



WAKULLA COUNTY COASTAL RESOURCES SURVEY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On behalf of the Wakulla County Board of Commissioners, PaleoWest conducted an architectural survey of historic resources in the coastal communities of Wakulla County, Florida (Project) that are particularly susceptible to damage from hurricanes and erosion. The Project was funded through a small matching grant from the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State. The purpose of the Project was to identify, document, and evaluate coastal historical structures to aid Wakulla County in its preservation planning process and provide an inventory of significant properties.

Survey methods PaleoWest implemented followed those outlined in Module 3: Guidelines for Historic Preservation Professionals. This report conforms to Chapter 1A-46 of the Florida Administrative Code: Archaeological and Historical Report Standards and Guidelines (Commernet 2011). Resources were evaluated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Documentation forms, maps, and GIS shapefiles were submitted to the Florida Master Site File.

Wakulla County identified eight communities on the county's coast as survey areas: Mashles Sands, Oyster Bay, Newport, Panacea, Shell Point, Spring Creek, St. Marks, and Wakulla Beach. These communities—excluding Oyster Bay due to the lack of historic structures in the community—were intensively surveyed with photo-documentation, notes, and Florida Master Site File documentation. A total of 226 resources were documented, with 185 newly recorded structures (WA01286 - WA01478) and 41 updated structures (WA00839 - WA01256). Two-hundred-and-twenty-two structures are recommended not eligible individually for listing in the NRHP, three are recommended eligible for listing in the NRHP (WA00839, WA00876, WA01455), and one is potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP (WA01433).

All 226 structures are within areas where potential for additional documentation exists. Therefore, potential districts are not yet defined, delineated, or fully surveyed. As a result, the resources were classified as having insufficient information for evaluation with respect to a potential district. Within the study areas, there are approximately 207 additional unsurveyed historic-age structures. Many of these unrecorded resources complement the structures documented in this survey and possess the potential to contribute to a future district.

Although there is currently insufficient information to fully document and define historic districts, PaleoWest identified structures in all survey areas that may potentially contribute to future districts. In Mashles Sands, 45 of 56 structures recorded potentially contribute to a district. In Newport, three of three structures recorded potentially contribute to a district. Within the Panacea survey area, 47 of 69 structures recorded potentially contribute to a district. In Shell Point, 22 of 30 structures recorded potentially contribute to a district. Within Spring Creek, 16 of 30 structures recorded potentially contribute to a district. In the St. Marks survey area, 21 of 36 structures recorded potentially contribute to a district. Within Wakulla Beach, one of two structures recorded potentially contributes to a district. These structures have retained their historical integrity and could contribute to future National Register or locally designated historic districts. At this time, there is insufficient information to delineate districts, but there is potential for their future creation. To facilitate the creation of districts, comprehensive survey of each area is recommended to document additional structures and determine district boundaries, periods of significance, and level of significance.

Structures documented in this survey were predominantly built circa 1940 through circa 1960, during the WWII and Aftermath (1942–1959) Period of development. The second most predominant period of development in the survey area was the Contemporary (1960–1971) Period. Surveyed structures also reflect the Florida Land Boom (1919–1929) Period and Great Depression Era (1930–1941) to a lesser extent. Within the Project area, most resources documented are single-family private residences. The coastal communities of Wakulla County were established in the early to late nineteenth century as centers of commercial fishing and tourism. By the early twentieth century, the county’s coastal communities were well-developed. The Hurricane of 1928, however, severely damaged Wakulla County’s coastal communities, an event reflected in the relatively low number of recorded historic resources dating from early periods of development. The resources in the Project Area reflect broad trends in postwar tourism and development.

The results of this Project will serve as an archival record of a selection of Wakulla County’s coastal historic architectural resources at the time of the survey. The historical overview contained in this report will provide an appreciation and understanding of these resources. This survey provides a foundation for a future comprehensive survey and consideration of potential historic districts. Ultimately, this work forms the basis for future preservation efforts in Wakulla County.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PaleoWest would like to thank the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners for their assistance and knowledge of the study areas. We would also like to give a special thanks to Somer Pell, Director of the Wakulla County Department of Planning & Community Development, and Natalie Knowles with the Wakulla County Procurement office. PaleoWest also thanks Kelsey Lewis of Kimley-Horn for facilitation and management of the Project. The Wakulla County Property Appraiser and the Florida Master Site File staff provided invaluable resources for background research.

Our fieldwork team would like to thank the citizens of Wakulla County, especially those residents of Mashas Sands, Newport, Panacea, Shell Point, Spring Creek, St. Marks, and Wakulla Beach; these residents showed appreciation of their neighborhoods and desire to preserve their community's shared history. They permitted photographs and answered questions about construction date, additions and alterations, and ownership history. It is the hope of PaleoWest that this survey will continue to provide helpful information for future historic preservation efforts in these neighborhoods.

This Project is sponsored in part by the Department of State, Division of Historical Resources and the State of Florida. A Small Matching Grant was awarded to the Wakulla County Board of County Commissioners by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Historical Resources. PaleoWest would like to give a special thanks to Tim Knoepke for his service as Historic Preservation Grants Program Supervisor and to Drew Begley for his facilitation and management of this Project.

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CHAPTER 1. PROJECT LOCATION AND PURPOSE

PaleoWest conducted an architectural survey of the communities of Mashes Sands, Newport, Panacea, Shell Point, Spring Creek, St. Marks, and Wakulla Beach in Wakulla County, Florida (Figure 1-1). The Project was funded through a small matching grant from the Division of Historical Resources, Florida Department of State. The purpose of the Project was to locate, document, and evaluate a minimum of 225 architectural resources within the coastal communities of Wakulla County.



