



Florida Trust for Historic Preservation
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PRESS RELEASE

Florida Trust for Historic Preservation Announced 2021 Florida's 11 to Save at Preservation on Main Street Conference

List spotlights the most threatened historic properties in the state and drives the Florida Trust's education and advocacy initiatives for the year ahead

New Port Richey, Fla, July 21, 2021 – On July 21 the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation announced the 2021 Florida's 11 to Save, the most threatened historic properties in the state, at the Preservation on Main Street Annual Conference in collaboration with Florida Main Street.

This year's list represents endangered historic resources in Florida's Duval, Holmes, Jackson, Lake, Marion, Martin, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach and Volusia counties, covering hundreds of years of history and a variety of cultural resources.

Each year, the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation announces its 11 to Save program as part of its annual conference. The program is designed to increase the public's awareness of the urgent need to save Florida's historic resources, and to empower local preservationists and preservation groups in their efforts to preserve Florida's rich history.

"We are grateful to those in communities throughout Florida who shared the historic places that matter to them through 11 to Save nominations," said Florida Trust Board President Friederike Mittner. "We are excited to get to work with our 11 to Save partners to find solutions to preserve these special historic places in order to build communities, drive economic growth throughout the state and protect the past."

Inclusion on the Florida's 11 to Save is a starting point for the Florida Trust's advocacy and education efforts and is intended to be part of a collaborative effort to identify custom solutions for each property. The Florida Trust partners with each location to determine what is most needed for the place and community. Listings are not in any order of importance.



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Abandoned African American Cemeteries Statewide

The ugly history regarding the fate of many segregation era African American cemeteries was highlighted in 2019 when two forgotten cemeteries in Tampa were rediscovered. Using ground-penetrating radar to discover nearly 200 graves, Tampa's Zion Cemetery was buried and forgotten under a public housing complex and warehouse prior to the *Tampa Bay Times* receiving a tip from a cemetery researcher. More research unveiled five additional erased African American cemeteries throughout the Tampa Bay area.



However, for those in Florida's historic African American communities, this news was not surprising or unique. As horrible as the discovery in Tampa sounds, examples of abandoned, disgraced, desecrated and disturbed cemeteries can be found all over the state.

For example, Mount Herman Cemetery was developed around 1880 to serve as the final resting place for Jacksonville's rapidly growing Black community during Reconstruction. In 1941, the cemetery was deeded to the city with the requirement that the property be used either as a public cemetery or park. By 1949, it was described in local papers as being an overgrown vacant lot with high weeds obscuring headstones. By 1969, the burial ground had been converted into a park that still retains visual reminders of it being a cemetery, including a headstone in the middle of a public street.

The fate of Zion and Mount Herman are just the tip of the iceberg. A burial ground task force mobilized by the Legislature in 1998 reported that 40% to 50% of the state's cemeteries are neglected or abandoned. Across the state, there could be more than 3,000 unpreserved African American cemeteries.

In June, Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law a bill (HB 37) intended to identify lost cemeteries by creating a Task Force on Abandoned African American Cemeteries that will create a panel of researchers to study forgotten or abandoned African American cemeteries and burial grounds across the state. Inclusion to this year's list is intended to help increase public awareness on the statewide effort to bring honor and dignity to historic sites that are long forgotten and sometimes intentionally erased from public records altogether.



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Downtown Bonifay Historic District Bonifay (Holmes County)

Downtown Bonifay is a testament to the families that founded this community, families that are still part of this community to this day. Everything about Downtown Bonifay's birth and growth shows a community of entrepreneurs, risk takers that were willing to work hard in a variety of trades to be successful and provide for their families.



Bonifay was named in 1882 for Judge Frank Bonifay, a railroad official with the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad. Downtown Bonifay comprises a collection of commercial and governmental buildings that have historically served as the economic, informational and governmental center of Holmes County.

These structures have withstood the test of time, including the 1920s decline of the lumber boom, the introduction of the boll weevil, which caused considerable damage to the area's cotton harvest, and even the emergence of the bootlegging industry during the Prohibition era. However, Bonifay has been no match for the destruction caused by hurricanes over the last decade. As a result, Downtown Bonifay was added to the National Register in 2020 in hopes of preserving historic buildings that had been damaged from Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Michael, and other storms. With this in mind, the nominator seeks to raise awareness to engender support for additional resources for a range of historic and cultural preservation initiatives for these communities.

Great Oaks Greenwood (Jackson County) *Built between 1857 and 1860*

Historically known as the Bryan Place and then the Smith House, Great Oaks was constructed between 1857 and 1860. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972, the name is derived from the entrance, which is lined with heritage oaks.



The Greek Revival style mansion is believed to be one of the last Antebellum plantation homes built in the South, as it was completed shortly before the Civil War began in 1861. The home was built by enslaved labor for prominent local planter, Hamilton Bryan, the son of Elijah Bryan, who owned land in Florida, Georgia and Alabama, making him one of the earliest and largest planters in the area. The estate includes reports, family letters and bibles, local church records and slave schedules specifically naming people



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associated with the property during these years. The lives of the enslaved, overseers, owners, circuit riders, tutors and more. are illuminated in these records.

