

PLACES TO VISIT

Excelsior Cultural Center

102 Martin Luther King Ave.
Our first black public high school is now a museum dedicated to the rich cultural heritage of the Lincolnville community.

Call for hours: (904) 824-1191



Fort Mose

15 Fort Mose Trail
Fort Mose was the pioneer black community in what is now the United States. It was

established in 1738 by runaway slaves from English plantations. The Spanish officials granted the refugees freedom in exchange for military service and Catholic conversion.

Fort Mose is now a state park with a museum to tell the story. Located off US-1, one mile north of SR-16.

The Freedom Trail

Presented by the 40th ACCORD, a series of historic markers around town tell the story of how St. Augustine became the final thrust for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Brochures with Freedom Trail maps are available at the visitor centers.



Frank Butler Park



Butler Beach. A1A South.
One of the historic black beaches from the age of segregation now has a park on both the ocean and intercoastal waterway with

boat ramp, picnic tables and rest room facilities.
Open during daylight hours.

DID YOU KNOW?

Juan Garrido (1513)

A free, African conquistador who was present when Ponce de Leon claimed Florida for Spain in 1513, and when Ponce was fatally wounded by Florida Indians in 1521. Garrido is famous as the first person to grow wheat in the New World.



Seminole Indians (1800's)



Many Africans escaped white slavery by living among the Seminole Indians. This was one of the primary causes of the Seminole Wars. A black man named Abraham was known as the "prime minister" of the Seminoles and accompanied the chiefs to the White House in Washington.

War of 1812

Africans and Indians helped save Spanish St. Augustine from American invasion during the War of 1812. The Spanish Governor rewarded them with land grants, including 185 acres to Antonio Proctor, whose descendants still live here.

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Discover More African-American Heritage

You'll find full stories with unique pictures and memorabilia. While you're there, browse the old maps, online books, interactive timeline, and modern-day amenities of the Nation's Oldest City.



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AFRICAN AMERICANS IN ST. AUGUSTINE

SPANISH ERA

Runaway slave-turned soldier at Fort Mose



SLAVERY

Georgia slave purchased at the market in St. Augustine

CIVIL RIGHTS

Civil rights leaders at a press conference



ARTS

Zora Neale Hurston,
novelist & folklorist

Birthplace of African American History

By David Nolan

The rich African American heritage of St. Augustine should cause all history textbooks to be rewritten. When the Spanish conquistador Pedro Menendez founded St. Augustine in 1565, not only were there black members of his crew, but he noted that his arrival had been preceded by free Africans in the French settlement at Fort Caroline, just a few miles north.

Our oldest written records, the Cathedral Parish Archives, list the first birth of a black child here in 1606--thirteen years before many textbooks say that the first blacks on these shores arrived at Jamestown in 1619.

The first legally recognized community of ex-slaves was Fort Mose, the northern defense of St. Augustine, founded in 1738 to protect the city from British invasion. In 1740, when General James Oglethorpe attacked from Georgia, it was the Battle of Fort Mose that proved decisive in turning him around and sending him back from where he came. The site of this free black fort is now recognized as a National Historic Landmark and is run by the Florida Park Service. It is considered the focal point for the first Underground Railroad, which ran not from south to north, but rather from the British southern colonies farther south into Spanish Florida, where escaped slaves would be given their freedom.

Everyone has heard of General Colin Powell, but two centuries before him there was a black general in St. Augustine. His name was Jorge Biassou, and he was one of the original leaders of the slave uprising in Haiti in the 1790s. In the twists and turns of international politics, he became a Spanish general. He was sent to St. Augustine in 1796, as the second-highest paid official of the colony, and stayed here until his death in 1801. His funeral was held at the Cathedral on the Plaza downtown, and he is buried in Tolomato Cemetery on Cordova Street.

An African militia saved St. Augustine from invasion at the time of the War of 1812, and its members were awarded land grants in gratitude by the Spanish governor.

Africans played an important role in relations with the Seminole Indians. A free black man named Antonio Proctor served as Indian interpreter for the first American governor of Florida. A century and a half later one of his descendants, Henry Twine, was active in the civil rights movement and became the first black vice mayor of St. Augustine.

Other Africans lived within the Seminole nation, and rose to high position there. A black man named Abraham was sometimes called "the prime minister of the Seminoles." Another Black Seminole, John Horse, played a prominent military role in the Indian wars of the 1830s.



During the Civil War, black St. Augustinians served in both the Union and Confederate armies. Their graves can be found in many of our historic cemeteries. Harriet Tubman, the famed "conductor" of the Underground Railroad, accompanied the Union soldiers who came down the St. Johns River during the war.

Former slaves established the community of Lincolnville in 1866 in the southwest peninsula of St. Augustine. Lincolnville is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in part because of its origins, in part because--given its time of development--it includes the greatest concentration of treasured Victorian architecture in the Ancient City,

and in part because it was the launching place for demonstrations that led directly to the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The famed abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, spoke here in 1889 at Genovar's Opera House on St. George Street.

A thriving black business district grew up along Washington Street in the 19th and early 20th century. Frank Butler, the leading businessman, also developed Butler's Beach on Anastasia Island, one of the historic black beaches of Florida from the age of segregation. He also had real estate holdings in West Augustine around the campus of Florida Normal (later Florida Memorial) College, a black school--and St. Augustine's first college-- that was located here from 1918 until 1968. The internationally celebrated novelist Zora Neale Hurston was among its teachers. There is a historic marker at the house at 791 West King Street where Hurston lived.