Figure 1-1. Map of Project study areas on aerial photography.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

2.1 HISTORIC PRESERVATION REGULATIONS

The laws and regulations that inform historic preservation in the United States are formed at all levels of government, from federal to local. The earliest iteration of historic preservation policy in the United States can be traced to the Antiquities Act of 1906. This act authorized the President to designate historic, natural, and scientific landmarks on land owned or controlled by the Federal Government as National Monuments. After signing the act into law, President Theodore Roosevelt established eighteen National Monuments, many of which have since been designated as National Parks (U.S. Department of the Interior 2016). The passage of the Historic Site Act of 1935 further developed national historic preservation policy. This act declared it a national policy to preserve historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for public use and the benefit of the American people. To accomplish this, the Secretary of the Interior was given the power to create historic and archeological surveys and to secure and preserve data of historic and archaeological sites, buildings, and objects (National Park Service n.d.).

Modern historic preservation legislation emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century with the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. Spurred by the dismal condition of America's historic resources outlined in the landmark report *With Heritage so Rich*, the NHPA presented the most comprehensive national preservation policy thus far enacted. It established the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, Section 106 Review, and the State Historic Preservation Offices required to maintain state-wide inventories of historic resources. The NRHP extended beyond individual buildings and included structures, districts, objects, and archeological sites, ranging from local to national significance (National Park Service 2018). In a subsequent amendment to the act, the Certified Local Governments (CLG) program was established, a program that allows local governments to become active partners in the Federal Historic Preservation Program. A decade after the passage of the NHPA, Federal Historic Tax Credits were established in the United States Tax Code. This program incentivized private sector investment in the rehabilitation of historic buildings for income-producing uses (National Park Service 2020).

On the state government level, Florida has established its program of Historic Property Tax Exemption. Authorized by Section 196.1997 of the Florida Statutes, the program allows counties and municipalities to adopt ordinances allowing property tax exemptions for up to 100% of the increase in assessed improvements of a qualified historic property resulting from rehabilitation (Florida Division of Historical Resources n.d.). The Florida Archives and History Act of 1967 was the first state-wide historic preservation policy. It recognized the unique heritage of the state and the social, cultural, and economic impacts of the loss of historic resources. The act, changed in name to The Florida Historic Resources Act in 1986, was codified in Florida Statute 267 and gave authority to local governments to further historic preservation goals (Abney 1998).

In Wakulla County, Florida Ordinances 2013-4 and 2013-19 were adopted and established local preservation regulations. These ordinances created the Wakulla County Historic Preservation Committee, a local Register of Historic Places, criteria and procedures for designating historic

resources, and regulations for demolition, construction, reconstruction, and alteration of historic sites. In 2016, Wakulla County was designated as a CLG (Wakulla County 2021).

This assemblage of federal, state, and local historic preservation regulations guides efforts to preserve historic resources. At the federal level, authority is limited to federally owned properties or projects that require federal funding or permitting. States are similarly limited in authority, leaving local governments primarily responsible for the preservation of historic resources within their communities. The onus of preserving Florida's heritage and historic built environment falls to local governments, elected officials, and community members.

2.2 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Selection methods for survey are often geographic or thematic; the present survey area was defined by both geography and theme. A geographic survey focuses on a location, with the goal of recording all age-appropriate structures and associated buildings within established geographic boundaries. The location can include a subdivision, neighborhood, district, or city limit. If a study area is larger than the scope of work allows, then geographic surveys are often executed in phases. In the case of a thematic approach, a specific theme drives the investigation. For example, a thematic approach may document all churches or wooden bridges within a city or county. The goal of this survey was to identify and evaluate a selection of coastal resources in seven communities. As such, the theme of coastal was applied to the geographic regions defined within Wakulla County, resulting in a blended approach. This survey was limited to historic buildings and potential historical districts located within the study area; no historic sites were included within the survey.

Wakulla County defined the study area for this Project as the resources of eight coastal communities: Mashas Sands, Newport, Oyster Bay, Panacea, Shell Point, Spring Creek, St. Marks, and Wakulla Beach. These geographic areas were chosen by the County due to their susceptibility to damage from hurricanes, evident through the impacts of past natural disasters. Of these eight communities, seven were surveyed. The community of Oyster Bay had no historical resources (structures constructed prior to 1971) and was thus excluded from the Project study area. In total, a sample of 225 historical resources were to be recorded in these areas.

PaleoWest selected resources that were age-eligible, possible to record without trespassing, and most likely to be eligible for listing in the NRHP either individually or as a contributing element to a historic district. To identify these resources, PaleoWest developed a preliminary list of resources built before 1971 by reviewing historical USGS quadrangle maps and property appraiser records. The team then compared this list to modern aerials to verify that the selected structures (1) had not been demolished and (2) would be possible to survey from the right-of-way. Concurrently, historians were conducting research into the Project area with the aim of identifying historically significant people, places, and events. Working with the aerials, property appraiser records, and historical research, the team then considered potential historical significance and selected structures most likely to be eligible for the NRHP. As a result, 226 structures (185 newly recorded and 41 previously recorded) were targeted for survey. Approximately 207 historic-age structures across all survey areas were not selected for survey. These structures were excluded due to the limited scope of the survey, issues with accessibility and view from the right of way, and lack of integrity. PaleoWest attempted to select resources with the highest probability of being either individually eligible for the National

Register or contributing resources within a historical district. Additionally, PaleoWest selected geographically dispersed resources to provide a more comprehensive overview of the survey area's historic resources.