Great Oaks is so valued to the local community that a group of concerned citizens organized Save Great Oaks in 2013 and in 2019, a grant was secured from the Florida Division of Historical Resources to acquire the property.

As a Category 5 storm, Hurricane Michael was the strongest hurricane landfall on record in the Florida Panhandle. The event resulted in damage to the property during Great Oaks' sale negotiations with the transfer of title not being able to take place until the storm damage was addressed. The delay in repairs due to insurance issues have led to further deterioration of the structure.

**House of Refuge at Gilberts Bar
Stuart (Martin County)
*Built 1875***

Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the House of Refuge at Gilbert's Bar, is the last remaining of 12 shipwreck life-saving stations on Florida's East Coast. Built in 1875, the site was operated by the U.S. Life-Saving Service, prior to the creation of the U.S. Coast Guard, serving numerous shipwreck survivors, including those of the Georges Valentine, which is now a Florida Underwater Preserve.



It remained occupied during WWI and WWII as German U-boats were active off the coast wreaking havoc on international shipping, before being decommissioned and abandoned by the government in 1945. In 1956, it was repurposed into Martin County's first museum.

The House of Refuge sits on a sliver of land about 100 yards wide between the Atlantic Ocean and Indian River. The effects of climate change and sea level rise are already being observed as the historic frame structures are constantly battered with salt water and ocean waves that crash against the building. It is not known exactly how many hurricanes, tropical storms and northeasters it has survived, but each one takes a toll on its structural integrity.

Seeking to overcome the challenges associated with climate change and sea level rise, in 2019 the Historic Society of Martin County completed a Historic Structures Report on the Buildings in anticipation of partnering with Martin County to work to stabilize, restore the buildings and reduce the threats of flooding as much as possible.

**Okahumpka Rosenwald School
Okahumpka (Lake County)
*Built 1930***



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Completed in 1930, the Okahumpka Rosenwald School is one of the few surviving structures remaining in nearly original form built through the Rosenwald Fund. A result of a collaboration of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald and Black educator Booker T. Washington, the Rosenwald Fund was a program that constructed more than 5,000 schools for Black children across the South from 1913 to 1932.



The school was constructed to serve the children of Okahumpka, a Black community of mostly orange grove, watermelon farm and turpentine making laborers in rural Lake County. Okahumpka was the birthplace of Virgil Hawkins, a Black man who was denied admission to the University of Florida law school in 1949 due to the color of his skin. After applying to the Florida Supreme Court under the Equal Protection Clause, Hawkins eventually withdrew his application to UF in exchange for a Florida Supreme Court order desegregating UF's graduate and professional schools.

Local nonprofit art and cultural organization, Leesburg Center for the Arts is working with the City of Leesburg Building and Planning department to save the buildings, renovate and reuse as a studio space and arts education center for artists, creatives as well as a children's and history museum.

Time has taken a toll on the structure, which has been neglected, unused and vandalized over the past two decades. In addition, The Villages, a nearby rapidly growing and sprawling community is threatening to erase the rural historic setting and way of life of Okahumpka. As a result, the Okahumpka Community Club is working to raise funds to restore the property to serve as a community center.

Old Stanton High School Jacksonville (Duval County) *Built 1917*

Designated to the National Register in 1983, Stanton is one of the oldest schools established for African Americans in the State of Florida.

Financed by the Freedman's Bureau, Stanton opened on April 10, 1869. The school was named in honor of General Edwin McMasters Stanton, an outspoken abolitionist and Secretary of War under President Lincoln during the Civil War. In 1877, President Ulysses Grant visited the school during a tour of Florida. During the visit, a six-year-old student named James Weldon Johnson raised his hand from the crowd and Grant shook it. Johnson would go on to become the school's principal in 1894 and expanded it to become the only high school for African Americans in the city. While





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serving as the principal Johnson wrote “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” which his brother Rosamond put to music. This song would later become known as the Negro National Anthem.

The Johnson brothers relocated to New York City in 1902. James Weldon Johnson becoming a nationally famous songwriter, author, poet, diplomat and civil rights orator. As a result of one of the first civil-rights litigation cases in Jacksonville and the South, the existing building was constructed in 1917.

Recently a portion of the roof collapsed, potentially damaging structural integrity if it isn't replaced soon. The nominator is currently working with the City of Jacksonville to replace the roof and continue with a plan to restore the structure into a mix of uses, including restaurant, retail, museum, community center and office space. It is believed that increased exposure of the building's rich history, present and proposed condition, will assist in restoration efforts.

Old Town Commercial District Lake Worth (Palm Beach County)

In September 2001, the Historic Old Town Commercial District was added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Historic Old Town Commercial District encompasses approximately 16 acres and comprises a total of 59 mainly commercial buildings. Of these 46 contribute to the historic character of the area, while 13 are considered noncontributing. The historic buildings date mainly from the 1920s, and the majority of them can be architecturally classified as Masonry Vernacular. Other styles represented in the district are Mediterranean Revival, Moorish Revival and Art Deco. Most of the buildings in the district are simple in design, displaying few defining characteristics. The contributing buildings in the district were all constructed between c. 1912 to c. 1949, with the majority erected between 1920 and 1949.