St. Augustine played a major role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Demonstrations began here with a sit-in at the local Woolworth's lunch counter in 1960 and grew to a crescendo by 1964 when Dr. Robert Hayling and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led the last major campaign that resulted in passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964--one of the two great legislative accomplishments of that movement. Dr. King went on from here to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. A street running through the heart of Lincolnville has been named in his honor.

There is a Freedom Trail of historic sites of the civil rights movement, honoring local heroes like Dr. Robert Hayling, dentist and organizer, and the St. Augustine Four (young teenagers who spent six months in jail and reform school for trying to order a hamburger at the Woolworth's lunch counter).

Your visit to St. Augustine is incomplete without exploring the rich African American heritage that changed our nation's history and inspired the world.

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN ST. AUGUSTINE



1 Jorge Biassou (1796)

This ex-slave led the Haitian Revolution before becoming a decorated Spanish general in St. Augustine. He lived at 42 St. George Street, worked at Fort Matanzas, and is buried in an unmarked grave in Tolomato Cemetery.

2 Government House

Ralph Waldo Emerson attended a bible meeting inside Government House while a slave auction took place in the courtyard. He wrote: "...almost without changing our position we might aid in sending the scriptures to Africa or bid for 'four children without the mother' who had been kidnapped there from."



3 Nora August (1860)

A Union soldier occupying St. Simon's Island carved an ivory bust of this freed slave while she posed for immortality. According to the inscription, she was "Purchased from the Market, St. Augustine, Florida April 17 1860."

3 "Slave Market" (1824)

A public market house built in the 1820's was used for the sale of many things, including slaves, before the Civil War. It became a focal point for civil rights demonstrations in the 1960's.



Fort Mose

America's pioneer free black community from 1738. 2 miles north of the Castillo de San Marcos

4 Lincolnville Historic District (1866)

Former slaves established this neighborhood as "Little Africa" immediately after the Civil War. Later renamed Lincolnville, it thrived during segregation, including a busy shopping district, churches, and the largest collection of Victorian houses in town. It played a major role in the civil rights movement in the 1960's.



5 Excelsior Cultural Center (1925)

St. Augustine's first black public high school - turned museum.

6 Dr. Aleck Darnes (1880)

Alexander Darnes grew up as a slave in the Segui-Kirby Smith House, where his statue now stands in the garden. After emancipation, he attended college and became the first black physician in Florida.

7 St. Cyprian's Episcopal Church (1900)

Founded by Africans, the church was built in 1900 and is the oldest church building in historic Lincolnville. The Gothic style wooden structure was beautifully restored in the 1990's and is one of the architectural ornaments of the city.



Gault Street Steps (1964)

These steps are all that remain of the Roberson family home which was firebombed after they sent their children to integrate the previously all-white Fullerwood School. 169 1/2 Gault Street. One block east of The Old Jail.



8 First Baptist Church (1916)

Replaced an earlier building destroyed by fire, this became one of the major churches where civil rights activities took place in the 1960's.



9 Zora Neale Hurston

Author of the famous novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In St. Augustine, Hurston taught at Florida Normal College and hung out with Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings at Castle Warden (now Ripley's). The plaque at 791 West King Street marks where Hurston lived in 1942.



10 Site of Foot Soldiers Monument

Coming soon: Foot Soldiers Monument honoring the heroes of the civil rights movement in the downtown plaza, next to the slave market.

11 American Legion Post 194 (1937)



Begun as the Colored Veterans of World War I in 1937, it became the Lincolnville American Legion Post in the 1940's and moved to West Augustine in the late 1950's, where it is named in honor of Alton Green. This post remains very active in community affairs.

12 Emancipation Proclamation

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 was read to the slaves at this spot.



13 St. Benedict School (1898)

The oldest brick school building in St. Augustine was a gift of Mother Katherine Drexel, who became a Catholic Saint in 2000. In 1916, three of St. Benedict's teaching nuns were arrested for violating the Florida law that forbade white teachers to teach black students.

14 St. Paul A.M.E. Church (1904)

Built in 1904 for a congregation dating back to 1873, this church was the birth of AME in St. Augustine. Dr. Martin Luther King and Jackie Robinson spoke at rallies here during the civil rights struggle.



15 Florida Memorial College (1918)

St. Augustine's first college was the all-black Florida Normal College. Later renamed Florida Memorial, the school moved to Miami in 1968. The entry arch is all that survives of the school's structure.



Ray Charles (1937)

Ray Charles was a student at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind from 1937 to 1945. His piano is on display at the Excelsior Cultural Center.



16 Civil War Troops (1862)

St. Augustine was under Union control from 1862 on. More than 1,000 ex-slaves from northeast Florida fought to end slavery with the Union army as "U.S. Colored Troops." Their graves are marked "USCT," and many of their descendants live here today.



17 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave.

Many cities have streets named for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., but he actually walked on this one in the course of changing history. It was the national spotlight King brought to St. Augustine that forced passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.



18 Slave Cabin

This coquina building is believed to be the last surviving slave cabin in St. Augustine. It was part of the Buena Esperanza Plantation, now south Lincolnville.



WEST KING STREET INSET