PaleoWest conducted fieldwork according to professional standards, documenting each resource with photographs of elevations, notes on architectural features, and GPS verification. Each resource was evaluated, and integrity was assessed. Field notes focused on describing architectural elements and integrity, which were then used when addressing the site description and eligibility of each individual structure included in the survey. Structures were placed within the surrounding physical context and evaluated individually and, if applicable, considered with respect to a potential district. Equipment and materials used in the field included digital data collection devices and a high-quality digital photography camera. Florida Master Site File (FMSF) forms were completed for each resource.

Architectural historians then compared the information collected in the field with existing records. This included a review of the parcel ID, architectural features, style type, address, and present and original use. The integrity of each building was evaluated using the guidelines established by the NRHP and the FMSF. Not permitted to trespass onto private property, the surveyors inspected each building from the right of way. Visual assessments from the right of way provided sufficient evidence of alterations and additions.

The architectural significance, historical themes, dates of construction, and periods of significance were evaluated according to the criteria of evaluation for the NRHP. Tables were prepared, classifying buildings into periods of historical development, present and original use, and architectural style. Architectural and historical contexts were composed to illustrate development patterns, significant historical events, and the major architectural influences represented in the study areas. This historical context information was obtained from local oral and written histories, newspapers, archival research, and secondary sources.

Following the completion of the survey report and structure assessment, a FMSF form for each surveyed resource was completed. Original forms were completed for newly recorded resources, and updated forms were created for previously recorded resources. These forms were submitted to and are retained by the FMSF.

2.3 EVALUATION

Four criteria are applied during the evaluation of a structure's eligibility for inclusion in the NRHP. Normally, a property must be at least 50 years of age and meet at least one of the following four criteria to be considered eligible for listing in the NRHP:

- Be associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our collective history (at a local, state, or national level) (Criterion A); or
- Be associated with the lives of persons significant in our past (at a local, state, or national level) (Criterion B); or
- Embody the distinct characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represents a significant and discernable entity whose components may lack individual distinction (Criterion C); or

- Yield, or be likely to yield in the future, information significant in prehistory or history (Criterion D).

PaleoWest architectural historians used these criteria, in conjunction with evaluations of integrity, to provide recommendations concerning the NRHP-eligibility status of all of the recorded historical resources. Determinations of eligibility are not possible when the limits of a district are unknown and only a portion has been sampled, but it may be possible to assess a district as potentially significant or eligible based on an incomplete sample.

Resources are recorded in the FMSF regardless of significance. The FMSF is not a register of historic properties but an archive for documents concerning the historical resources of Florida. Each FMSF form is a permanent record of a historical resource. When submitting a resource to the FMSF, a site file number must first be assigned by the Florida Division of Historical Resources. A FMSF form is then completed using this site file number and the record is submitted to the FMSF for archiving.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH CONTEXTS

A review of research contexts is a prerequisite for an architectural survey, providing perspective for fieldwork, analysis, and interpretation. The research contexts are presented here in three sections: environmental context, developmental and historical context, and previous research. Because the focus of the survey is historic architecture, the developmental and historical context focuses on those periods relevant to this study.

3.1 ENVIRONMENTAL

The Project area is in the East Gulf Coast Plain physiographic region, which stretches from the Mississippi River to the Florida Panhandle and from western Tennessee to the Gulf of Mexico. The topography in this region typically ranges from rolling prairie to rugged hills and is characterized by loess bluffs in the west and distinctive lower coastal plain flora.

Paleoenvironmental reconstructions for this physiographic zone have shown that the vegetation of the region during the last glacial maximum (around 20,000 BP) was dominated by southern Diploxylon pines (*Pinus*) (20 to 40 percent), oaks (*Quercus*) (20 percent), and hickories (*Carya*) (20 percent) (Delcourt and Delcourt 1987a). The glacial conditions, and the expansion of the Laurentide ice sheet, drove some cold-hardy species like poplars (*Populus*) and ash (*Fraxinus*) into the region, but these remained minor components (Delcourt and Delcourt 1987b). As the climate began to warm, the more northerly vegetation components began to recede (Delcourt and Delcourt 1987b).

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines the ecoregions of the Project study area as the Gulf Coast Flatwoods and the Big Bend Coastal Marsh within the Florida Southern Coastal Plain (Griffith et al. 2001). The Gulf Coast Flatwoods ecoregion variability covers the lower portion of the Florida Panhandle along the Gulf of Mexico. The Big Bend Coastal Marsh stretches along the Gulf Coast from north of Anclote Key to Ochlockonee Bay. The Atlantic Ocean is east of these regions and the Gulf of Mexico is to the south and west. The Gulf Coast Flatwoods ecoregion is composed of nearly level terraces with poorly to moderately drained soils with loamy surfaces. Dominant land uses in this ecoregion include urban, woodland and wildlife habitat, and agriculture. Historically pine savannas with a variety of grasses, orchids, pitcher plants, rushes, and longleaf and slash pine were common. The Big Bend ecoregion is composed of a shallow sloping submarine surface, with a lack of wave activity and sediment supply. Coastal wetlands in the ecoregion are a mixture of mangrove, hammock vegetation, and marsh.

The Project area consists of structures built within Wakulla County in seven communities: Mashes Sands, Newport, Panacea, Shell Point, Spring Creek, St. Marks, and Wakulla Beach (Figure 3-1).

