

# Apalachicola's Historic Squares

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2022

# Common Element

- What do Philadelphia, New Orleans, Savannah, Tallahassee and Apalachicola have in common?
- The town plan based on Spain's 16th Century "Laws of the Indies"

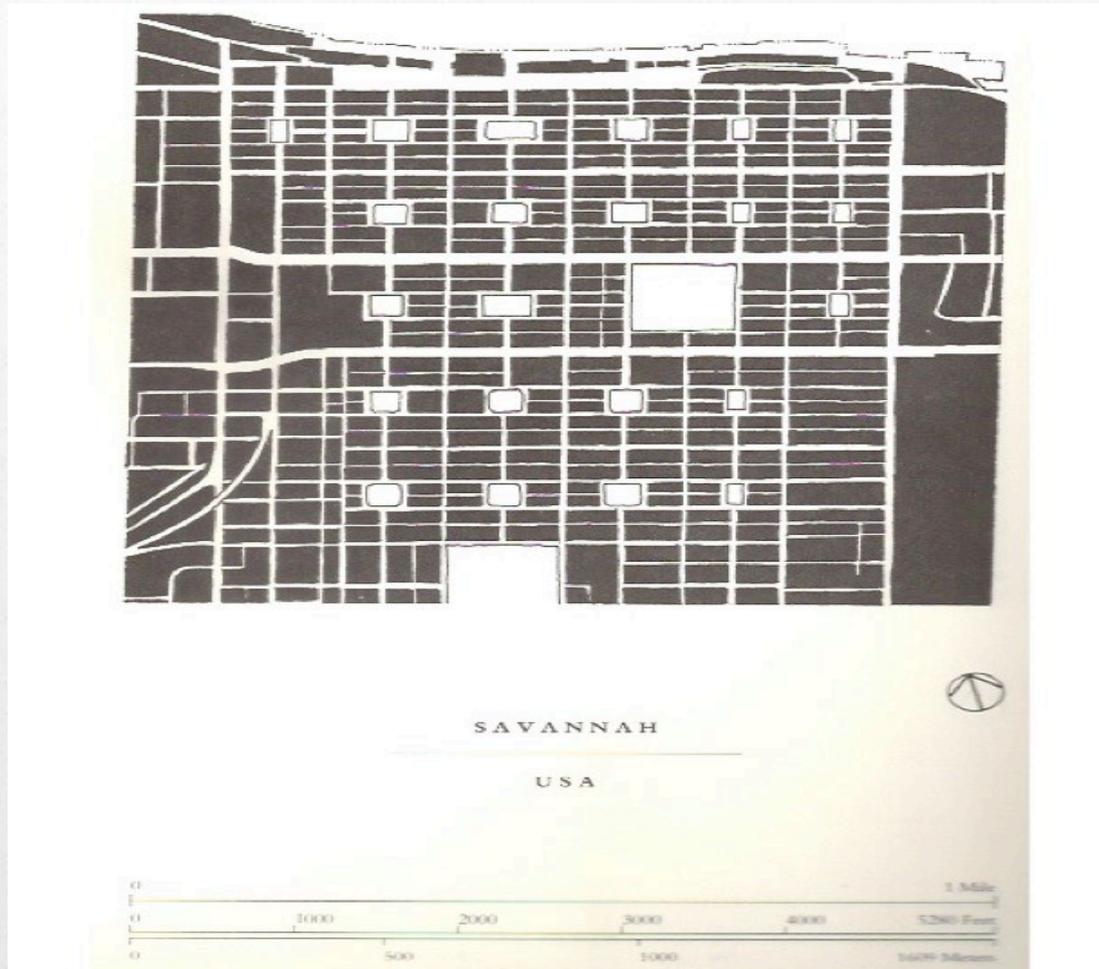
# Philadelphia's plan 1682



# New Orleans's plan 1718

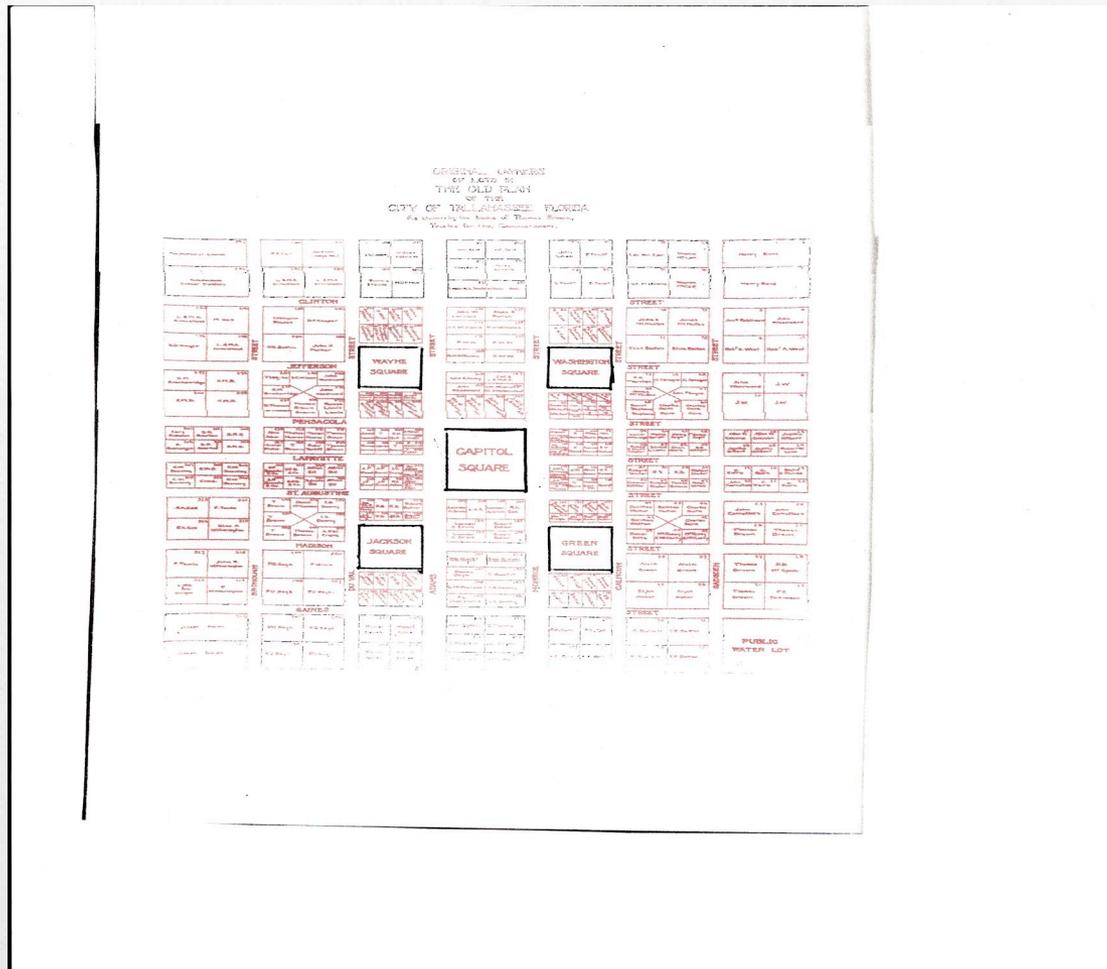


# Savannah's plan 1733





# Tallahassee's Squares



# Why the Squares Are Important

- Historic assets, as old as Apalachicola
- Squares make Apalachicola authentic and visually appealing
- Stabilize neighborhoods by providing attractive usable destination gathering places creating pride of place
