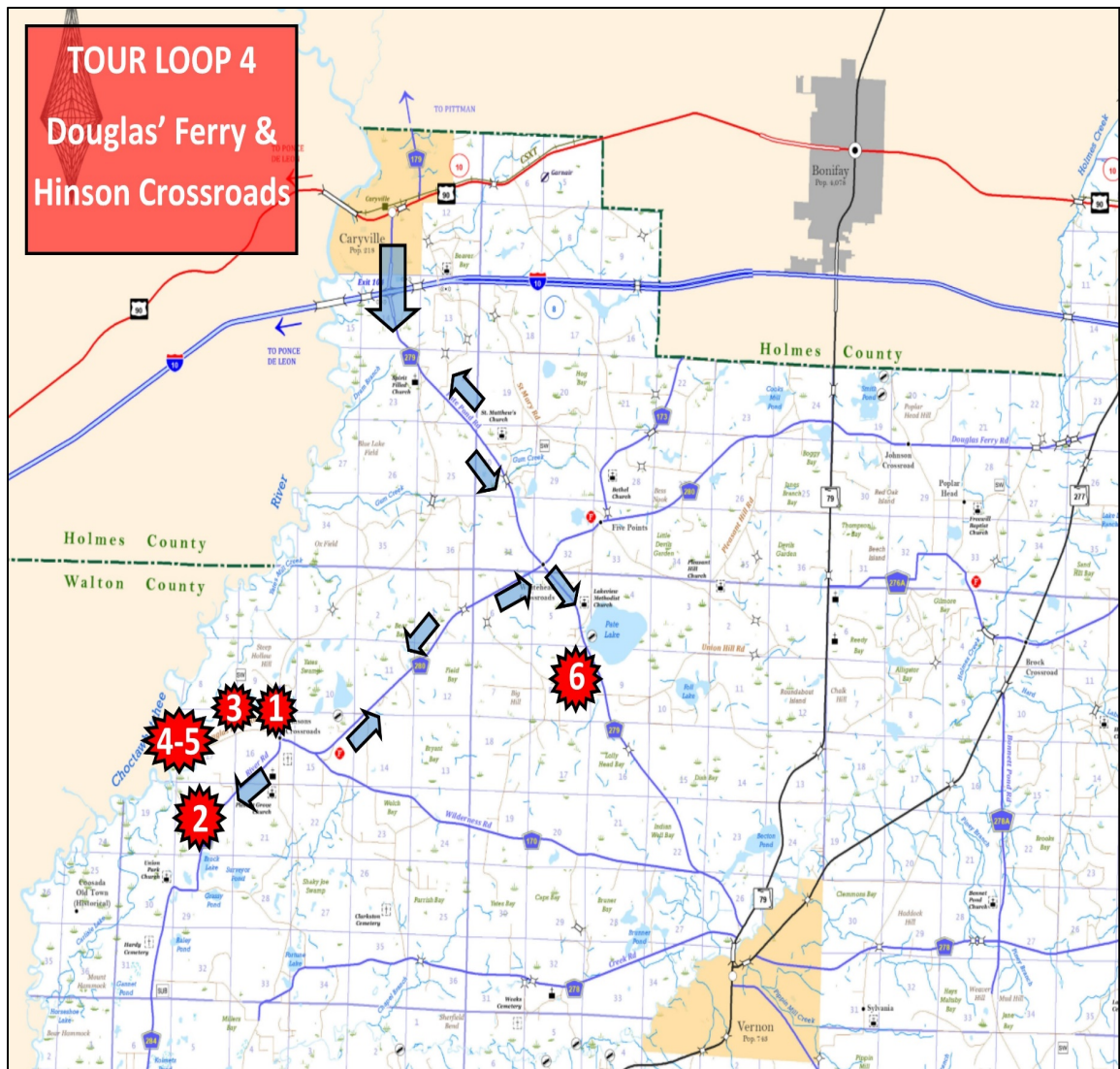
From the Pine Log State Forest, the tour loop returns to Vernon on State Road 79. There it turns right onto State Road 277 and returns to its starting point in Chipley.

4. Raiders, River & Sacred Harp Singing

This short tour loop leads south from Caryville to several fascinating historic sites as well as great places for viewing the scenic Choctawhatchee River and one of Washington County's most beautiful natural lakes.

Highlights include Hinson Crossroads, a unique community founded because it was liked by hogs; Douglas Ferry, the site of an antebellum ferry crossing and a Civil War battle; Pleasant Grove Methodist Church, where remarkable Sacred Harp singings have taken place; and Pate Lake, a beautiful natural lake surrounded by rolling hills.

The tour begins at Caryville Town Hall, located at 4436 Old Spanish Trail, Caryville, Florida. From the proposed Historic Highway 90 Corridor kiosk at town hall, it leads east on U.S. 90 for 0.2 miles and turns right onto Waits Avenue/County Road 279. It then follows County Road 279 for 5.8 miles and turns right onto Douglas Ferry Road/County Road 280. It continues on Douglas Ferry Road/County Road 280 for 5.3 miles to Hinson Crossroads at the intersection of Douglas Ferry Road with River Road/County Road 284. The tour turns left onto River Road and immediately on the right can be seen a historical marker for Hinson Crossroads.



Tour Stop #1 – Hinson Crossroads

This charming small community owes its existence to hogs. Harrison and Joshua Hinson, two brothers from Jackson County, came here in around 1887 with five hogs seeking land to homestead. After exploring the area, they released the hogs and then returned after a season to settle permanently. The hogs flourished and the brothers found they had a number of swine when they returned to set up farming. Their families joined them and the community of Hinson Crossroads soon grew on the spot. At its height, the village was home to a number of businesses including a grocery store and even a millinery shop where women and girls bought their hats and bonnets.

From the main intersection at Hinson Crossroads, the tour continues 0.1 miles south on River Road and turns left onto Shakey Joe Road. It then follows Shakey Joe Road 0.6 miles to Pleasant Grove Methodist Church and Cemetery.

Tour Stop #2 – Pleasant Grove Church & Sacred Harp Singing

This historic church and cemetery was founded during the 1880s by members of the Hinson family as they settled at Hinson Crossroads. It was also the location of Pleasant Grove School, established in 1883 with W.W. Parish and S. Johnson as its original trustees. The former individual had settled at Pleasant Grove in the 1850s. The church was the location of many “Sacred Harp” or “Four-Note” Singings over the years. This unique and beautiful form of choral music originated in the South during the 1840s. Sacred Harp singing is done with no instruments by four sections of singers that sit in a hollow-square arrangement. Altos, trebles, tenors and basses are grouped together. The leader, who “calls” the song to be performed next, faces the tenors from the center of the square. The resulting harmony, taught by the use of shaped notes, is astoundingly beautiful. One Sacred Harp session at Pleasant Grove lasted for three days. Adjacent to the church is its historic cemetery, which contains the graves of many pioneers of the area.

From the church and cemetery, the tour retraces its route back north on Shakey Joe Road to the intersection of River Road and Douglas Ferry Road. It turns left onto Douglas Ferry Road, which becomes a canopy road as it approaches the Choctawhatchee River. In approximately 1 mile the tour passes through the canopy section of the road.

Tour Stop #3 – Douglas Ferry Road

This historic road, worn deep into the earth by more than 175 years of traffic, was for many years a main traffic route from Washington County to all points west. Established in the 1830s, it led from Miller’s Ferry over Holmes Creek to Douglas Ferry on the Choctawhatchee River. The road offered major improvements over previous routes downstream in that it was useable almost year-round, while more southern routes often flooded. Approved by Florida’s Territorial Legislature, the road became an important stagecoach and mail route. It was a predecessor of today’s Historic Highway 90 and stretched from this point east to Quincy and Tallahassee while to the west it

extended to Pensacola. It remained in use as a major route until the Old Spanish Trail highway – today's U.S. 90 – was completed during the 1920s.

The tour continues west on Douglas Ferry Road for another 1.4 miles to Washington County's Douglas Ferry Park. This part features picnic tables, a boat ramp, and beautiful views of the Choctawhatchee River.

Tour Stop #4 – Douglas Ferry

A ferry was established at this site during the early days of U.S. settlement in Florida by Alexander Douglas. Part of the large community of Scottish immigrants and their descendants that settled in the Euchee Valley of today's Walton County, Douglas was impressed by the potential of this site for a high water route crossing of the Choctawhatchee River. The first ferry was a large wooden barge or "flat" that moved back and forth across the river on a strong rope line. It was destroyed by Union troops on September 23, 1864, as they advanced up the opposite side of the river on their way to the Battle of Marianna. A small but sharp battle was fought on this site near the end of the Civil War between Confederate soldiers and Jim Ward's Raiders, a guerrilla unit made up of Confederate deserters and Southern Unionists. The ferry was rebuilt after the war and operated for another 70 years until the completion of the Old Spanish Trail national highway (U.S. 90) made its continued use unnecessary.