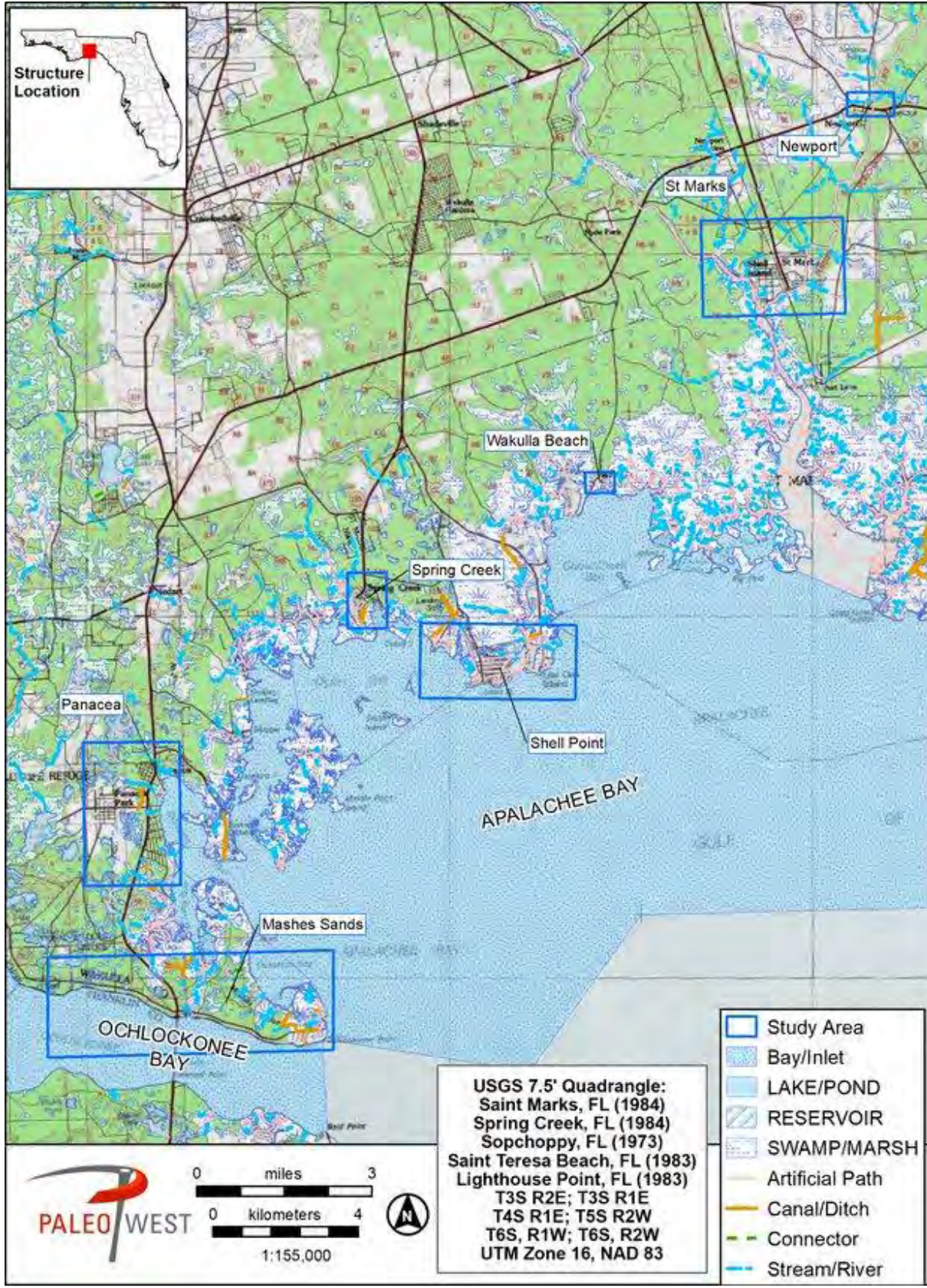


Figure 3-1. Map of Project study area on topographic layer with major water features.

3.2 DEVELOPMENTAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The earliest human occupation of present-day Wakulla County dates to the Paleoindian Period (15,000 B.C. to 8,000 B.C.) and can be traced specifically to Wakulla Springs. These earliest occupants were likely nomadic and did not settle permanently within the area. By the arrival of Europeans in the early sixteenth century, however, the Apalachee tribe had settled in the area at a village called Aute. The first Europeans to visit present-day Wakulla County were Spaniards led by Pánfilo de Narváez in 1528, quickly followed by Hernando de Soto one decade later. In the late seventeenth century, Spanish Governor Pablo Hita Salazar erected a small, primitive, fortification in the Apalachee Bay region, but it was destroyed in 1704. This early fortification was replaced by San Marcos de Apalachee in 1718, located at present-day St. Marks on the St. Marks river. A stone fort eventually replaced the initial fort. The construction of San Marcos de Apalachee and subsequent trading houses near the fort made coastal Wakulla County a major shipping port in the Gulf by the late 1700s.

In 1763, West Florida was ceded to the British through the Treaty of Paris, and the British garrisoned the Spanish fort at St. Marks. By 1783, the Spanish regained control of the region and once again occupied San Marcos, strengthening its defenses. Around this same time, Scottish fur traders Panton Leslie and Company, headquartered in Pensacola, began establishing a string of trading houses along the Gulf coast and into the interior regions of west Florida. One such trading post was near the old Spanish fort at St. Marks on the St. Marks River. The company worked with the Spanish colonial government to protect the trade and Spanish sovereignty in the region during the following decades. Panton Leslie and Company, which later became John Forbes and Company after 1803, operated the store for several decades and were among the earliest European settlers in what became Wakulla County (Figure 3-2). As payment for debts owed to the company, the Lower Creek ceded nearly 1.4 million acres of land between 1804 and 1811, encompassing all of present-day Wakulla County (Coker and Watson 1986). Known as the Forbes Grant, a portion of the original acreage was eventually recognized by the U.S. government after 1828 (Coker and Watson 1986). In 1818, a U.S. military offensive led by Andrew Jackson invaded Spanish West Florida and occupied the fort at St. Marks for nearly a year. The incident, part of what would later be known as the First Seminole War, precipitated the acquisition of the St. Marks region by the United States, which occurred in 1821 (WPA 1942).