- Heritage tourism in historic towns contributes \$, jobs to local economy (2010 UF Study) vs. timber and cotton of the past and oyster and seafood business today
- Preservation and restoration fulfills goals stated long ago in the City's Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan
- When restored, Apalachicola's squares will be comparable to Savannah's they market as "must see"
- Keeps Apalachicola historic/authentic vs. facsimiles

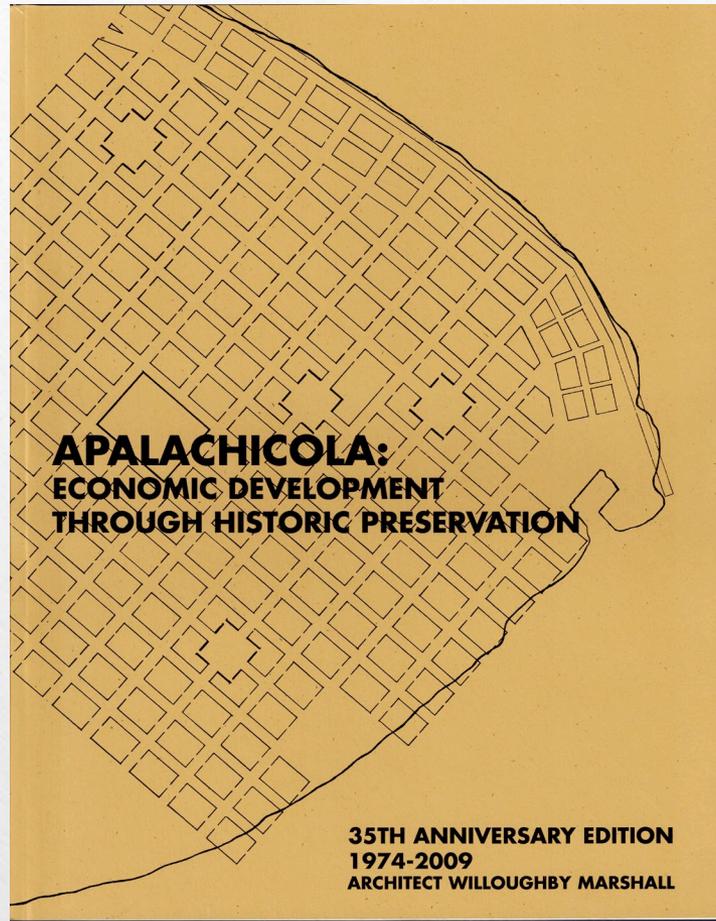
# Inspiration for Restoration

- Willoughby Marshall 1923-2020
- Described on his 89<sup>th</sup> birthday by former Mayor Van Johnson as a "[native] resident, author, historian, historic preservationist and architect"