Also at Douglas Ferry is the site of a Civil War battle.

Tour Stop #5 – Battle of Douglas Ferry

A small but sharp battle took place on this ground during the closing days of the Civil War. A detachment of Confederate soldiers from Company A, 5th Florida Cavalry was doing patrol duty when it ran into Jim Ward's Raiders at Douglas Ferry on March 23, 1865. Ward's raiders was a company of outlaw guerrillas made up of Confederate deserters and Southern Unionists. Rather than fight for either side, they retreated into the swamps and spent the war raiding communities and homes throughout Northwest Florida and South Alabama. Lt. Joseph Barnes, commander of the Confederate patrol, launched a cavalry attack on a much larger force of Ward's Raiders here, but was driven back. When he attacked a second time, the raiders broke for the woods but behind they left the body of Lieutenant Frank M. Stovall. He had been executed by the raiders, who took

his sword, pistol and even the buttons from his coat. It was the last recorded Civil War encounter in Washington County.

From Douglas Ferry, the tour loop retraces its route for 7.1 miles to the intersection with Pate Pond Road/County Road 279. It turns right onto Pate Pond Road and continues for 1.2 miles to the Pate Pond Dock at 3093B Pate Pond Road, Caryville, FL.

Tour Stop #6 – Pate Lake

This beautiful freshwater lake was originally called Yates Lake and later Pate Pond. It has long been popular for fishing and recreation. American Indians hunted and fished the lake area for hundreds of years before the first U.S. settlers arrived. Settlers and residents have continued to enjoy it as a place for fishing and boating ever since. This lake is unique from the large ones in other parts of Washington County because it is part of the DeFuniak-Bonifay Karst Hills. The rolling hills around Pate Lake were formed by stream erosion thousands of years ago as a river delta flowed across what is now the Florida Panhandle. The lake is more than one-mile long from east to west. High hills approach the water from several directions, adding to the beautiful natural scenery. Alligators larger than 11-feet long have been reported in Pate Lake!

Leaving Pate Lake, the tour loop retraces its route north on Pate Pond Road/County Road 279 to its starting point at Caryville Town Hall. The distance is approximately 7 miles.

VII. Additional Recommendations

The development of proper interpretation through the use of kiosks, historical markers and highway signage is an important step in the development of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor, but it is only a first step.

To fully recognize the potential of the corridor to attract tourism traffic, improve community quality of life and stimulate economic progress, additional steps are essential to create an optimum, multi-platform visitor experience. Specific recommendations are outlined below:

1. Corridor Beautification & Enhancement

A. Gateway Beautification

The primary gateways to the Historic Highway 90 Corridor from Jackson County to the east, Holmes County to the west, Interstate 10 at Chipley and Caryville, and State Highway 79 North at Chipley will provide the first impression most visitors receive of the Washington County sections. The enhancement of these gateways will do much to assure that this first impression is a positive one. This is essential, as “word of blog” and “word of Twitter” travel much faster than “word of mouth” these days. The following actions are recommended:

- a. Placement of the corridor “Welcome” signs described in the segment recommendations should be coupled with suitable, easily maintained but attractive, affordable landscaping. Native plants, flowers, etc. provide attractive and ecologically-aware enhancements to community and county welcome signs.
- b. In addition to the “Welcome” signs, consider larger “Welcome to Washington County” signs and landscaping at all key gateways (U.S. 90 East and West in both the Chipley and Caryville sections, the Interstate 10 exits at Chipley and Caryville, and State Highway 79 North and South).
- c. Focus litter collection and mowing efforts at each of the key gateways to assure that grass is always mown, shrubs are trimmed and litter is removed as quickly as possible.

- d. Interact with property owners to encourage landscape and structural beautification. Coordinate this effort with the Chamber of Commerce, City of Chipley, Town of Caryville, Florida Department of Transportation and other key stakeholders.
- e. Focus on unoccupied and/or abandoned properties in gateway areas to make sure that lawns and shrubs are maintained.

B. Caryville Landing

This landing is a vital resource for the Historic Highway 90 Corridor in that it provides the only access to the Choctawhatchee River along the Washington County section. While the landing is flood-prone due to untamed nature of the Choctawhatchee River, enhancements are necessary and will improve the experience of visiting the landing for citizens and visitors alike. It could also become a focal point of pride for the Caryville community. The following recommendations should help:

- a. As noted in the corridor recommendations, informational signage is needed on U.S. 90 to direct visitors to the landing.
- b. Improve maintenance of the picnic area by mowing the grass more often, clearing litter, pruning trees to provide a clear field of view for safety, adding attractive fencing and repainting picnic tables as needed.
- c. Work with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Florida Department Transportation to secure funding for an improved parking area at the landing itself. Time and the elements are doing damage, as is vehicle traffic through the mud beneath the bridge.
- d. Open a better vista of the river on the left (south) side of the ramp to provide visitors and residents an improved view of the Choctawhatchee.
- e. Work with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to improve placement and attractiveness of mounting signage at the landing.
- f. As the proposed paddling trail is approved, join the effort with informational signage at the landing.

C. General Corridor Enhancement

Additional attention should be focused to enhancing the beauty, cleanliness and improvement of the entire Historic Highway 90 Corridor through Washington County. These recommendations are offered:

- a. Develop a program for encouraging resident and property owners along U.S. Highway 90 to join in the Corridor effort. Perhaps form a “Friends of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor” under the umbrella of the Washington County Historical Society and the Tourist Development Council. This effort will help identify additional sites and properties of significance for future interpretation expansion and encourage enhancement and beautification of properties along the corridor.
- b. Establish a “Historic 90 Pride” award program to publicly honor those who maintain beautiful properties and landscaping along the corridor, establish new businesses, expand existing businesses, or enhance existing structures.
- c. Work with the Florida Department of Transportation to establish additional wildflower plots along U.S. 90 and to develop ideas for other landscape enhancements.
- d. Work with the Florida Department of Transportation’s district scenic highways coordinator to have both segments of U.S. 90 through Washington County designated as Florida Scenic Highways (or part of a multi-county scenic highway).

2. **Chipley Main Street**

The Chipley main street area (North and South Railroad Avenue and adjoining blocks) is a major heritage treasure not just for Washington County, but for the entire Historic Highway 90 Corridor, State of Florida and the nation. This unique railroad-focused downtown area still includes a remarkable number of original structures and an active business community. Existing steps taken by the Tourist Development Council, City of Chipley, Washington County Historical Society and other organization to capitalize on this asset are well-considered and noteworthy. Specific recommendations include:

- A. Re-establish the Chipley Main Street effort. The city did maintain a Main Street effort in the 1980s but it has lapsed. Main Street organizations are on the upswing across Northwest Florida at this time, with solid tourism and economic results. A Main Street organization would be a major stakeholder in representing commercial interests while also assisting in the enhancement of the Main Street District.
- B. Seek National Historic District status for the Main Street District as defined in the historical structure assessment done for the City of Chipley several decades ago.

Virtually all of the assets identified in this study still exist and it provides a wealth of information on the history, architecture and potential of the Main Street District.

- C. In addition to the specific sites identified in the corridor segments of this plan, implement the placement of attractive, small wall plaques on historic structures along North and South Railroad Avenues and adjoining blocks. This could use language such as “Old City Hall” and the date of construction. Visitors consistently ask how old buildings are and these would provide instant answers while also enhancing the attractiveness of the area.

3. Systems for Immediate Information

Tourism is changing with increasing speed due to rapidly improving technologies for delivery of information. Brochures and printed maps still have their place, of course, but a large and growing segment of the traveling population now expects to have current and immediate information available by web, mobile site and phone/tablet app. This technology is inexpensive and the dividends it produces are high. Consider the following recommendations:

- A. Immediately develop a mobile-friendly process for www.visitwashingtoncountyfl.com. Not only is the number of users accessing the internet through mobile devices surging, but Google and other search providers are moving to systems that rank sites based both on information and mobile friendliness. This enhancement is vital.
- B. Work cooperatively with other counties in the Historic Highway 90 Corridor (Gadsden, Jackson, Holmes and Walton) to develop an overall, mobile-friendly, website for the corridor, with specific sections that break away to each county’s Tourist Development Council website.
- C. Develop a mobile apps that provide the following:
 - a. Current information on key points of interest along the Historic Highway 90 Corridor.
 - b. Current information on accommodations and restaurants along the corridor.
 - c. Current information on heritage-related businesses along the corridor (i.e. antiques, unique shops, businesses located in historic structures, etc.)
 - d. Emergency and road conditions/roadwork along the corridor.

