

Enjoy the Heritage Walking Tour of Central Green Cove Springs, Florida

This educational walking tour honors the Sesquicentennial (150th) Anniversary of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church. You may be surprised at what you learn in this simple, yet historic area. The total walk is 2.7 miles or approximately one hour and a half or take the shorter option of about 2.0 miles, which does not cross Orange Avenue, for about one hour and seven minutes. There's more in store in Clay County, Florida!!

1. **START - 549 North Palmetto Avenue** – Established in 1873, **Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church**, Green Cove Springs, is the oldest standing church for African Americans. In Clay County. Three presumably freedman and six white individuals with varied backgrounds began the church as original Trustees.

Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church was constituted after Edward Waters University in 1866, and before all other historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in Florida, provided residents with news during World Wars I and II regarding the welfare of their loved ones who served in the military, and was once the interim Dunbar High School before new school on Martin Luther King Blvd. (formerly known as Middleburg Avenue), between 1942 and 1945.

2. **Augusta Savage Park-** This is where the first Dunbar School was located in Clay County. Some former graduates and residents who lived across the street from the school recall its red facade, wooden-framed two-story building as the only place for Black students to attend school in the area.

(You will pass the uniquely designed historic home with the wrap-around porch.)

3. **1018 Martin Luther King Boulevard - The Muldrow Hotel** is now a vacant lot of foliage and trees by the side of the road. The land, currently owned by a family member, was Black-owned and -operated by Sarah and Joseph Muldrow, as part of an active business district along old Middleburg Avenue.
4. **1107 Martin Luther King Boulevard - The Augusta Savage Cultural and Community Center**, Food Pantry, daycare center, and other not-for-profit agencies are now housed in various sections of the **Dunbar High School 1946 – 1968**, which served as the focal point for Black education in Clay County prior to integration. A historic marker recognizes Augusta Fells Savage (1892 – 1962) whose birthplace was here on this site where her family lived. In 1915, her parents, Methodist Minister Edward Fells (elected Constable around 1890) and wife Cornelia Murphy Fells along with her siblings, moved to West Palm Beach where he obtained a new church position. Augusta Savage grew in prominence and was inducted into the **Florida Artist Hall of Fame in 2008**.
5. **1107 Martin Luther King Boulevard – Paul Laurence Dunbar High School** was built as a new school for Black children in 1946 after land was “sold” to the Clay County School Board for the sum of \$500 by Augusta Savage to use for educational purposes according to descendants of members of a School Site Selection Committee. Many, many graduates rose from meager beginnings and excelled in all levels of society. Many teachers had Masters’ and Doctoral degrees and lived in the same community as their students.

(You will pass the Public Works Department at 5 Esplanade and Green Cove Springs Police Department at 1001 Idlewild Avenue enroute to your next stop.)

6. **915 Walnut Street – The Historic Triangle Complex** includes the restored Italian Renaissance style Clay County Courthouse, which was restored for the use as a Family and Teen Court. The Annex on the left houses the Clay County Historical Museum, which features a fine railroad collection, train station and caboose. South of the Triangle is the 1894 Historic Jail used until the early 1970s. The restored jailer's quarters house the Clay County Archives and Sheriff's Museum.
7. **Walnut Street & 23 South Green Street** – This is the site of the original **Clay County High School**. Known today as the H. D. Long Building, it was a Works Project Administration endeavor in 1937. A second campus was built and later became Green Cove Springs Junior High as the student population grew. The newest facility is known as Clay High School, and is located west at 2025 FL16. Did you know that the inventor of the precursor to the Smart Phone graduated from Clay High School in 1974?

(You will pass the Centennial Time Capsule and one of the Borden homes at this intersection.)