Marshall & Mike Plummer, WFSU-TV  
(PBS)



# What Marshall Did



# Marshall's

## Accomplishments

- Helped create Apalachicola's nationally recognized historic district, 1980
- His award-winning HUD study became the basis of Apalachicola's Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan (1981), zoning code and Design Guidelines (2006)
- Lafayette Park restoration, Apalachicola
- Fry-Conter House restoration and historic plaque, Apalachicola
- 40 years +

# Apalachicola Design Guidelines

## HISTORIC APALACHICOLA DESIGN GUIDELINES



*A Guide to Rehabilitation and  
New Construction in the City of Apalachicola*

*Adopted - Apalachicola City Commission  
August 8, 2006*

# The Land

Grid pattern town layouts originated by Spain whose "Laws of the Indies" in 1573 created a one mile grid of rectangular blocks with a large central "plaza" (square) used for fiestas and other public gatherings. The most important buildings faced the square.

Deemed the most practical layout for new cities, the grid was based on ancient Roman principles of city planning. These laws are the origins of urban planning bringing order to the environment.

Used to construct many cities in U.S. including

- St. Augustine 1565, America's oldest colonial town
- Philadelphia 1682
- Savannah 1733
- Tallahassee 1824
- Apalachicola 1830
- in Georgia, Texas, and throughout the US

# The Model

- Philadelphia founded by William Penn in 1682
- Penn adopted the "Law of the Indies"
- A grid of 2 miles by 1 mile was created with large blocks and 4 public squares with its City Hall on its main central square
- Penn's plan was so influential it was replicated in many American towns like San Antonio, Albuquerque and even Los Angeles





# Apalachicola's Beginnings

Panton, Leslie & Co., a Scottish firm, licensed in 1783 to trade with Creek Indians operated near the Flint-Chattahoochee River junction 18 miles up river from Apalachicola at Prospect Bluffs, known as Ft. Gadsden.

When Panton's store at St. Marks was damaged by a competitor, Spain compensated the firm with land grants in 1804, 1811, and 1812

John Forbes, brother of original Panton, Leslie partner, headed the company now called John Forbes & Co., claimed 1,500,00 acres located between the Apalachicola and Wakulla Rivers.

Known as the "Forbes Purchase", land ownership was disputed before being settled in favor of the Apalachicola Land Company, as the company was now called, by US Supreme Court in 1835.

# Apalachicola Land Company

- First developer
- Laid out the plan
- Gave land for streets and squares to City and for churches, courthouse, cemetery and other public uses
- Sold lots to public (\$1,500!)
- Intended squares to be used as open green spaces for public purposes
- Most important buildings in center of each square with houses AROUND them, facing the square

# Public Recreation



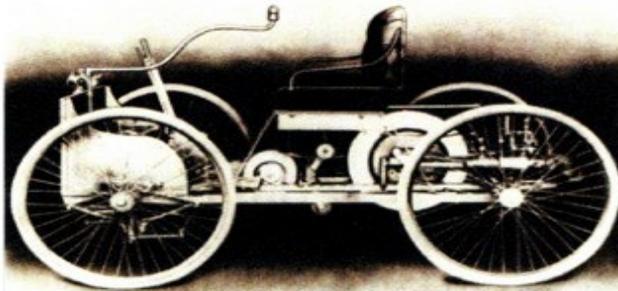
# “Porch Fest” on Gorrie Square 2021



# Since 1835

- Apalachicola's development moved away from the planned central square toward the river in the era of shipping, cotton, lumber, naval stores and seafood
- Streets surrounding the squares were extended in the 1920s creating intersections in the middle of five of the six squares
- The sixth square, Washington Square, was sold to Franklin County for Weems Hospital
- Buildings and other structures were permitted to be built on the other squares
- Square configuration and identity "effectively destroyed"

# The Eve of Destruction



Four on the floor; Henry Ford dubbed his first gas-powered motorcar "Quadricycle." Its 4-horsepower engine produced a top speed of 10 mph.

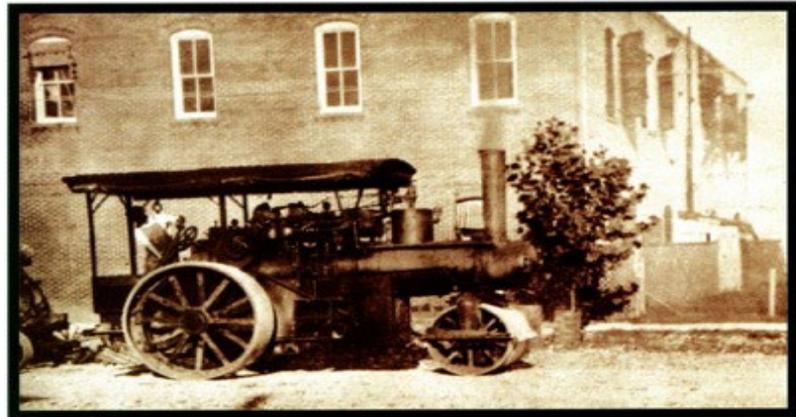
## 1899: THE ARRIVAL OF THE AUTOMOBILE

Even though a relatively new invention at the turn of the century, it was clear that the motorcar would soon change everything.