- D. Place a digital billboard on Historic Highway 90 at Chipley to provide changing information on activities and events, coupled with information on sites of interest along the corridor.
- E. Activate low power digital radio stations in Chipley and Caryville. These “traveler information” FM stations are inexpensive to build and operate and are used by cities, parks and organizations to provide tourism information across the nation. Placement of signs that simply say “Tune to FM ---.- for Tourist Information” will direct visitors to their frequencies. These stations work on a pre-recorded rotation and no staffing is necessary.

4. Marketing

As the corridor is developed, marketing will be essential to begin the process of drawing travelers from Interstate 10 and attracting those who are planning “off the beaten path” vacations. The following steps are recommended:

- A. Rely heavily on the marketing expertise of the Tourism Director for developing solid cooperation with Visit Florida, the other four counties in the corridor and individual communities in the corridor.
- B. Develop a major news coverage initiative that will focus on press conferences and visual events for print, new media, television and radio coverage. Conduct press tours for travel writers. Help coordinate stories on individual points of interest for print and television journalists.
- C. Target any advertising dollars spent based on the flow of tourists through the visitor center and other locations along the corridor. For example, if visitors from a specific city appear to be traveling the corridor at a higher rate than visitors from elsewhere, find out how they learned about it through conversations and surveys and then target marketing to that city to expand interest.
- D. Place permanent billboards on both east and west-bound lanes of Interstate 10 near both the Chipley and Caryville exits, encouraging drivers to “Drive Historic Highway 90.”
- E. Become a contributing county to the “Old Spanish Trail” Centennial effort currently being promoted along the route of the historic national highway developed in 1915-1929. Numerous cities and counties, large and small, have joined in this effort and it

would be extremely beneficial to the marketing of the Washington County segments for the county to join this grass-roots effort.

- F. Develop and place brochures, maps and other printed materials in Welcome Centers, museums, visitor centers and parks throughout the area.

5. Washington County Historical Society Museum

This excellent museum is a major asset to the entire Historic Highway 90 Corridor. It is maintained by the Washington County Historical Society and is currently open to the public one day per week.

- A. Provide financial assistance to the society in expanding the square footage of the existing facility to create more exhibit space.
- B. Seek state and federal grant funding to enhance and expand this facility.
- C. Provide funding for a part-time employee to expand the open hours of the facility to at least mid-morning to mid-afternoon Monday-Saturday.
- D. Maintain keys for the museum at the Visitor Center and a list of volunteers who could open the museum and provide tours for visitors on short notice. Place a notice on the museum door when closed that explains tours can be arranged by calling or stopping by the Visitor Center during regular business hours.

6. Falling Waters State Park

A jewel of the Florida State Park system, Falling Waters is suffering problems from its own success. The campground is often filled to capacity and visitors hoping to camp must be turned away. The waterfall is also a signature of Washington County.

- A. Work with the park, state officials and the local legislative delegation to secure funding for expanding the campground, adding additional property, building cabins and placing other amenities that will serve its growing base of overnight visitors.
- B. Work with the park, state officials and the local legislative delegation to secure funding for a permanent live webcam at the waterfall that can be used to show visitors water conditions via web, mobile phone and app.
- C. Work with the park, state officials and the local legislative delegation to enhance the experience of visiting Falling Waters for visitors of all abilities. Many disabled visitors

cannot now see the waterfall. With the aging of the “Baby Boom” generation, additional focus on access to such points of interest for visitors of all abilities should be a major priority.

7. Other Recommendations

- A. Work with the Chamber of Commerce, county planners, city leaders and others to develop additional camping capacity in Washington County. RV hookups are needed as the campgrounds at Falling Waters State Park are often filled to capacity.
- B. Expand the Geocache trail to include all of the sites being interpreted for the Historic Highway 90 Corridor.
- C. Continue to assemble stakeholders on a regular basis and transition them into a working advisory group as the corridor development goes forward.
- D. Work with the Nature Conservancy to develop access to the Rock Hill Preserve near Chipley. This remarkable natural feature would make a fantastic addition to Falling Waters State Park, which already interprets the similar geology of Falling Waters Hill. The Nature Conservancy often works with Florida’s state parks to arrange reasonably priced sales of its lands.

VIII. Appendices

Appendix One: Historical Resources Guide

Historic Highway 90 Corridor

Historical Resources Guide

Washington County, Florida

Washington County is Florida's twelfth county and was established by act of the Territorial Legislative Council in 1825. When first established, the county stretched all the way to the Gulf of Mexico and was more than twice the size of the state of Delaware. Most of the original settlers built small farms for themselves and only a few plantations were established within the Washington County limits. It was still sparsely populated by the time of the Civil War. The arrival of the P&A (later L&N and now the CSX) railroad in 1881 ignited growth in the county and the founding of the City of Chipley, today's county seat. The Historic Highway 90 Corridor passes through two parts of northern Washington County.

Museums and Historical Societies

Two points of interest provide museum exhibits and help visitors learn more about the Washington County sections of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. Both are located in Chipley.

- The Washington County Historical Society Museum is located in a railroad-themed structure. Open on Fridays, the museum features exhibits and historical archives that interpret the long history of Washington County. Popular with visitors is an original moonshine still dating from the early 20th century.
- The Old City Hall and Visitor Center can be found in Chipley's Old City Hall on Fifth Street. The beautiful old brick building dates from 1929 and was built in the Mediterranean Revival Style. Exhibits and tourist information are available in the main lobby which is open Monday-Friday during regular business hours.

Archaeological Sites

Washington County's prehistory is not as well understood as that of some of its neighboring counties. Only limited archaeological research has taken place within the Historic Highway 90 Corridor but two areas of archaeological interest have been identified.

- Falling Waters State Park at Chipley is home to a cluster of prehistoric American Indian sites that date as far back as the Archaic era (1000 B.C.-4000 B.C.). Points and other stone tools found in the park were used by prehistoric hunters as they searched for buffalo, white-tailed deer and other game.
- The Mahs Farm Site is located on Holmes Creek just south of Historic Highway 90. It is believed to date from the Deptford time period (500 B.C.-200 A.D.) and was a small village or habitation site.

Civil War & Reconstruction

Washington County was divided in its loyalties as Florida debated leaving the Union in 1861. The majority of the county's men enlisted in the Confederate army, but a large minority enrolled to fight for the Union as members of the First and Second Florida U.S. Cavalry Regiments. Several raids targeted the county during the Civil War and the last action on the Choctawhatchee River took place at Douglas' Ferry in the Historic Highway 90 Corridor.

- The "Bloomer Raid" is the name given to an expedition carried out by Union forces to capture the civilian steamboat "Bloomer" on the Choctawhatchee River. Led by Acting Master Elias D. Bruner of the USS *Charlotte* and Lieutenant James H. Steward of the 91st New York Infantry, a party of men from the Union army and navy slipped up the river by land and seized the *Bloomer* just north of the Alabama line near the town of Geneva. It took them 24-hours to get the boat running, but they were able to head downstream with her on the morning of December 28, 1862. Late that evening and early the next morning the boat steamed past present-day Caryville Landing and Douglas' Ferry.
- The Skirmish of Douglas' Ferry took place on March 23, 1865, and was the last recorded action of the Civil War in the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. A detachment of 15 men from Company A, 5th Florida Cavalry, battled and ultimately defeated a group of 50 deserters led by Jim Ward at Douglas' Ferry. One of the soldiers, Lieutenant Frank Stovall, was killed. The deserters fled into the swamps.

The Late 19th & Early 20th Centuries

The coming of the P&A Railroad (later the L&N and today the CSX) at the end of the Reconstruction era brought new prosperity to Washington County. Paddlewheel steamboats operating on Holmes Creek and the Choctawhatchee River provided an outlet for the farm goods, timber and naval stores of the county, but it was the arrival of the railroad that brought the county to life. Communities including Chipley, Aycock, Hagerman and Caryville were founded along the railroad. Chipley, named for P&A

President Col. W.D. Chipley, boomed and is today the county seat. Its more than 100 historic structures stand as reminders of the success brought by the railroad.