8. **615 Walnut Street – First Baptist Church** was constituted in 1889 and this church was constructed 1916. The stained-glass windows were imported from Germany prior to WWI.
9. **604 Walnut Street** – Currently the location of the Council on Aging, entrepreneur Grady Smith bought the **Coca Cola Operation** from E. E. Geiger and moved it to this location, which was built in 1946. By the time it closed in 1971, a reported 1,160 cases of the 6.5 ounce bottles were produced in an 8 hour day compared to 12,000 cans of canned coke per *hour* in the Jacksonville plant. Since the 1970s, the building has been a center for Clay County seniors.
10. **509 Walnut Street** - is preserved as the home-place of **Ma and Pa Gustafson of Gustafson** Milk Company fame. It is still family-owned as of the publication of this guide.
11. **400 Block (Southside) of Walnut Street** - Walnut Street sits squarely in the **Historic District of Green Cove Springs**. It was developed early as the main street for business in town because it led to the town's general landing at the East end where the fishing pier is now located.
12. ****326 Walnut Street** – Clay Theatre was Green Cove Springs' first Art Deco style theater in the mid 1930's. The original owner in 1936, R. C. Wilson, relocated the business from 420 Walnut Street where it was known as the **Palace Opera House and Motion Picture Show**. In 1939, a license permit was issued for the **Clay Theatre** to Frank Bryant. Today it is the Clay Theatre, An Event Venue privately held by new owners.**
13. ****215 Spring Street - City Hall** is seen west of the park. It was completed in 2004 on the site of the **Qui Si Sana Hotel** (c. 1907 meaning "Here is Health"), which faced The Spring. The architectural features of City Hall have similarities of the Qui Si Sana. Prior to the Qui Si Sana, the same site was occupied by the **Clarendon Hotel (1870 – 1900)** where Guests had exclusive use of the spring.**

14. ****Footbridge** – Across Spring Run connecting the North and South sides of the park, this bridge was built in 1988 by a Hungarian immigrant and Vietnam War Army veteran, Antal Molnar and his son Antal Jr. Note the replica of the old city seal in the center of the intricate iron work.**
15. ****Spring Run** is the stream from the outflow of the spring-fed chemical-free community pool. “Friends of the Park” was responsible for the large riverfront gazebo built in 1984 and still used regularly today for weddings and other events. Cross the bridge and take the sidewalk along St Johns Avenue.**
16. ****Spring Park** - The Spring tapers down with clear visibility to a depth of 31 feet up from which flows 78 degree mineral water filling the pool at 1,300 gallons per minute for chemical-free swimming in the summer. In the late 1800s, many came to partake of the medicinal waters and some even stayed. Today, the park includes the pool, the spring, playground, cooking pavilion, numerous gazebos, picnic tables, a stream, fishing pier and boat slips with water and electricity on the St. Johns River.**
17. ****103 S. Magnolia Avenue** – This building was used as a cottage for the **Clarendon Hotel** as well as the residence of **Dr. Joseph Applegate**, one of the original Trustees of Mt. Zion AME Church. He once prescribed and dispensed “medicinal” spring water to his wealthy northern clientele. This frame vernacular style is characteristic of one of the most popular building styles in this region during the late 1800s. Notice the Dr. Applegate House historical marker, which designates the property as a Florida Heritage site.**
18. **400 Block (Northside) of Walnut Street** - Walnut Street sits squarely in the **Historic District of Green Cove Springs**. Imagine 1882, when there was a barbershop, a cobbler, several grocery stores, two churches, a bakery, a photography shop, and several hotels on Walnut Street.
19. **17 North Palmetto Avenue** – A Florida Heritage Site, it still serves the community as the **Village Improvement Association**, the first Federated Women’s Club in Florida.. Built in 1915, this is the most significant social building in Green Cove Springs. This land was donated to the Village Improvement Association (VIA) for the building in 1885 by Penelope Borden of condensed milk fame. It is Spanish Colonial Revival style, designed by architect Mellon Greeley
20. **433 Palmetto Avenue – First African Missionary Baptist Church** – The church’s first congregation was established in 1883 under the leadership of Deacon Sam E. Patterson. The church is on land gifted by the Borden family as do several sites of interest in and near the Central Historic District of Green Cove Springs.
21. **477 Houston Street** – Today’s **Clay County Administration Building** represents the date of incorporation in 1874, three years after it became the seat of Clay County. It grew around its spring, which became a popular tourist destination for northerners and people in nearby Jacksonville. Because of the Natives’ previous use of the spring for sustenance and healing, some believed it to be – and many marketed it as – something of a “fountain of youth.”
22. **549 North Palmetto Avenue Mt. Zion Parsonage (End of the Heritage Walking Tour of Green Cove Springs, Florida inaugurated March 25, 2023 in honor of the Sesquicentennial Celebration of Mt. Zion AME Church)**

*****- Not included in Short Walking Route**

– Recreated by Mt. Zion Community Development Corporation, Inc. in collaboration with Clay County Historical Society. Information also provided by Clay County Tourism and Film Development Department, Clay County Clerk's Office, and several individuals: Linda Bartley, Hon. Constance Butler, Eugene Francis, Dr. Michael Henry, Gwen Hunter, Rev. Elaine McBride, Hon. Curtis Richardson, Dr. Larry Richardson, Matthew Tinney, Jr., and Alice Johnson Williams.