The present trolley system is only temporary. The era of the automobile means a revolution in city and suburban transportation. It is not a speculation or a promise, but something close at hand.

Every day we see more of them on the streets; every day they come within the reach of the people. Then as the thoroughfares are better paved, we can look forward to the time when the track will be removed from the streets, and when we shall glide along comfortably and cheaply on rubber tires.

—"The Future of the Automobile," December 30, 1899



The beginning of the 20th century marked an era of progress and growth for Apalachicola. By 1900, electricity was available, the lumber industry was constant and the shellfish industry was booming. Pictured, a steam roller crushes oyster shell for a roadbed beside Montgomery's Dry Goods Store in downtown Apalachicola (circa 1910).

Apalachicola State Bank, established in 1897, is located across the street (Avenue E) from where the Montgomery Dry Goods Store was once located.

APALACHICOLA  
STATE BANK • 1897

Service, Commitment & The Rest Is History ...



# Washington Square

- Central and largest square covering four blocks
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Courthouse built 1892
- Square SOLD to Franklin County 1957
- Courthouse torn down



Washington Square  
1940





# Washington Square Today



# Gorrie Square



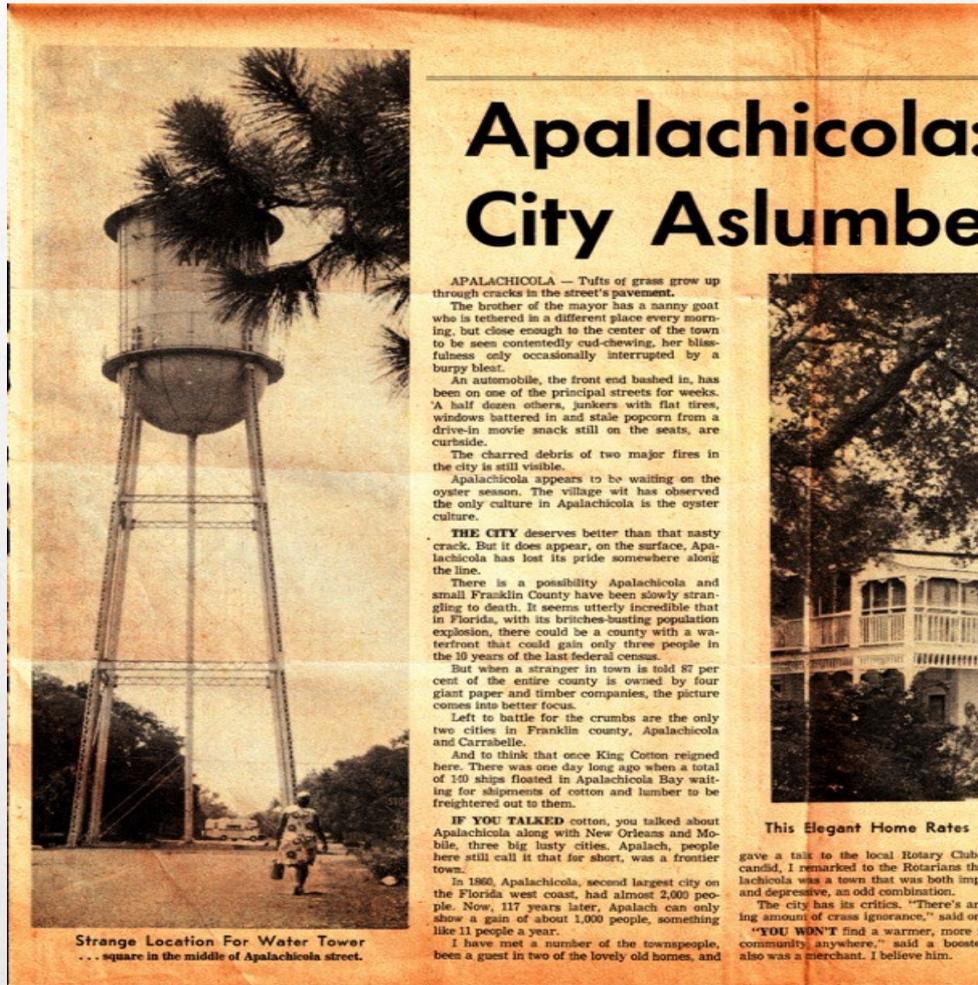
# Gorrie Square History

- 1900 Square renamed and monument dedicated
- 1906 water tower erected
- 1920s streets extended THROUGH the square
- 1955 City donated 3/4 of the square plus Mabel Osborne donated lots to State of Florida
- 1957 Gorrie museum constructed, grave relocated
- 1961 brick storage building erected
- 1985 water tower felled by hurricane

# Gorrie Square 1900



# Water Tower 1906



## Apalachicola: City Aslumber

APALACHICOLA — Tufts of grass grow up through cracks in the street's pavement.