- Aycock was an important lumber and naval stores town and industrial center located where the L&N railroad crossed the boundary between Washington and Jackson Counties. A number of steam-powered sawmills and planing mills operated at Aycock, which was a “factory town” of the Aycock Bros. Lumber Company.
- The National Egg-Laying Test was established in 1926 along Historic Highway 90 east of Chipley. The facility played a major role in the development and expansion of commercial poultry production in the United States.
- The W.D. Chipley Monument in Chipley pays tribute to the town’s namesake. It stands within view of today’s CSX Railroad and the Chipley Depot.
- The Farrior-Huggins House on Sixth Street in Chipley is believed to be the city’s oldest standing structure. Of Frame Vernacular Design it was built in 1885
- The First National Bank Building at the intersection of South Railroad Avenue and Fifth Street in Chipley was built in 1905 and is Washington County’s only structure of the Second Empire style. The building symbolized Chipley’s growth as a commercial center and boasts a mansard roof with 20 gable dormers.
- The Porter Building, now the home of Habitat for Humanity, was built on North Railroad Avenue in 1900 using the Masonry Vernacular design. Its unique parapet, center gable and oculus vents make it one of Washington County’s most ornate commercial buildings.
- Chipley’s South Third Street National Historic District stretches along Third Street from Historic Highway 90 to South Boulevard. The district was established on February 2, 1989, as Washington County’s first historic district and is noted for its thirteen contributing structures, several of them built using the increasingly rare Queen Anne style of architecture.
- The Butler House is located at 731 Third Street within Chipley’s South Third Street National Historic District. Built in circa 1902, it is one of the best preserved examples of Queen Anne architecture in Northwest Florida
- The First United Methodist Church of Chipley faces Historic Highway 90 and was built in 1903 to replace an earlier structure destroyed in a “cyclone.” This was the location of the Cates Union Revival of 1916, one of the most dramatic religious events in the history of Florida. Supported by the congregations of several other of the city’s churches, the revival led to the conversion and baptism of 700 people in the town of 1,500.
- The Ghost of the Lime Sink is one of the oldest folk stories encountered along the Historic Highway 90 Corridor in Washington County. Legend holds that the silent ghost of Netta McMillan can be seen moving across the water of a lime sink on foggy, moonlight nights. The girl drowned here in the Spring of 1890 and her body was never recovered.
- Falling Waters State Park at Chipley is home to Florida’s tallest waterfall and one of its first oil wells. The waterfall is 73 feet high and falls into a 20-foot wide cylindrical sinkhole that is more than 100 feet deep. The park is home to the Falling Waters Sinks State Geological Area which is known for its numerous caves and sinkholes. The capped oil well can be seen along the nature trails.
- The Kudzu Marker on Historic Highway 90 in Chipley pays tribute to the community’s role in the introduction and spread of the Kudzu vine in the Southeastern United States. The efforts of a Washington County couple, Charles and Lillie Pleas, were responsible for the 1934 decision by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service to promote the production of kudzu. The “vine that ate the South” is now found in all corners of the South and has been known to swallow utility poles, buildings and even mountainsides in a single year.

- Hagerman was a sawmill town established in circa 1894 on the east side of Holmes Creek in Washington County. It was a “company town” of the Hagerman company which produced lumber for shipment out on the trains of the L&N Railroad. The town had all but disappeared by the time Historic Highway 90 was built through the vicinity in 1925-1926.
- Caryville was an important town founded in 1882 as the P&A Railroad was completed through Washington County. Home to one of the largest sawmills in the nation, it has been subjected to numerous severe floods. In the late 20th century it was entirely moved to higher ground away from its original site near the Choctawhatchee River.

Natural History

The rich history of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor through northern Washington County is augmented by the rich natural history of the county.

- Blue Pond (also called Blue Lake) is a beautiful body of water on the southern edge of the City of Chipley. It is one of Florida’s famed “disappearing lakes.” This phenomenon is unique to the karst topography of the state. Water slowly erodes the limestone that is found beneath the surface of much of Florida, creating caves that eventually collapse as sinkholes are formed. One of these sinkholes is at the bottom of Blue Pond. The sink is normally plugged by natural debris but on occasions the pond has been known to drain overnight when the “plug” suddenly breaks through and allows water to pour away through the sinkhole!
- Falling Waters State Park is home to both Florida’s tallest waterfall and the Falling Waters Sinks State Geological Area. Located atop a hill that is riddled with limestone caverns, the park offers boardwalks and nature trails that take visitors into the fascinating world of Florida’s mysterious sinkholes. The waterfall itself pours over a ledge and into a 20-foot wide cylindrical sinkhole that is more than 100 feet deep.
- There has not been a confirmed sighting of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker since the 1950s, but a group of scientists from Auburn University believe they saw, photographed, recorded and video-taped the giant bird along the Choctawhatchee River in Washington County in 2005-2008. The sightings have not been confirmed, but Auburn researchers reported fourteen sightings of purported Ivory-billed Woodpeckers on the Choctawhatchee. They also made more than 300 audio recordings of what they believe are the sounds of the mammoth birds.

Additional Resources

More information on the points of interest along the Historic Highway 90 Corridor can be obtained at the Washington County Visitor Center in Old City Hall on Fifth Street in Chipley. The center is open Monday-Friday during business hours. For more information, please visit the Washington County Tourist Development Council’s website at www.visitwashingtoncountyfl.com.

Appendix Two: Stakeholders' List

Historic Highway 90 Corridor
Washington County Tourist Development Council
672 5th Street / PO Box 450
Chipley, Florida 32428
www.visitwashingtoncountyfl.com

Stakeholders List

Washington County Tourist Development Council
Heather Lopez – 850-638-6013, admin@VisitWashingtonCountyFL.com
Dana Phillips, Old Cypress Canoe Rentals – 850-388-2072
Mayor Victor Starling, Vernon City Council – 535-2444 vernoncityhall@mchsi.com

Washington County Commissioners
Todd Abbott – tabbott@washingtoncountyfl.com
Alan Bush – district1@washingtoncountyfl.com
Lynn Gothard – district5@washingtoncountyfl.com
Charles Kent – ckent@washingtoncountyfl.com
Charles Brock – jsnowden@washingtonfl.com

Washington County Administrative Offices
Michael DeRuntz, Senior County Planner – 850-415-5093 mderuntz@washingtonfl.com

City of Chipley
Lee Dell Kennedy, Mayor – 850-326-6903 (no email)
Dan Miner, City Administrator – 850-638-6350 dminer65@gmail.com

Town of Caryville
4436 Old Spanish Trail, Caryville, FL 32427 – (850) 548-5571

Washington County Chamber of Commerce
Ted Everett, Executive Director – 850-638-4157/850-527-6063 ted@washcomail.com

RiverWay South AC, Inc.
Pam Portwood, Executive Director – 850-544-6133 pportwood@embarkmail.com

Florida Department of Transportation, District 3
Zena Riley-Taylor, Scenic Highways Coordinator – zena.riley-taylor@dot.state.fl.us

Northwest Florida Water Management District

Bill Cleckley, Lands Manager – Bill.Cleckley@nwfwater.com

Jim Lamar, Director of Communications – Jim.Lamar@nwfwater.com

Tyler MacMillan – Tyler.MacMillan@nwfwater.com

Paule Thorpe – Paul.Thorpe@nwfwater.com

Washington County Historical Society & Museum

Dorothy Odom – 850-638-0358 wchistorical@gmail.com

Falling Waters State Park

Jacob Strickland – 850-638-6130 Jacob.strickland@dep.state.fl.us

Scott Sweeney – 850-638-6130 scott.sweeney@dep.state.fl.us

Downtown Chipley Merchants

Kevin Russell, Spanish Trail Playhouse – 850-260-9279 spanishtrailplayhouse@gmail.com

Bill Tinsley, T&B Hidden Treasures – 850-768-0272

Joe Miner & Matt Miner, KC's Pizza & Grille – 850-415-1221

Boar Deli – 850-326-9053

Bella Salon & Boutique – 850-638-8033

Rodney Sewell, The Westerner – 850-638-1124

Gloria Potts, 1901 Gallery & Café – 850-638-8463

Kirby Holt, Blossoms – 850-638-7786

Jackie & Greg Baxley, Baxley Cleaners – 850-638-0201

Joel & Oceil Pate, Chipley Florist & Gifts – 850-638-4200

Zenna Corbin, Chipley Gun & Pawn – 850-638-8987

Sarah Curry, Chipley Flower Gallery – 850-638-3398

Shaunna Johnson, Colonial Restaurant – 850-415-7115

Oliver & Robin Reichert, Computer Island – 850-415-6979

Pamela Holmes, Everything Must Go – 850-326-5351

Zenna Corbin, Habitat for Humanity – 850-638-4436

Daniel Donofrio – Inkfliction Tattoo Gallery – 850-326-6945

Paul Davidson, Main Street Market – 850-638-7755

Melissa Snapp, Talk O the Town Nutrition – 850-638-8943

Other Key Business Stakeholders

Carol Kent, Washington County News – 850-638-0212

Kathy Foster, FosterFollyNews.com – 850-638-7972 kathymfoster@bellsouth.net

Tony Centuro, ChipleyBugle.com – webmaster@chipleybugle.com

Paul Goulding, The Goulding Agency – 850-625-6888 paul@thegouldingagency.com

Washington County Native American Communities

Debbie Bush (Former Governor's Council Member) – 850-326-0946

Appendix Three: Minutes of Stakeholders' Meeting

Historic Highway 90 Corridor

Washington County Tourist Development Council
672 5th Street / PO Box 450
Chipley, Florida 32428
www.visitwashingtoncountyfl.com

Minutes

Washington County Stakeholders Meeting January 15, 2014

The meeting was held at 2:30 p.m. at the Washington County Historical Society Museum in Chipley, Florida.