During the American Territorial Period (1821–1845) the Wakulla County settlements of St. Marks, Port Leon, and Magnolia played an important role in Middle Florida’s economic development. A single plank road was one of the only connections between west Florida’s interior regions and the Gulf in Wakulla, running from Tallahassee to the coast at Newport. Used to transport cotton, the road is considered one of the oldest still in use in Wakulla County. The name “plank road” comes from the method of construction in low-lying areas. Wooden planks were set across the road and filled in with earth to help maintain the integrity of the roadway during periods of high water (Tallahassee Democrat 1969). The plank road, along with steamboats and shipping, aided the area’s development, and in 1843 Wakulla County was officially formed from the existing Leon County.



Figure 3-2. Portion of early nineteenth century Forbes Purchase map showing Project area (historic map collection, Florida Historical Society). Note the location of Fort St. Marks and low-lying marshland that would later attract seine net fisherman.

Shortly after the formation of the County, these early prominent settlements became less important economic centers with the arrival of rail lines in the region. By the turn of the twentieth century, the Carrabelle, Tallahassee, and Georgia Railroad ran from Carrabelle, just west of the county's boundary, to Tallahassee. This line, along with the Old Tallahassee Railway, was eventually absorbed into the Seaboard Air Line in the twentieth century (WPA 1942). In the early 1870s, the commercial oyster industry emerged in Wakulla County, replacing the earlier role of cotton in Wakulla's coastal towns (WPA 1942). Small communities directly in the low-lying marshes of southern Wakulla County built infrastructure to support the commercial beach seine method of fishing, which required nets, drying racks, and large reels (Figure 3-3).



Figure 3-3. Seine nets and drying racks at Saint Marks. Image courtesy of State Archives and Library of Florida, Manuscript Collection, M82-53, Box 1, FF1 Image # MSC6195).

The annual mullet runs on Wakulla's coast lasted roughly four months out of the year in the fall months and attracted visitors from as far away as Georgia to take part in the seining process, as well as buy fresh fish for the coming winter months. Regular watches were kept at each major seine yard to alert the community of an impending school of fish. Some of the largest operations used motorized boats and dozens of people to haul the nets onto the beach for processing and sorting. A single day could yield close to 3,000 pounds of fish (Tallahassee Democrat 1968). With the hundreds of migrant laborers and visitors to the seine yards of Wakulla County each year, small cottages were built at the larger operations where fisherman hung, repaired, and built new boats in preparation for the "running season." Many of the yards in Wakulla could trace their history back to the mid-nineteenth century, and generations of fisherman underwent the annual process relatively unchanged. Some of the primary operators in the mid-twentieth century included the Taff family, Willie Spears, E. C. Ferrell, the Becton family, and Virgil Allen. Each yard employed nearly 150 men to haul the nets and process the fish. In 1950, the commercial fishing industry was the most lucrative form of commerce in Wakulla County, producing nearly \$200,000 worth of fish (Pigott 1949).

To transport these catches, better roads were needed. Roads along the coastal region were largely unimproved for most of the nineteenth century, and access to many communities such as Shell Point and Panacea was difficult. Evidence of pine log "corduroy roads" could be found in and around Oyster Bay and Shell Point. These roads were so named because logs were placed perpendicular to the direction of the road, and when the sand filler in between was exposed, the resulting grade looked like corduroy. Similar in construction materials to the plank

road between Newport and Tallahassee, these rural routes carried cotton and later aquaculture products to and from the Gulf to the interior regions of Florida and the railroads.

During the Great Depression, Wakulla received federal funding for infrastructure and public works projects that helped bolster the commercial fishing industry in the region by providing much needed reliable roads, electricity, and telephone lines. A December 1935 article in the Tallahassee Democrat reported that Civilian Conservation Corps workers were deployed in the Apalachicola National Forest and that contractors were building roads between Shadville and Spring Creek, Shell Point and Live Oak Island, and the St. Marks highway, as well as a road between Panacea and St. Teresa. The road from Panacea to Tallahassee was described in 1935 as “bad, sandy, rough, but passable (Lamb 1935). Poles were also erected along Highway 10 to bring electricity and telephone services to Wakulla Springs and St. Marks (Tallahassee Democrat 1935B). Additionally, the St. Marks School (WA00870, currently the Wakulla Coast Charter School) was constructed by the WPA in St. Marks.

The small settlements of Wakulla Beach, St. Marks, and Panacea evolved around the commercial fishing industry, an industry which remains a cornerstone of the County’s local economy (Page 2001). One of the County’s greatest natural features is the Wakulla Springs, one of the world’s largest freshwater springs. The springs of Wakulla County brought tourists from all over as early as the nineteenth century, spurring the region’s first surge of tourism and infrastructure development. Coinciding with the growth in commercial fishing in Wakulla in the twentieth century was the increase in seasonal tourists traveling on Coastal Highway 98 and other main thoroughfares to see the commercial fishing operations and take part in recreational activities.

During World War II, the town of Newport had a brief economic resurgence, and Wakulla County was the scene of some war-related activities. In Newport, ship building for the war effort occurred at the Newport Marine boatyard. Predominantly patrol torpedo boats were constructed at the site, and shipbuilding continued in Newport for at least several years following the war (Apalachicola Region Resources on the Web 2005). Wakulla Springs became a recreational venue during the war years and played host to officers and men stationed at nearby Dale Marby Field and Camp Gordon Johnston. In 1943, the springs were also used as the main backdrop for the Academy Award winning short *Amphibious Fighters* (Coles and Gregory n.d.). On the coast, the seventh and eight Naval Districts conducted German U-Boat observations in the Gulf (Brunies 2020).