The brother of the mayor has a nanny goat who is tethered in a different place every morning, but close enough to the center of the town to be seen contentedly cud-chewing, her blissfulness only occasionally interrupted by a burpy bleat.

An automobile, the front end bashed in, has been on one of the principal streets for weeks. A half dozen others, tankers with flat tires, windows battered in and stale popcorn from a drive-in movie snack still on the seats, are curbside.

The charred debris of two major fires in the city is still visible.

Apalachicola appears to be waiting on the oyster season. The village wit has observed the only culture in Apalachicola is the oyster culture.

**THE CITY** deserves better than that nasty crack. But it does appear, on the surface, Apalachicola has lost its pride somewhere along the line.

There is a possibility Apalachicola and small Franklin County have been slowly strangling to death. It seems utterly incredible that in Florida, with its briches-busting population explosion, there could be a county with a waterfront that could gain only three people in the 10 years of the last federal census.

But when a stranger in town is told 87 per cent of the entire county is owned by four giant paper and timber companies, the picture comes into better focus.

Left to battle for the crumbs are the only two cities in Franklin county, Apalachicola and Carrabelle.

And to think that once King Cotton reigned here. There was one day long ago when a total of 150 ships floated in Apalachicola Bay waiting for shipments of cotton and lumber to be freightered out to them.

**IF YOU TALKED** cotton, you talked about Apalachicola along with New Orleans and Mobile, three big lusty cities. Apalach, people here still call it that for short, was a frontier town.

In 1860, Apalachicola, second largest city on the Florida west coast, had almost 2,000 people. Now, 117 years later, Apalach can only show a gain of about 1,000 people, something like 11 people a year.

I have met a number of the townspeople, been a guest in two of the lovely old homes, and



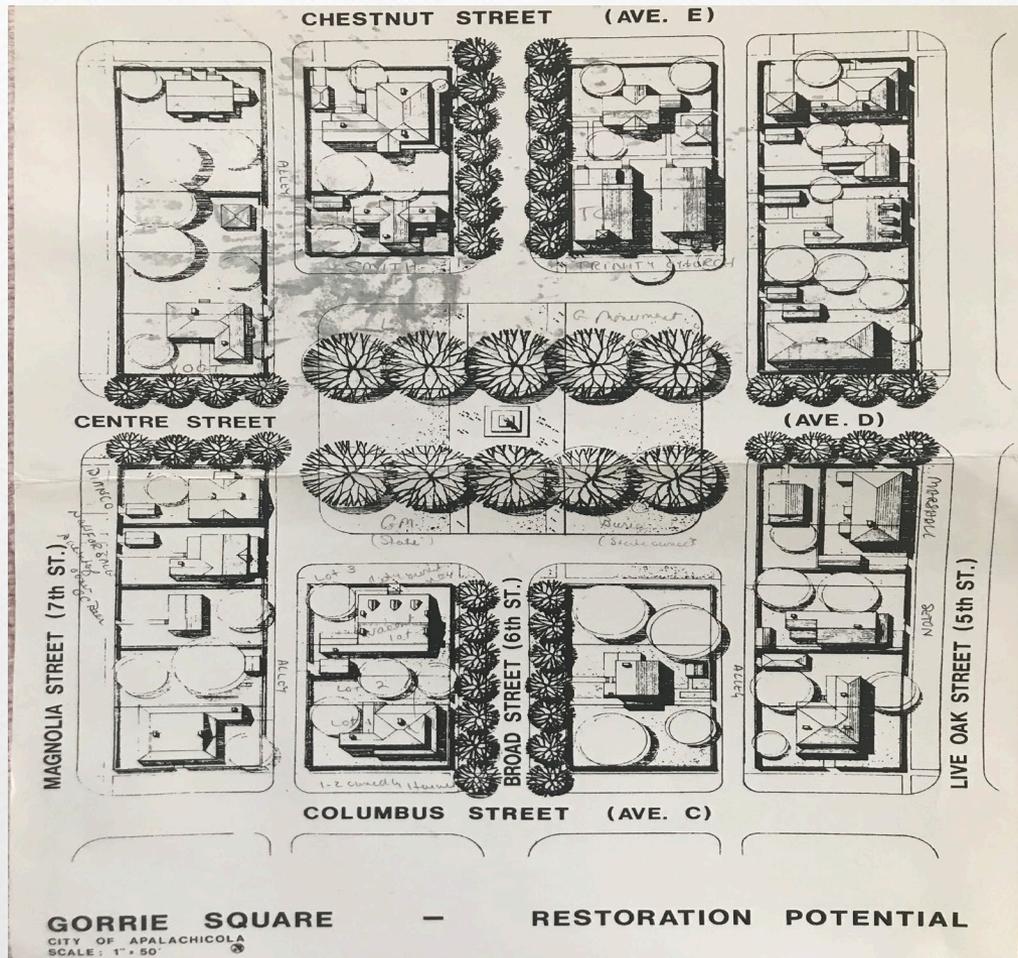
This Elegant Home Rates

gave a talk to the local Rotary Club. candid, I remarked to the Rotarians the lachicola was a town that was both imp and depressive, an odd combination.