Present were:

Dale Cox, Moderator
Dorothy Odom, Washington County Historical Society
Debbie Bush, Washington County Native American communities
Bill Tinsley, T&B Hidden Treasures
Jeffrey Carnley, Holmes County Historical Society
Kathy Foster, FosterFollyNews.com
Mike DeRuntz, Senior Planner for Washington County
Joe Miner, KC's Pizza & Grille
Jacob Strickland, Falling Waters State Park
Scott Sweeney, Falling Waters State Park
Heather Lopez, Washington County Tourist Development Council
Pam Fuqua, Jackson County Tourist Development Council
Whitney Willis, Jackson County Tourist Development Council

Dale Cox opened the meeting with an explanation of the purpose of the Historic Highway 90 Corridor Master Plan. He told those in attendance that the goal was to create a workable plan that would help draw tourism traffic from Interstate 10 as well as major north-south routes onto Historic Highway 90, thereby increasing visitation and commerce. He explained that the plan would provide a blueprint for improvements to the Historic Highway 90 Corridor, including signage; interpretive signage; recommendations to responsible agencies for improvements to parks, historic sites, and eco-tourism assets; recommendations for printed material to promote the

Corridor; identification of unique businesses and restaurants that would be of interest to tourists and more.

Cox also explained that part of the idea for the Master Plan is to develop driving loops that will lead from U.S. 90 itself to points of interest in the county. He mentioned Falling Waters State Park, the Possum Monument, historic Moss Hill Church, Holmes Creek, local springs, and the Choctawhatchee River as examples.

He then encouraged a relaxed and open discussion and offered each person present an opportunity to speak and present ideas.

Dorothy Odom of the Washington County Historical Society indicated that she believed the culture, historic sites and eco-tourism assets along the Choctawhatchee River could be a major draw for tourists. She noted the springs and other eco-tourism assets along the river and that it passed through Caryville, the Historic Highway 90 Corridor's western gateway into Washington County.

She also discussed the unique river culture of the Choctawhatchee Basin and noted that there had been a possible sighting recently of the Ivory-Bill Woodpecker.

Bill Tinsley of T&B Hidden Treasures, a Chipley antique shop, recommended the publication of a map or guide to the unique shops and businesses along the Corridor. He mentioned that this had been successful for his former hometown in North Carolina.

He recommended heavy promotion of the Wolf Preserve in Washington County, pointing out that it had the potential to draw visitors from around the world. He also suggested expanding the Washington County TDC's existing geocache trail and praised Chipley's Christmas Lights.

Tinsley also noted that his business is now listed on the Florida Antique Trail and that he has been amazed by the jump in sales he has seen as a result. He said that 25% of his business comes from non-local customers who are visiting the area and that his sales have improved by 150% since the Florida Antique Trail listing.

He also recommended hospitality training for local restaurant, hotel and retail employees, noting that it could be arranged through the Small Business Administration offices in Panama City.

Jeffrey Carnley of the Holmes County Historical Society said that he had come to hear more about the Historic Highway 90 Corridor idea and was very pleased by what he was hearing. He expressed hope that Holmes County could join in with the project. Dale Cox responded that the goal was to add not only Holmes, but Walton and Gadsden as well so that the Corridor would become a destination drive stretching from the outskirts of Tallahassee to DeFuniak Springs. Carnley said that he was excited by the idea and offered to help.

Kathy Foster of FosterFollyNews.com asked if Washington County had brochures in the state welcome centers. Heather Lopez, Washington County TDC Director, responded that she would discuss it with her after the meeting. Foster offered her help with the Corridor project.

Mike DeRuntz, Senior Planner for Washington County, recommended enhancements for bicycle riders. He noted that biking has become a major source of tourism for Washington County, pointing out that many bike riders travel east or west along Highway 90 as part of cross-country journeys.

He mentioned the new Blue Water Trail designation for the Choctawhatchee River and discussed the need for improved promotion of the county's paddling trails.

He also said there was a need for both RV Parks and campgrounds in the county and that he hoped an increase in tourism could draw in entrepreneurs interested in developing such enterprises.

Finally, he suggested that one of the side loops take visitors to uniquely named places in Washington County, mentioning Burnt Sock as an example. Signs to pose by, he felt, would draw people to such places and they would help promote the county by posting photos of themselves on their blogs and on social media.

Joe Miner of KC's Pizza spoke about the many historic sites and heritage-related attractions in Washington County. He mentioned the site of the Battle of Vernon, Moss Hill Church and other locations that might attract visitors. He also discussed the remarkably well-preserved Chipley downtown area which faces the railroad and is one of the best preserved downtown areas in Florida. He offered his help in identifying historic sites and also expressed the need for expansion of the downtown Chipley business community.

He also commented on the suggestion about making enhancements for bicycle riders, noting that his business catered to many of these visitors and that their numbers seemed to be growing.

Jacob Strickland, the Park Manager of Falling Waters State Park, agreed that bike riders are becoming a major source of tourism and encouraged enhancements to attract and serve them better. He mentioned Madison County's bike loops. He also suggested guides or hand-outs featuring maps, information on springs and paddling trails, as well as historic sites.

Dorothy Odom asked Strickland about the possibility of a webcam at the waterfall in the park. Strickland replied that funding was not available at this time and that the nature of the terrain made it difficult to use wireless technology at Falling Waters.

He said that the park currently attracts around 55,000 visitors each year and that the office is happy to hand out local guides and information.

Pam Fuqua, Executive Director of the Jackson County Tourist Development Council, said she was very pleased that Washington and Jackson County were working together on the Historic Highway 90 Corridor and believed it would strongly benefit both counties. She also suggested that with the growing number of bike riders being seen along Highway 90, it might be good for both counties to develop ideas for being more welcoming and for urging local motorists to drive with caution.

Heather Lopez, Executive Director of the Washington County Tourist Development Council, said that she was excited about the possibilities as well and thanks everyone for taking the time to attend and offer their thoughts.

The meeting ended with a general discussion about the need for the local legislative delegation to help by securing funding for some of the improvements needed.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.

Appendix Four: Calendar of Events

Washington County Calendar of Events

January

24 Basket Weaving Class

Washington County Historical Society Museum

685 Seventh Street, Chipley, FL

GPS: 30.780267 -85.537123

This class offers a unique opportunity to learn the historical techniques of weaving homemade baskets from White Oak splints and other materials.

February

28 Pheasant Tower Continental Hunt

Hard Labor Creek Plantation

Cane Mill Road, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.661544 -85.596393

The Pheasant Tower Continental Hunt offers an opportunity for those who enjoy shooting sports and hunting to experience a rare Southern pheasant hunt.

March

3 Matthew Gurnsey: The Kilted Man Concert

Washington County Agricultural Center

1424 W. Jackson Avenue, Chipley, FL

GPS: 30.40649 -85.35374

Live performance of traditional Scottish music and tales.

14 Basket Weaving Class

Washington County Historical Society Museum

685 Seventh Street, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.780267 -85.537123

This class offers a unique opportunity to learn the historical techniques of weaving homemade baskets from White Oak splints and other materials.

20-22 Spring Performance: “Over the River and through the Woods”

Spanish Trail Playhouse

Historic Chipley High School

680 2nd Street, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.781374 -85.545975

The Spanish Trail Playhouse presents four outstanding productions each year, featuring local talent from throughout the Washington County area and special guests.

20-27 Bike Florida: Caverns to Coast Tour

Intersection of Historic Highway 90 and State Highway 77, Chipley, FL

GPS: 30.780590 -85.538551

This special Bike Florida Spring Tour will pass through Chipley twice, allowing riders the unique opportunity of seeing the city's historic structures and sites from their bikes as they pass through.

24-26 Sunshine State APBT Dog Show

Wausau Possum Palace

3121 Forest Avenue, Wausau, FL

GPS: 30.637249 -85.589144

Dog shows have been part of Southern culture and history for more than one century. This event features dogs taking part in a variety of competitions.