By 1970, Wakulla County’s commercial fishing seine yards and modernization in roadway construction gave way to more modern housing developments, exemplified by the Paradise Village mobile home development at Shell Point. Advertised as a low-maintenance rental and retirement option with direct access to canals and the Gulf, Paradise Village was the project of the Tallahassee-based firm, Mobile Home Industries (Tallahassee Democrat 1970). The 1970s saw a steady rise in the popularity and construction of mobile home parks in the greater Tallahassee metropolitan area. These developments contributed to the socio-economic and cultural shift in the area, away from fishing and rural agriculture/aquaculture to a reliance on tourism and eco-tourism.

Currently, Wakulla County has a population of approximately 31,900 residents across its 736 square miles. The County has two incorporated communities, the cities of Sopchoppy (established 1894) and St. Marks (established circa 1830s). Sopchoppy has an estimated population of 491, while St. Marks has an estimated population of 324 (U.S. Census Bureau

2019). Crawfordville and Panacea are both census-designated places located within the county. As of 2010, Crawfordville had a population of 3,702, and Panacea had a population of 816 (U.S. Department of Commerce 2010) (Table 3-1). The majority of the County’s workforce is employed in the trade, transportation, and utilities sector, followed by leisure and hospitality, and manufacturing. In 2013, the County’s top five growing industries included: (1) educational services, (2) manufacturing, (3) transportation and warehousing, (4) real estate, rental, and leasing, and (5) agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (Florida Department of Transportation 2013).

Table 3-1. Project Study Area Census Data (Source: 2010 Census, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Community	Area	Population
Mashes Sands	6 square miles**	No data*
Newport	0.3 square miles**	No data*
Panacea	1.7 square miles	816
Shell Point	2.5 square miles**	No data*
Spring Creek	0.6 square miles**	No data*
St. Marks	2 square miles	293
Wakulla Beach	0.1 square miles**	No data*

*These communities are unincorporated; no census data is available.

**Area measurements are approximate as no census data is available.

3.2.1 St. Marks

St. Marks is the earliest European settlement in Wakulla County, dating to the first Spanish fortification constructed near the mouth of the St. Marks river in 1677 (WPA 1942). San Marcos de Apalachee, constructed in the mid-eighteenth century at the intersection of the St. Marks and Wakulla Rivers, replaced this initial fort. During the British (1763-1783) and Second Spanish (1783-1821) Periods, San Marco de Apalachee was an important military outpost. The fort played a major role in the First Seminole War in 1818 as the site where General Andrew Jackson hung two British citizens. The hanging created an international response, with hostilities between the United States and the United Kingdom threatening to rekindle (Waber and Cantner 2016). In the 1830s, nearly a decade after Florida became a territory, the town of St. Marks was founded on land surrounding the fort. The establishment of St. Marks was preceded by the town of Magnolia, established in 1827 just north of the fort (Howard 1993).

Both St. Marks and Magnolia developed into important port towns, supporting the cotton industry in middle Florida and Southern Georgia. Public roads were first created in Wakulla to support the cotton trade, but soon the Tallahassee Railroad was built, connecting Tallahassee with the Gulf by way of St. Marks and Port Leon on Apalachee Bay. In 1843, a flood destroyed much of Port Leon, Magnolia, and St. Marks, and settlers moved north, establishing the town of Newport (WPA 1942). While Magnolia never recovered from the impact of the hurricane or the creation of Newport, St. Marks was rebuilt (Howard 1993). Despite its earlier prominence, St. Marks struggled to regain its footing and compete with Newport during the 1840s.

By the following decade, St. Marks was having a resurgence, as the federal government established a Marine hospital at the old fort, and the Tallahassee Railroad was modernized with steam engines (Waber and Cantner 2016). During the Civil War, the coast along Apalachicola Bay was used as a salt distillation site until Union forces destroyed both the salt works and the Railroad to Tallahassee. Fort St. Marks was occupied by Confederate forces throughout most of the war years. After the Union maritime blockade closed St. Marks to commerce, the community substantially declined in population, and a fire in 1868 all but destroyed the small town (WPA 1940). Following the fire and the creation of newer rail lines that diverted cotton from the area, cotton was replaced by lumber as St. Marks's primary export (Waber and Cantner 2016). Elsewhere in Wakulla County, the commercial oyster industry was emerging in place of the cotton industry (WPA 1940).

Entering the twenty-first century, St. Marks relied heavily on the timber industry, railroads, and shipbuilding. In the early 1930s the first paved road in the town was constructed, followed by the construction of the St. Marks Highway by the WPA in the mid-1930s. During the same decade, the oil industry arrived in St. Marks, as the Gulf Oil Company constructed storage tanks in the community (Smith 1976). With the outbreak of World War II, St. Marks became the center of war-related activity in Wakulla County. Nearly one hundred servicemen were stationed in the town during the war, including a rescue boat squadron. Two U.S. Coastguard bases were established in the town. Post-War, St. Marks returned to normalcy, largely catering to commercial and recreational fisherman like Wakulla County's other communities (Waber and Cantner 2016). The town also continued to be used as a storage area by oil companies, and the construction of the St. Marks Power Plant in 1952 resulted in the immediate creation of thirty jobs in the community (Beaudoin 1953) (Figure 3-4). By the 1970s, the oil industry had left St. Marks and the area, like much of Wakulla County, became more dependent on commercial and recreational fishing (Waber and Cantner 2016).