The city has its critics. "There's an ing amount of crass ignorance," said one **"YOU WON'T** find a warmer, more f community anywhere," said a boostee also was a merchant. I believe him.

Strange Location For Water Tower  
... square in the middle of Apalachicola street.

# Gorrie Square as if restored



# Chapman Square



NW vacant



NE vacant



SW vacant



SE tennis courts

# Madison Square



NW vacant



NE vacant



SW skateboard park



SE Water tower, recently dismantled

# City Square



NW Community Garden, 2008



NE Community Garden



SW covered pavilion



SE abuts Cemetery

# Franklin Square



NW Recreation building



NE covered pavilion

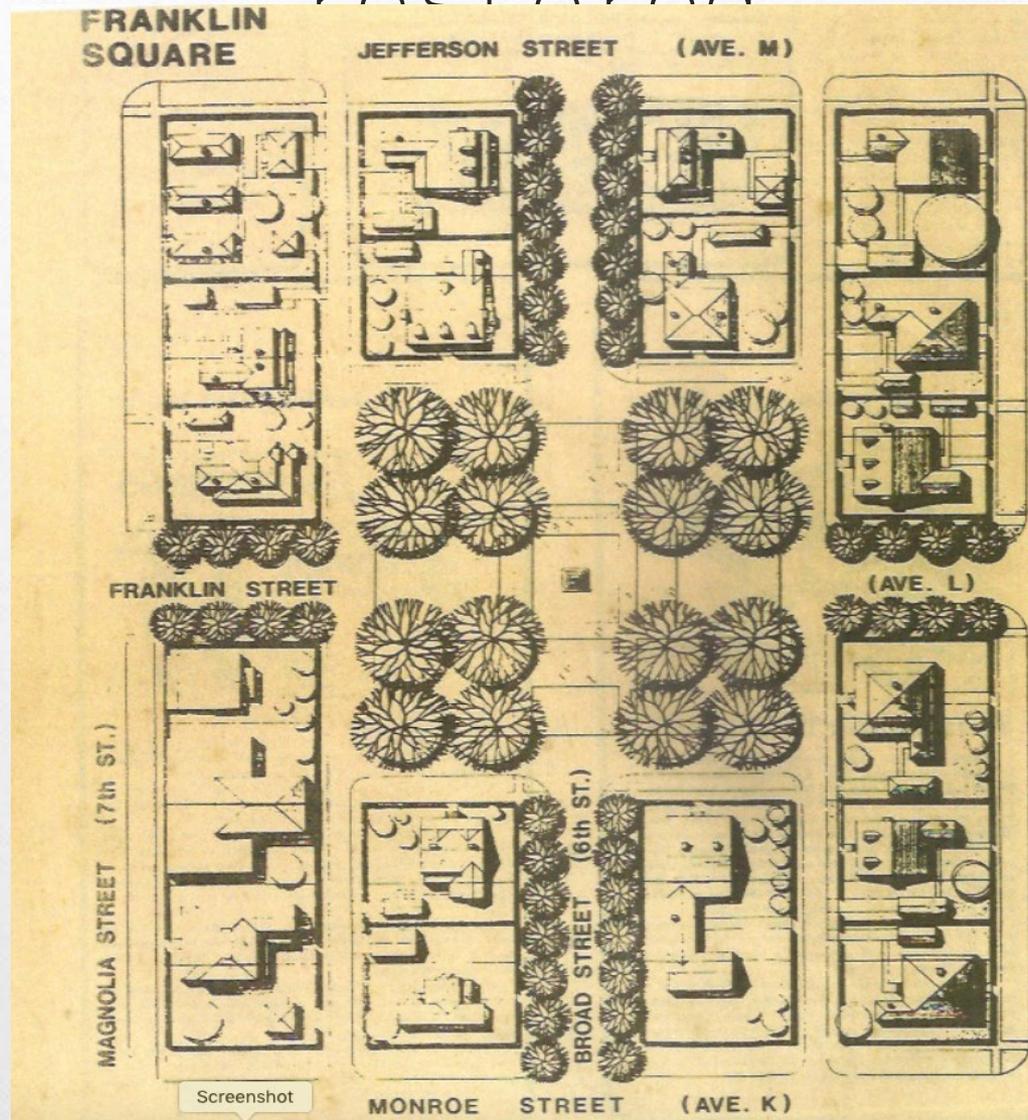


SW vacant, abuts Holy Family Ctr



SE Ball courts

# Franklin Square as if restored



Screenshot

# Good News

In the words of Willoughby Marshall "the squares are not lost forever. They are hiding in plain sight and can be recovered".