April

4-5 Chipley Gun & Knife Show

Washington County Agricultural Center

1424 W. Jackson Avenue, Chipley, FL

GPS: 30.40649 -85.35374

Gun and knife shows have long been fixtures in the culture of Northwest Florida. This event features not only firearms for hunting and self-protection, but knives, fishing tackle and a variety of other goods used for outdoor recreation.

10 Amber Waves Band Concert

Sponsored by the Washington County Public Library

1444 Jackson Avenue, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.778783 -85.549185

A free live musical performance featuring historical and current music.

18 Lowe's Skills USA Last Band Standing

Washington County Agriculture Center

1424 W. Jackson Avenue, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.40649 -85.35374

Live musical performances of traditional and modern music.

May

17 Holmes Creek Clean-up

Details and location pending.

29-30 3rd Annual Choctawhatchee Catfish Round-Up

Tournament will be at Caryville Landing. Cash prizes for 1st – 3rd places. First place youth division receives \$100 as well as the person catching the most total pounds of flathead. Cost per entry is \$50.

June

12-14 Summer Performance: “Oklahoma”

Spanish Trail Playhouse
Historic Chipley High School
680 2nd Street, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.781374 -85.545975

The Spanish Trail Playhouse presents four outstanding productions each year, featuring local talent from throughout the Washington County area and special guests.

26-27 59th Annual Panhandle Watermelon Festival

Washington County Agriculture Center
1424 W. Jackson Avenue, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.40649 -85.35374

This annual event celebrates Washington County’s long history of watermelon production. Held each year on the last Saturday in June, the event is the county’s largest of the year. Activities include a parade, antique car show, clogging and square dancing, gospel and bluegrass concerts, horseshoe tournaments, speed sitting contests and more!

July

10 Dust Bowl Exhibit (Continues through August 25)

Sponsored by the Washington County Public Library
1444 Jackson Avenue, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.778783 -85.549185

A special summer exhibit featuring art, photographs, lectures and more that detail the history of the Dust Bowl.

August

1 Wausau Fun Day & Possum Festival

Wausau Possum Palace
3121 Forest Avenue, Wausau, FL

GPS: 30.637249 -85.589144

The first Saturday of each August is officially Possum Day in Florida and nowhere is the event bigger than in Washington County. Events include food, fun and entertainment.

September

28 Battle of Vernon Anniversary

Washington Church
2191 Owens Pond Road, Chipley, FL

GPS: 30.674099 -85.609773

Plans for the first annual Battle of Vernon Reenactment include a memorial service and Civil War reenactment.

October

16-18 Fall Performance: “The Odd Couple – The Female Version”

Spanish Trail Playhouse
Historic Chipley High School
680 2nd Street, Chipley, Florida
GPS: 30.781374 -85.545975

The Spanish Trail Playhouse presents four outstanding productions each year, featuring local talent from throughout the Washington County area and special guests.

23-25 Seacrest Wolf Preserve’s “Howl-O-Ween”

Seacrest Wolf Preserve
3449 Bonnett Pond Rd., Chipley, FL
GPS: 30.586730 -85.626293

This annual Halloween-themed event is a treat for visitors and a chance to learn more about the history and lives of the wolves that live at the Seacrest Wolf Preserve.

3 Annual Scarecrow Contest

Washington County Historical Society Museum
685 Seventh Street, Chipley, FL
GPS: 30.780267 -85.537123

This annual event celebrates the history of Washington County with displays, lectures, storytelling and an array of scarecrows on display throughout downtown Chipley.

November

13-15 Veteran’s Day Powwow

North Bay Creek Indian Village
1560 Lonnie Rd., Chipley, Florida
GPS: 30.684435 -85.563726

This annual celebration of American Indian culture features drumming, dancing, arts & crafts, food and more.

TBA Survivalist, Preparedness & Homesteading Expo

Information to be announced.

December

4 Chipley Christmas Fest

Downtown Chipley, Florida
GPS: 30.780692 -85.538740

This annual holiday celebration is a Washington County tradition. Featured activities include a parade, appearances by Santa and an after-dark Christmas Stroll to enjoy the lights.

4-31 Christmas Lights in Downtown Chipley

Downtown Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.780692 -85.538740

Chipley's famed lighting display can be enjoyed evenings December 4-31.

6 Woman's Club of Chipley Tour of Homes

607 5th Street, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.785768 -85.540359

This popular annual tradition allows visitors to experience some of the most beautiful and historic homes in Chipley.

11-12 Holiday Performance: "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever"

Spanish Trail Playhouse

Historic Chipley High School

680 2nd Street, Chipley, Florida

GPS: 30.781374 -85.545975

The Spanish Trail Playhouse presents four outstanding productions each year, featuring local talent from throughout the Washington County area and special guests.

Appendix Five: Inventory of Historic Sites

Inventory of Historic Sites Historic Highway 90 Corridor Washington County, Florida

Site of Aycock

County border south of the intersection of Aycock Road and US 90, Cottondale, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.786733 -85.441502

Ownership: Private/Pubic Roads

Status: Private (Can be viewed from public roads)

Aycock was an important lumber and naval stores town of the early 20th century. Located on the border with Jackson County, it was a “company town” of the Aycock Brothers Lumber Company and a station on the L&N (now CSX) railroad. The town was the location of saw and planning mills, general stores, a jewelry store and other businesses. It was also the location of homes for both employees and management of the company. A private railroad connected the main community here with outlying timber and turpentine camps in Washington and Jackson Counties. The dead from the fatal fire in the Aycock company’s camp or “stockade” for leased convict laborers are buried in unmarked graves on the site of the town. This fire claimed the lives of 5 men and left 6 others with horrible burns. The tragedy was one of several that helped bring the Convict Leasing System to an end in Florida.

National Egg-Laying Test Site

Intersection of US 90 and New Prospect Rd., Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.46957 -85.29476

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from public roads)

The Florida National Egg Laying Test was established on this site in 1926 in response to growing interest in the development and expansion of commercial poultry production in the Washington County area. E.F. Stanton, the “father of the commercial poultry industry in Washington County,” played an instrumental role in the establishment of the center. The first annual poultry test took place here in 50 pens containing 12 hens each. The hens averaged 186.5 eggs each over the course of a year, with two producing 300 eggs. Using eggs from the better-laying hens to produce improved stock, the center expanded the number of hens producing 300 eggs from two to 139. The operation of the facility led to dramatic improvement in the commercial production of chickens and eggs in the United States.

Chipley

Historic Highway 90 at its intersection with State Highway 77

GPS Coordinates: 30.780590 -85.538551

Noted for its unique railroad-oriented downtown and the Queen Anne architecture of its South Third Street National Historic District, Chipley is a charming and historic Northwest Florida city in the Historic Highway

90 Corridor. Named for railroad magnate Col. W.D. Chipley, who built the P&A Railroad (later the L&N and now the CSX) through Washington County in 1882, the city is the seat of government for Washington County and the gateway to Florida's tallest waterfall at Falling Waters State Park. The community was founded in 1882 and its first newspaper was established that same year. The original 80 acre site encompasses the downtown area and was surveyed by Colonel D.H. Horne. Chipley's post office was designated on May 4, 1883.

Washington County Historical Society Museum

685 Seventh Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: N 30.780267 W -85.537123

Ownership: Washington County Historical Society

Status: Public

The Washington County Historical Society Museum features exhibits, artifacts and other information on the rich heritage of Washington County. Located adjacent to the CSX railroad, it is located in a structure designed to resemble a train depot of the late 1800s.

W.D. Chipley Monument

Grounds of Washington County Historical Society Museum

GPS Coordinates: N 30.780419 W -85.537123

Ownership: Public

Status: Public

The monument honors Col. W.D. Chipley, for whom the City of Chipley is named. A major stockholder and executive of the P&A and L&N Railroads, he was responsible for building the railroad that connected Pensacola with the Apalachicola River. The construction of that line led to the founding of Chipley.

CSX Railroad

GPS Coordinates: N 30.780769 W -85.537429

Ownership: CSX

Status: Can be viewed from adjacent streets and sidewalks

Originally named the P&A and later the L&N, this railroad was built through Washington County in 1882. The railroad was built to link Pensacola with the Apalachicola River and was managed by Col. W.D. Chipley. He was also a major investor and approved the development of the city that now bears his name. Chipley developed as a railroad siding and tank station on the P&A. Its first business was a wine shop owned by B.W. Berry. The railroad has remained in continuous use since its completion

Chipley State Bank Building

Corner of North Railroad Ave. and North Main St., Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.780859 -85.538722

Ownership: Private/Commercial

Status: Commercial, Open during business hours.

An excellent example of Masonry Vernacular commercial architecture, this commercial structure was built in circa 1905 as the home of the newly-chartered Chipley State Bank. It is no longer a bank building, but continues to serve commercial purposes.