Figure 3-4. Circa 1950s aerial image of St. Marks, showing the St. Marks Power Plant (now the Sam O. Purdom Generating Station) in the forefront (Florida Memory, State Library and Archives of Florida, image number N039985).

3.2.2 Newport

The town of Newport was established after the 1843 flood that destroyed sections of Port Leon, St. Marks, and Magnolia. Located on the St. Marks river, upstream from St. Marks, Newport was immediately prosperous as a center of shipping. When Wakulla County was carved from Leon County the same year, 1843, Newport was named the county seat (Friends of Wakulla Springs n.d.). In the first census completed after Florida gained statehood, Newport was one of only eleven cities and towns recorded. In that year, 1850, the town had a population of 132 (U.S. Census Bureau 1850). Despite its early success, Newport's population remained stagnant through the 1860s and declined to 199 residents in 1870. By 1880, the town was no longer counted in the census (U.S. Census Bureau 1860, 1870, 1880). One source claims that the town's population dipped to as low as 32 by 1872 (Apalachicola Region Resources on the Web 2005).

Newport briefly resurged during World War II as a production site for patrol torpedo boats at the Newport Marine Industries shipyard. Post-War, shipbuilding in the town continued through at least the 1960s (Figure 3-5). Today, the former shipyard is an abandoned site, and the town is only approximately 0.3 square miles. U.S. Highway 98 bisects the community, and three crossroads—Westfield Street, Pineview Drive, and Old Plank Road—compose the town.



Figure 3-5. Construction of a fiberglass trawler at Newport Marine Industries in Newport, Florida, 1969 (Florida Memory, State Library and Archives of Florida, image number C673598).

3.2.3 Mashes Sands

Mashes Sands is approximately six miles southeast of Panacea on a peninsula bounded by Ochlockonee Bay and Apalachee Bay (Figure 3-6). The earliest known history of Mashes Sands dates to the Civil War. The Union blockade of southern ports stopped the supply of salt to the confederacy from Europe and the northern states. The confederacy's solution was to allow men to exempt from service if they could produce twenty gallons of salt a day (Womack 2015). Mashes Sands was the site of a confederate salt distillation facility in the early years of the war. In 1863, two U.S.S. Steamers with one-hundred-and-thirty Union soldiers came ashore to destroy the salt works and the fifty salt boilers located on the beach. In addition to destroying the works, the Union captured three Confederate soldiers and six enslaved individuals (WPA 1942; Howard 1993).

Modern day Mashes Sands is an unincorporated community that extends west along the northern edge of Ochlockonee Bay. North of Mashes Sands Road is predominantly

undeveloped and is the location of the Mashas Sands Outstanding Florida Waters area. The eastern terminus of the Peninsula, Ochlockonee Point, is the location of the public Mashas Beach. The beach has a pier that extends into Ochlockonee Bay, but it has been closed for repairs since sustaining damage during Hurricane Michael. Just west of the pier, there is a small residential development planned around four man-made canals (evident in Figure 3-7). The Mashas Sands area is mostly residential, although there is commercial development centered around the intersection of Mashas Sands Road and Coastal Highway.

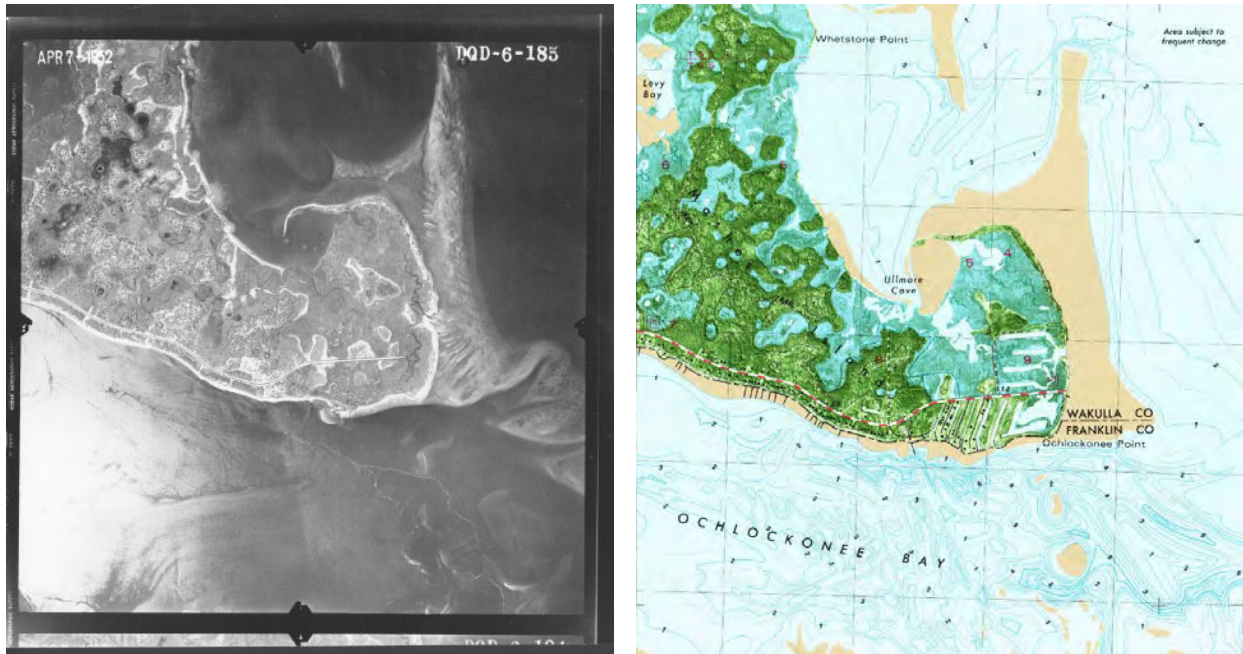


Figure 3-6. (Left) 1952 aerial image of Mashas Sands Beach (University of Florida Digital Collections, Flight 6, Tile 185). Figure 3-7. (Right) 1985 topographic map of Mashas Sands beach showing development along the coast (TopoViwer, Lighthouse Point Topographic Map).