Recovery efforts continue:

- Project launched and approved at Apalachicola Area Historic Society's annual meeting in 2017
- Resolutions protecting squares from new development unanimously passed by Apalachicola's City Commission 2015 and 2017
- Squares surveyed
- Brochure created in 2019, first ever, + its 2nd edition
- Squares officially designated by City of Apalachicola as "parks", 2021
- FAMU-FSU College of Engineering 20-21 Senior Design Study
- Media

# Square Restoration

**GOAL - return at least one square to its original configuration**

- Create a "one-way square"
- Move streets to perimeter of square (around, NOT through)

One solution: FAMU-FSU shows it can be done!

- Maximizing usable space while relocating roads
- Retains and slows traffic flow
- Addresses site issues: grading, storm water and drainage
- Added sidewalks, lighting and parking

Other considerations - Aesthetics, landscaping, central feature: monument(s), fountain, recreational elements, seating, parking?



for squares  
engineering

# Historic Square Restoration

Historic Apalachicola Foundation, Inc.

Group 201

“All parties signing the cover sheet have reviewed this proposal and endorse the initial project plan, including initial safety assessment. Student members acknowledge that the Senior Design instructor has final approval over the scope and requirements of the Senior Design project, including the safety plan, and reserves the right to change them at the beginning of the final Senior Design semester.”