Albert Deermont House

Sixth Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.782454 -85.538992

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

An outstanding example of the Neoclassical style, this home was completed in 1939. Its original owner, Albert Deermont, was also a local architect and designed the house himself. Construction was by Bryant Thurman, a local builder.

Farrior-Huggins House

Sixth Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.782820 -85.538984

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

This Frame Vernacular structure was built in the 1885 by Dr. Farrior soon after the founding of Chipley. It is believed to be the oldest standing structure in Chipley.

Old City Hall (Visitor Center/Chamber of Commerce/Library)

Fifth Street, Chipley, FL

Note: National Register of Historic Places

GPS Coordinates: 30.781469 -85.540184

Ownership: Public

Status: Open to the Public

Completed in 1929, this beautiful brick structure was built in the Mediterranean Revival style. Always a public building, it features a hip roof, arched window openings and a curved parapet with a square corner tower. It originally served as the Chipley City Hall, but now functions as Washington County's official Visitor Center and is open to the public on weekdays.

J.R. McGeachy House

Fifth Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.781851 -85.540075

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

Built in 1902, the McGeachy House is a good example of the Frame Vernacular style that was popular in Florida during the late 19th and early 20th century. The height of the façade gable is

greater than its width, an architectural design that gave the home more of a soaring appearance than it might otherwise present. It is built of pine and stands on brick piers.

First National Bank Building

Intersection of South Railroad Avenue and Fifth Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.780356 -85.539597

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

Built in the Second Empire style which is rare in Florida, this structure dates from 1905. It is Washington County's only structure of this design. The building symbolized Chipley's growth as a commercial center and features a brick façade that rises to a mansard roof with 20 gable dormers. The entrance on the northwest corner of the building faces the street at a unique 45-degree angle.

Porter Building (Historic Chipley Antique Mall)

1368 North Railroad Avenue, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.780797 -85.539259

Ownership: Private/Commercial

Status: Antique mall, open to the public (No interpretation)

Built in 1900 using the Masonry Verandah style, the Porter building features a façade that rises two-stories to a charming stepped parapet. This parapet features decorative pinnacles, a center gable and oculus vents. It originally had double-hung sash windows on the second floor.

S.A. Alford House

Church Ave., Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.781173 -85.541478

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

Designed by architect Alvin R. Moore, the S.A. Alford House is an outstanding Italian Renaissance structure that represents the epitome of high style residential construction in Chipley during the 1920s. It was completed in 1928 and was built of locally manufactured brick, which are distinguishable by their pinkish gray color. The home was originally owned by S.A. Alford, Sr., the owner of the Alford and Company Turpentine Still, a major naval stores operation.

J.O. Blackburn House

Church Avenue, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates:

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

Built in 1936, this was the home of Chipley funeral director J.O. Blackburn. Built of the Colonial Revival style, it was representative of Chipley's commercial success even during the Great Depression.

Third Street National Historic District

Third Street from Historic Highway 90 to South Boulevard, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.778285 -85.542098

Ownership: Private homes along a public street.

Status: Private homes (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

South Third Street from Historic Highway 90 to South Boulevard in Chipley was designated a National Historic District on February 2, 1989. Thirteen contributing structures, many of them built using the unique and increasingly rare Queen Anne style, make up the District, which is marked by a directional sign on Historic Highway 90. Among the noteworthy structures is the:

Butler House

731 Third Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.776559 -85.541888

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

Built in circa 1902, the Butler House is a beautiful example of the Queen Anne style of architecture. This style was popular in Northwest Florida in 1880-1910, although many examples have been destroyed over the years due to the growth of downtown areas. The Butler House, however, has survived with minimal alterations. It features a unique roof system with cross-gables, an octagonal turret, Doric columns and double-hung sash windows.

Queen Anne style home

742 Third Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.775946 -85.542280

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

This residence was built in 1900 and is one of six Queen Anne style residences still standing in the South Third National Historic District in Chipley.

Late Gothic Revival Home

768 Third Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.773775 -85.542528

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

This Late Gothic Revival home was built in 1890 and is the oldest contributing structure to the South Third Street National Historic District. Late Gothic Revival can be distinguished in part by a sharply-gabled roof.

Queen Anne style home

790 Third Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.772660 -85.542706

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

Completed in 1909, this beautifully-restored Queen Anne style residence stands near the southern end of the South Third Street National Historic District.

Dr. Harper House

658 Second Street, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.784265 -85.544064

Ownership: Private

Status: Private (Can be viewed from the sidewalk)

This Mediterranean Revival home was built of natural limestone cobbles and is representative of a limestone construction technique that came into use locally during the 1920s. It was built in 1930 by Tillman Adams and Bill Shoemaker.

First United Methodist Church of Chipley

1285 Jackson Avenue, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.46756 -85.32408

Ownership: Church

Status: Open to the Public during normal service times.

The current sanctuary was built in 1903 to replace an earlier frame structure that was destroyed in a storm or tornado. The original oak pews are still used in the structure today and the art glass windows were manufactured in Antwerp, Belgium. The blocks used in the construction of the church were manufactured on the grounds by Rev. G.N. Winslett and members of his congregation. It was in this structure that the Chipley Revival took place in 1916. Sometimes called the Cates Union Revival, it was a local version of the Great Awakening of the previous year. On December 17, 1916, a meeting of 600 converts was held at the First United Methodist Church, following which the new Christians flowed into the streets of Chipley with a choir in the lead to shake hands with citizens of the city. The revival was supported by the congregations of several other Chipley churches and by its end 700 people in the town of 1,500 had been converted.

Ghost of the Lime Sink

Bordered by US 90, 1st St, Coleman Ave. & 2nd St, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.777471 -85.544572

Ownership: Private

Status: Private, not accessible to the public at this time.

The story of the Ghost of the Lime Sink is one of the oldest folk stories along the Historic Highway 90 Corridor. Legend holds that the ghost of a young woman named Netta McMillan can be seen moving over the still waters of a lime sink on foggy nights. The story has a basis in known history. Netta McMillan was 18 years old when she and two friends – Graymore Pridgeon, 18, and Nannie Callaway, 14 - went wading in the lime sink during the spring of 1890. The three stepped off a ledge into deep water and vanished. Jeff McMillan, Netta's 14-year-old brother, was able to save Pridgeon, but Netta and her friend Nannie Callaway drowned. Nannie's body was recovered by rescuers who flocked to the scene, but that of Netta McMillan was never found. Local legend tells that the sobbing figure of the woman can be seen moving across the water on foggy nights.

Blue Pond/Blue Lake

1865 Florida 77, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.742000 -85.553089

Ownership: Public

Status: Open to the Public

This large body of water just south of Chipley is one of Florida's famed "disappearing lakes." The karst topography of the region is noted for sinkholes, at least one of which can be found at the bottom of the lake. The sink becomes plugged with natural debris, which allows the body of water to form. Occasionally, though, the pressure on the "plug" reaches the point that it suddenly gives way and disappears through the sink into the limestone caverns beneath. When this takes place, the lake drains so rapidly that it has been reported to disappear literally overnight.

Falling Waters State Park

1130 State Park Rd, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.43526 -85.31726

Ownership: State of Florida

Status: Open to the Public, Interpretation provided.

Falling Waters State Park covers 168 acres on the outskirts of Chipley and is home to Florida's tallest waterfall. The falls are 73-feet high and disappear into the bottom of a 20-foot wide and 100-foot deep cylindrical sinkhole. The waterfall and sink are part of the Falling Waters Sinks State Geological Area, which preserves a unique area of karst terrain noted for its sinks and caves. The park is the location of numerous archaeological and historical sites, including prehistoric American Indian campsites, a Civil War era gristmill, a legal whiskey distillery operated during the late 19th century and one of Florida's first oil wells. The park offers picnicking, camping, swimming, hiking, boardwalks to the waterfall, a butterfly garden and other amenities for visitors. Historical markers and interpretive panels provide information on its historical and natural resources.

Kudzu Marker

Washington County Agricultural Center, 1424 W Jackson Ave, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.40649 -85.35374

Ownership: Public

Status: Open to the Public

Placed in 1967, this historical marker notes that kudzu, “the vine that ate the South,” was introduced to the United States as a commercial crop at Chipley in 1902. The leguminous plant is of Asian origin and was first shown in the country at the U.S. Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1876. It was occasionally used as an ornamental over the years that followed and in 1902 Charles and Lillie Pleas set some out near an outbuilding at their home. The vine grew rapidly and Mr. and Mrs. Pleas soon noticed that horses were rubbing the hair from their manes as they reached through a fence trying to graze on it. They wrote to the U.S. Department of Agriculture to determine if the vine was poisonous and a danger to their horses. The USDA wrote back that kudzu was safe, but expressed doubt as to whether livestock would actually eat it. The couple then expanded their plantings of the vine and engaged in a national marketing effort to promote kudzu. The idea caught on in 1934 when the Soil Conservation Service championed the production of kudzu and the rest is history. The vine that will “outrun you back to the house” is now found in all corners of the South and has been known to cover utility poles, buildings and mountainsides in a single year.