The District's uniqueness to South Florida is the intimate interface between traditional historic residential structures and commercial buildings as well as the workforce housing it provides for shopkeepers and those who work at restaurants and bars. Today, several contributing structures within the historic district, including sites associated with Agnes Ballard, one of Florida's first female registered architects and the sixth woman admitted to the American Institute of Architects nationwide, are in danger of being demolished to create cleared lots for future infill development opportunities.

Opa-locka City Hall Opa-locka (Miami-Dade County) *Built 1926*



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Establishing a winter encampment at San Diego in 1910 to teach flying to Army and Naval personnel, Curtiss became known to many as the "Father of Naval Aviation." By the 1920s, he became involved in real estate development in Florida, co-developing the city of Hialeah and developing the cities of Miami Springs and Opa-locka.

Envisioning a town designed in the themes of an "Arabian Fantasy" or "Arabian Nights," Curtiss hired architect Bernhardt Emil Muller to design 86 buildings in a Moorish Revival style.

At the heart of the new community, the Opa-locka Administration Building was designed to serve as the headquarters for the development and sales company created by Curtiss.



Described as the anchor of new city and completed in 1926, it also was the flagship in the center of the town that would arrow out to other structures within its limits. It later became the Opa-locka City Hall and was eventually placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. A decade ago, the building was shuttered due to a mold infestation. Since that time, a renovation project had started but due to a lack of funds, that project was put on indefinite hold. As time has gone on, the structure has continued to deteriorate.

Ormond Beach Riverside Church Ormond Beach (Volusia County) *Built 1976*

The congregation associated with the Ormond Beach Riverside Church dates back to 1876. A previous house of worship on the riverfront property was attended by such local luminaries as John D. Rockefeller and James Ormond, the namesake of the City. In 1976, the current sanctuary was completed as an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture that includes stained glass and original architectural details that are nearly impossible to replicate.



In 2018, the City of Ormond Beach acquired the property with the hope of converting it into a recreational facility for public use. However, plans changed after an inspection found mold in the classroom portion of the building. Despite the property being the site of the oldest church in Ormond Beach and being connected with persons and events of great historical significance, its future is threatened by a city plan to raze the



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structure in order to create a new surface parking lot to provide additional parking for nearby businesses. The nominator hopes that increased awareness will encourage the City Commission to reconsider the parking plan and offers for the adaptive reuse of the property.

Reddick Presbyterian Church
Reddick (Marion County)
Built 1887

During the 1850s, Ulric and Sarah Mills Reddick relocated to Marion County from South Carolina with their sons Samuel, John and George. After the civil war, John became involved in the timber industry, acquiring land and eventually deeding right-of-way and timber needed for crossties to the Florida Southern Railway Company with the provision that the railroad would construct and operate the line. With his land as a railroad stop, on June 8, 1882 the Plat of the Town of Reddick was filed. The Town of Reddick quickly became a center for citrus and farming.



On land conveyed to them, brother George and Callie Reddick built a general merchandise store and residence in the new town. This residence became a meeting place for the beginning of the Presbyterian Church of Reddick when it was organized in 1884. In 1887, the current Victorian frame structure, featuring a Romanesque was completed. Over the next century, the Reddick Presbyterian Church served as a vital part of the town's religious and social life.

It continues to serve as an excellent example of the late 19th century scale and character of the rural railroad town of Reddick. Damage to the building, post-COVID hardships and mold have caused the congregation to leave the building and the best next step for the historic church is in question.

South Shore Community Center
Miami Beach (Miami-Dade County)
Built 1969



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Designed in 1969 and completed in two phases by the architect Morris Lapidus, the South Shore Community Center is an example of a neglected aspect of Lapidus' work. Designed in response to changing demographics and acute social issues, the South Shore Community Center is both part of and the witness to local and national history. Moreover, its association with prominent historical figures (Rep. Claude Pepper and Sen. Edward Kennedy) and an emerging social movement gives the Community Center local and national importance. This historical significance is matched by its architectural merit. It is an extraordinary example of the evolution of the work of Morris Lapidus, who did not want to be "always referred to as the architect of the Fontainebleau."



Currently, the community center property is being considered as a potential site for a new City of Miami Beach fire station. The nominator seeks inclusion to the 11 to Save list as a tool to help bring increased awareness to local officials that there is a public contingency who would like to see the building preserved and another location selected for a new fire station.

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About the Florida Trust

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation is the state's non-profit dedicated to protecting Florida's extraordinary heritage and history. Founded in 1978, the Florida Trust has collaborated to save irreplaceable Florida treasures like the Historic Florida Capitol and is a statewide partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Learn more at www.FloridaTrust.org and follow on Twitter: @FloridaTrustHP.