Meghana Chachra

Team Member

Jessica Cavalieri

Team Member

Shelby Graziani

Team Member

Camilo Romero

Team Member

Diane Brewer

Client

Marie Marshall

Client

Mark Llewellyn, Sr., PE

Industry Engineering Mentor

O. Sean Martin, PE, SECB

Faculty Advisor/Instructor

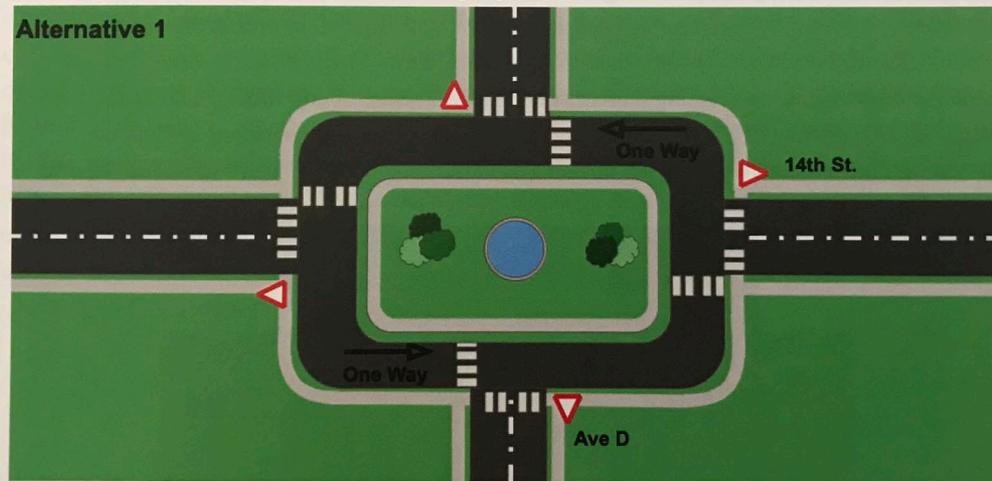
December 4, 2020



for squares  
engineering

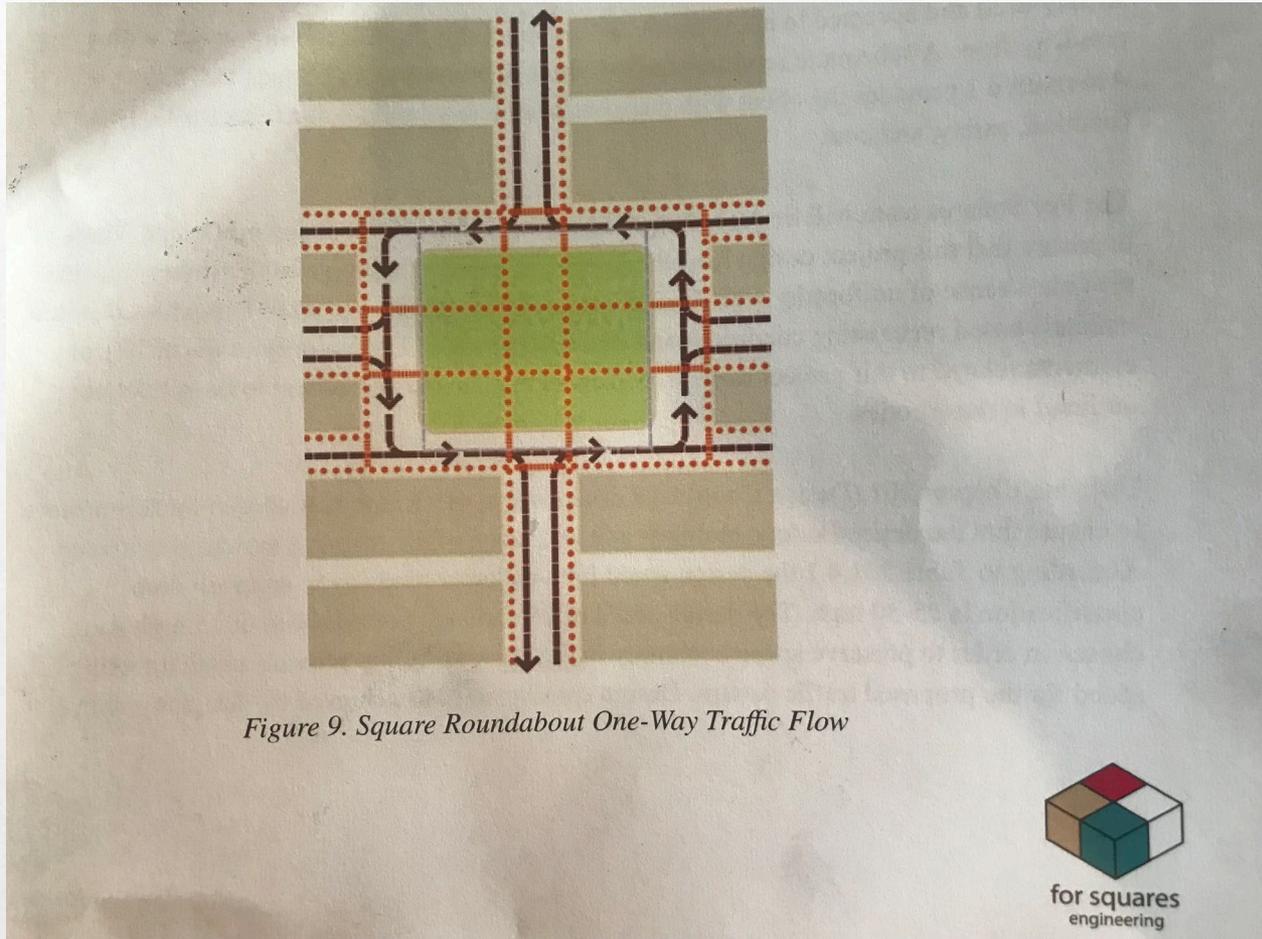
# Restoration Design FAMU- FSU

As seen in the design concepts below ( Figure 7. & Figure 8.), the roads making up the square roundabout will handle one-way traffic, with yield signs leading to intersections. The rounded 90 degree turns create a slower flow of traffic, allowing bikes to easily and effectively share the road, removing the need to implement designated bike lanes. Regarding the aesthetics of this design, For Squares suggests implementing an attraction, such as a fountain or historical statue, in the center of the square to enhance the identity of the town and revitalize a sense of community. In addition to this, the square will include seated areas to lounge or picnic, a small gazebo, street lighting, and curated landscaping.



*Figure 7. Alternative 1 Schematic*

# Traffic flow proposed by FAMU- FSU



# Benefits & Challenges to Restoration

- + Gain visually appealing areas for pedestrian friendly public uses with seating and ADA features
- + Reduce traffic and speed - roundabouts known to have a natural calming effect on traffic without enforcement and signage
- + Apalachicola streets are golf cart legal. With increasing use by carts, bicyclists and pedestrians, there is less need for streets for vehicle traffic today
- + Opportunity to resolve some of City's infrastructure and drainage problems
- + Respects the City's historic past: "heritage tourism" now a major economic driver
- Resistance
- Two squares not owned by City: all of Washington,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of Gorrie
- Existing structures on squares

## Risk or Reward

- If Apalachicola's historic squares are NOT respected and restored, an integral part of its town plan, one of the last remaining still intact plats in the US, **may be lost forever!**

OR

- "Economic Prosperity through Historic Preservation"

# Status of Restoration

- Project is almost ready for grant applications
- Grants are available for planning, engineering, as well as implementation
- Approval by City of Apalachicola needed as owner of the land
- Apalachicola's City Commission has asked for public workshops to gauge interest and support for restoration before approving grant applications

# How You Can Help

- \$\$\$\$\$\$
- Resources (documents, photos and stories, ideas, grant opportunities etc.)
- Express your support:
  - Email them to [restoresquares2020@gmail.com](mailto:restoresquares2020@gmail.com) (in brochure) OR
  - Facebook (Apalachicola's Historic Squares)

# THANK YOU

- Willoughby Marshall & Historic Apalachicola Foundation, Inc.
- Apalachicola Area Historic Society
- City of Apalachicola
- PBS, WFSU-TV and radio
- FAMU-FSU College of Engineering
- Oyster Radio, 106.5 FM
- Zak Kozak, technical support
- POMS 22

# Sources

- Marshall's "Apalachicola: Economic Prosperity Through Historic Preservation" ISBN 978-0-692-000325-1, 2009 reprint
- "Florida's Vanishing Architecture" by Beth Dunlop, 1987, ISBN 0-910923-39-6
- "Economic Impact of Historic Preservation in Florida", 2010, Center for Government Responsibility, UF College of Law
- PBS WFSU-TV "Local Routes", 6.5 minutes  
<https://wfsu.org/local-routes/2020-03-20/saving-the-Apalachicola-squares/>
- PBS video "10 Towns that Changed America", 2016, ISBN978-62789-672-4
- PBS WFSU- radio, 52 minute panel discussion on "Perspectives" January 25, 2021