Indian Oak

Near intersection of Florida 277 and Brickyard Rd., Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.765565 -85.569286

Ownership: Private

Status: Private, tree is visible from the roadway.

This old live oak growing on the site of the former Glen Arden Nursery is called “Indian Oak” due to a legend dating from the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). On August 31, 1842, a party of Creek warriors attacked the home of the Perkins family at Orange Hill southeast of Chipley. The house was burned and only one survivor, a 7-year-old boy, survived. A company of local volunteers led by Captain Stephen Daniel pursued the war party along a trail that led northwest from Orange Hill through today’s Falling Waters State Park and finally to a sink hole near Chipley. There they found a warrior and his wife. Legend holds that Daniel and his men shot the warrior and dumped his body in the sink. Distraught by the death of her husband, the Creek woman committed suicide by hanging herself from the branches of the “Indian Oak.”

Site of Hagerman

2206A US. 90, Chipley, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.778458 -85.612785

Ownership: Private

Status: Private, can be viewed from Historic Highway 90

Hagerman was a sawmill town established in ca. 1894 by C.W. Hagerman, who moved to Washington County from Pensacola. The community included sawmills, planing mills, a company store, and housing for employees and managers of the Hagerman company. Its post office was established on February 8, 1895 and discontinued only seven years later. The mills used creeks and canals to float logs down to a millpond. The finished lumber was then shipped out on the trains of the L&N railroad. No buildings of the community survive today.

The Mahs Farm Site (8WS8)

¼ Mile south of US 90 at Holmes Creek

GPS Coordinates: 30.775060 -85.616052

Ownership: Private

Status: Private

This prehistoric American Indian site was documented in 1955. Researchers found a lithic scatter including stone tools and pottery from the Deptford time period (500 B.C. – 200 A.D.). The size of the site is not known.

Holmes Creek

GPS Coordinates: 30.778633 -85.615671
Ownership: Public/Private
Status: Public/Private

Holmes Creek is a spring-fed creek that rises on the Alabama line near the Jackson County city of Graceville. It is a major tributary of the Choctawhatchee River. At the point it is crossed by Historic Highway 90, the creek flows through a wide flood-plain swamp. Called the Weekaywee Hatchee (“Spring Creek”) by the Creek Indians of the late 18th century, the stream has also been called the Holmes River. A major natural resource of Northwest Florida, the creek is a designated paddling trail further downstream.

Caryville

4436 Old Spanish Trail, Caryville, FL (Town Hall)
GPS Coordinates: 30.773425 W -85.814708
Ownership : Private, City, State, Federal
Status: Public/Private

Originally called Half Moon Bluff, Caryville was established as a sawmill community in around 1882 as the Pensacola & Atlantic Railroad was completed across the Choctawhatchee River. It was named in honor of railroad executive R.M. Cary. In the years that followed, the community became a major industrial center centered around timber and lumber production. The mills made use of the Choctawhatchee River to bring logs downstream from the vast floodplain swamps in neighboring Holmes County and nearby South Alabama. Caryville became the first community in Washington County to receive electricity in 1903. It was incorporated in 1913. Historic Highway 90 was completed through the town in 1925. The town was the victim of repeated severe floods due to its location along the Choctawhatchee River and in the late 20th century was moved in its entirety to higher ground.

Skirmish at Douglas’ Ferry

West end of Douglas Ferry Road, Washington County, FL
GPS Coordinates: 30.669392 -85.870090
Ownership: Public
Status: Public park and boat ramp, no interpretation

One of Florida’s last skirmishes of the Civil War took place at Douglas’ Ferry on March 23, 1865. Led by Lieutenant Joseph B. Barnes, a detachment of 15 men from the 5th Florida Cavalry was patrolling the crossings of the Choctawhatchee River when they encountered a raiding party of 50 deserters at Douglas’ Ferry. The raiders were led by Jim Ward and had been blamed for an attack on Elba, Alabama, the previous year. Fighting broke out between the two groups, but the outnumbered Confederate troops were forced to retreat. Much of their ammunition was wet and their guns would not fire properly. At least one of the soldiers, Lieutenant Frank Stovall, was captured by the deserters. After reorganizing his men, Lieutenant Barnes led a second attack on Ward’s men, forcing them to scatter in retreat. The body of Lieutenant Stovall was found on the ground and there were indications that he had been murdered after his capture. His pistol, sword and coat buttons had been

stolen by some of Ward's men. The incident was the last recorded action of the Civil War in Washington County.

Hinson Crossroads

Intersection of Douglas Ferry Road and River Road, Washington County, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.668654 -85.842336

Ownership: Private Homes and Public Roads

Status: Public/Private (historical marker near crossroads).

Located on the original road leading to the Douglas' Ferry crossing of the Choctawhatchee River, Hinson Crossroads was founded in circa 1887 by Harrison, Joshua and Oscar Hinson. Harrison and Joshua were brothers, while Oscar was Joshua's son. The men then lived in Jackson County and arrived in the vicinity with five hogs which they turned loose as free-range animals. After releasing the hogs, the Hinsons returned to Jackson County but when they returned later they found that the hogs had reproduced and become numerous. They moved their families from Jackson County to the site and established the community of Hinson Crossroads.

Ivory-billed Woodpecker Sightings

Caryville Landing, west end of Boat Ramp Road at the Choctawhatchee River, Caryville, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.775321 -85.826960

Ownership: Public

Status: Public (No interpretation)

Dr. Geoff Hill, an ornithology professor from Auburn University, with two research assistants spotted what they believed to be an ivory-billed woodpecker on the Choctawhatchee River south of this point on May 21, 2005. One of the largest woodpeckers known to exist in North America, there had not been a confirmed sighting since 1944. The team conducted extensive research along the Choctawhatchee over the months that followed and reported thirteen additional sightings of bird believed by the researchers to be ivory-billed woodpeckers. Joined by Dr. Daniel Mennill of the University of Windsor, the Auburn researchers also made 300 recordings of sounds they believed to be those of ivory-bills. The Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee, however, has declined to accept the validity of the sightings. The search for definitive proof continues at this time.

Choctawhatchee River

Caryville Landing, west end of Boat Ramp Road at the Choctawhatchee River, Caryville, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.775321 -85.826960

Ownership: Public

Status: Public (No interpretation)

The Choctawhatchee River is believed to take its name from the Chacato Indians who lived in Northwest Florida when Spanish explorers and missionaries arrived in the region in 1674. Early maps spell the name "Chactohatchee." The name Chacato is similar to Choctaw and the name was converted to its current pronunciation and spelling in the 18th century by British mapmakers. One of the largest rivers in Northwest Florida, the Choctawhatchee was an important transportation artery for thousands of years. Prehistoric American Indians paddled it in dugout canoes, as did their descendants the Creeks, Yuchi, Chacato and other tribes. The river is first mentioned in the accounts of a Spanish expedition in 1677 and English traders

established themselves along its banks in 1763-1783. Barges and paddlewheel steamboats navigated the river during the 19th and early 20th centuries, their reign finally coming to an end not long after US 90 was completed through Washington County in 1925. The river today is an ecological treasure.

The Bloomer Raid

Caryville Landing, west end of Boat Ramp Road at the Choctawhatchee River, Caryville, FL

GPS Coordinates: 30.775321 -85.826960

Ownership: Public

Status: Public (No interpretation)

On December 28, 1862, the captured river steamer *Bloomer* was piloted past this point by a raiding party of Union soldiers from the 91st New York Volunteers with the assistance of a handful of U.S. Navy sailors and Unionist civilian volunteers. The raid up the Choctawhatchee was launched four days earlier after a scouting expedition reported that the 130-ton sidewheeler was tied up on the Choctawhatchee River just below its confluence with the Pea River near Geneva, Alabama. The owner of the vessel, James L. Brady, had volunteered for service in the Confederate navy and was one of the crew of the Mississippi River ironclad CSS *Arkansas*. Led by Acting Master Elias D. Bruner of the USS *Charlotte* and Lieutenant James H. Steward of the 91st New York, the raiders moved inland by land and seized the *Bloomer* on the afternoon of December 27, 1862. It took 24-hours to get the steamer ready to go but at 8 a.m. the next morning the boat started down the river. It passed this point sometime late on the evening of December 28, 1862, on its way down to Choctawhatchee Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. The vessel was renamed the USS *Bloomer* and saw service along the Northwest Florida coastline for the rest of the war.