3.2.4 Panacea

Panacea is one of modern Wakulla County's larger coastal communities. Early settlement of Panacea was centered around the local mineral springs, which were found in and around the settlement. Originally known as Smith Springs, the property surrounding the Spring was purchased by investors from Boston and renamed Panacea (Federal Writers Project 1939). These springs were believed to possess curative powers, and tourists began visiting the region in the nineteenth century. Hotels and lodgings were created to support the burgeoning tourism industry in Wakulla (Figure 3-8).



Figure 3-8. Hotel near Panacea Springs, 1901 (State Archives and Library of Florida, Manuscript Collection, M82-53, Box 1, FF4, Image #MSC6215).

In the 1920s, Panacea grew quickly as a result of the tourism traffic, and hotels, restaurants, and attractions began to appear. A strong hurricane landed near Wakulla County in August 1928 and damaged many of the hotels and commercial buildings supporting the tourism industry in Panacea (Tallahassee Democrat 1928A). Other coastal communities, including Sopchoppy, St. Marks, and Newport, reported severe damage (Tallahassee Democrat 1928B). In the latter half of the twentieth century Panacea, much like the other communities of coastal Wakulla County, depended on commercial and recreational fishing (Figure 3-9). Modern day Panacea is a census-designated place with a population of 816, dispersed across 1.7-square-miles. The Coastline Highway runs north-south through the community, and the majority of Panacea's commercial development lines this highway.



Figure 3-9. Boats docked at Panacea fishing village, November 1979 (State Archives and Library of Florida, Department of Commerce Collection, Series 1047, Box 5, Folder 21, Image #K022353).

3.2.5 Shell Point

Shell Point was established in the late nineteenth century as a small, rural fishing community. One of the earliest seine yards at Shell Point was operated by Robert Raker in the late nineteenth century, and later B.B. Stevens operated the yard for the Taff family in the 1920s. Stevens estimated that the yard had been in existence since the mid-nineteenth century, which is supported by other accounts (Howard and Saponetti 1993). The company became known as the Shell Point Fish and Oyster Company, which regularly hauled in tens of thousands of fish a day during the fall mullet runs in the 1930s. The company advertised in the Tallahassee newspapers when the anticipated mullet runs would begin (Figure 3-10). People traveled to the seine yards for work at the company. For those who owned their own nets, the company purchased their fish, processed it at their plant, then shipped it to Tallahassee and other areas (Tallahassee Democrat 1934A). Although not the first or only company operating at Shell Point, it was one of the largest and most successful in the twentieth century. The company even operated a restaurant in Tallahassee and another commercial processing facility in Apalachicola.

In the 1970s, a mobile home development was slated for Shell Point. The waterfront community Paradise Village, backed by the firm Mobile Home Industries, included 113 lots with seawalls and docks. The community was deeded exclusively for mobile homes and three canals were dug to provide each mobile home with water access. Paradise Village is still extant. Today, Shell Point is an unincorporated community of approximately two-and-a-half-square miles. Shell Point Beach, a popular public beach, is located at the southern end of the community. Shell Point Road, running north-south, provides access to the community.



Figure 3-10. Mullet Fishermen - Shell Point, Florida (State Archives and Library of Florida, Dorothy Dodd Collection, Image#DD0488).

3.2.6 Spring Creek

Spring Creek, like other communities in southern Wakulla county, also contained a large seine yard and infrastructure to support the commercial fishing industry. Later, recreational fishing became the primary local industry as commercial operators began to decline in the latter decades of the twentieth century. By 1969, the unincorporated community boasted fire hydrants, a volunteer fire department, telephones, electricity, and accommodations for over 60 guests, in addition to the Metcalf Crab Packing Plant (Schley 1969).

The commercial operators at Spring Creek also served as private guides during off-seasons. J. I. Flavery and Leon Langston operated a small fleet of commercial fishing vessels and served as the community's welcoming committee for visitors from outside Wakulla. When not engaged in catching or delivering their commercial catch, the Flaverys contracted their local knowledge to visiting sport fisherman in and around the bay (Tallahassee Democrat 1934B). Spring Creek's small permanent population of nearly 75 individuals in 1935 meant that most of the community worked for the Langston company. The Langstons operated a company store that sold goods on credit to fishermen, as well as cabin rentals to tourists. Spring Creek, as was the case with other fishing communities, also harvested oysters when not employed in the mullet run, or other fishing operations (Figure 3-11 and Figure 3-12) (Clark 1935).

Spring Creek today is a small unincorporated community, located on approximately 0.6 square miles of a peninsula flanked by Old Creek and Stuart Cove. Spring Creek Highway provides the only access to the community.



Figure 3-11. Wakulla Oyster Fisherman, undated (Courtesy of the Wakulla Historical Society).



Figure 3-12. View showing fishermen on the beach with their seine nets and boats in the Florida Panhandle. Photo by Joseph Janney Steinmetz, December 1951. Photo courtesy of State Archives and Library of Florida, Steinmetz Collection N2011 - 7, Photographic Collection, 1930s – 1970s; Box 6, Image #JJS0729. Note seine nets drying on beach near piles of discarded oyster shells.