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THE ALACHUA-ST. MARYS ROAD

by BURKE G. VANDERHILL

THE foot trails and rough cart roads of early nineteenth-century Florida reflected the needs for communication and trade which were changed significantly as the territory was organized and development began under American administration. Nevertheless, there was a tendency for continued local use of these old routes long after the original functions had been lost. Not only was it easier to improve or modify an existing trace than to cut an entirely new one through the Florida forests, but the early routes were relatively felicitous, following the drainage divides, skirting the extensive swampland tracts, and avoiding more difficult river crossings. Numerous stretches of the historical routes remain in use today, nearly two centuries later, ranging from faintly marked forest paths and jeep trails to city streets and super highways. Such route segments constitute landscape features which may be described as "relict," for they represent elements of the past now serving different purposes. Further, when the various segments are viewed collectively, they often reveal much, if not all, of the former routes of which they are detached portions. Thus, many of the old trails and historic roads have been "imprinted" on the Florida landscape, although this phenomenon may not be immediately obvious.

One example is the cart road, about 120 miles in length, which for a period of nearly four decades linked the Alachua country of interior Florida with the small Georgia port of St. Marys on the lower St. Marys River. Referred to as the "St. Marys Road," or the "road to St. Marys," or the "road to Alachua," according to one's orientation, it was most appropriately called the "Alachua-St. Marys Road" (Fig. 1). Investigation has shown that the route was in use during much of the second Spanish period and the early years of the American territorial period, and was of particular importance to those who wished to avoid the main areas of Spanish authority east of the

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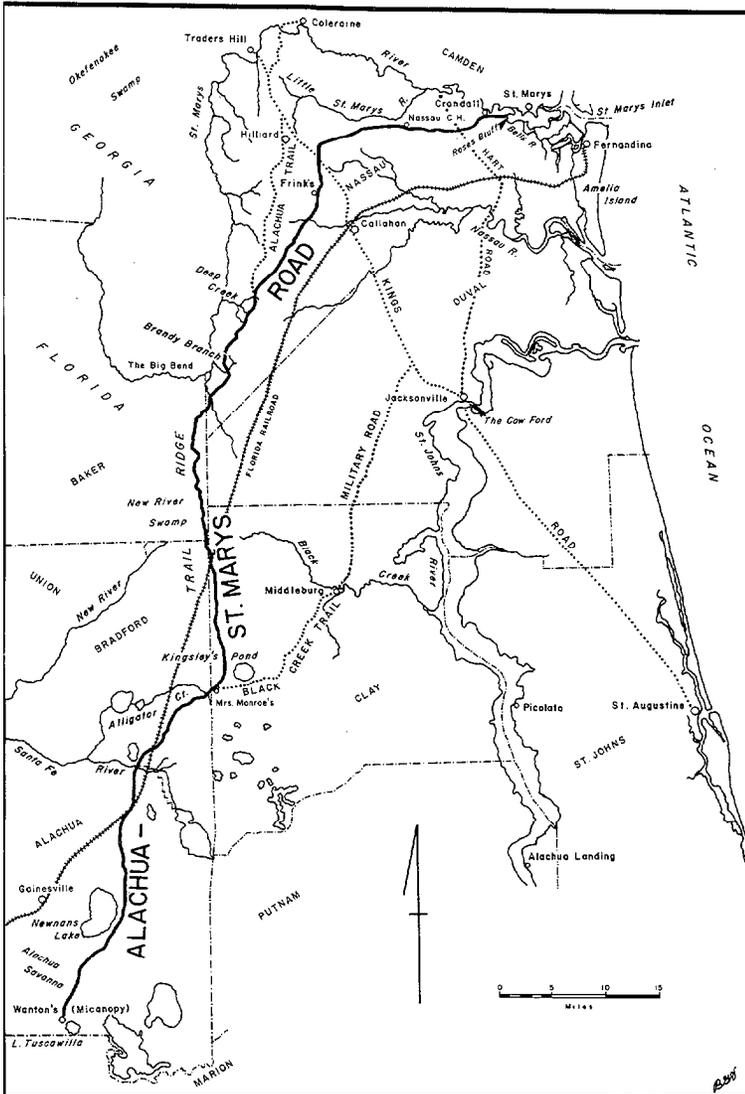


Fig. 1. The Alachua-St. Marys Road and significant intersecting routes.

St. Johns River. With the transfer of Florida to American hands, the chief *raison d'être* for a connection between Alachua and St. Marys was removed. Sections of the cart road were abandoned and eventually obliterated as memory of the route gradually faded.

No record of the initial opening of the Alachua-St. Marys Road has been discovered, but it is clear that it was developed in response to the founding of St. Marys town. A number of long-used and much shorter crossings of the St. Marys River were available upstream, including that of the Kings Road, constructed by the British in 1765. The St. Marys, however, had become a boundary between the Spanish province of East Florida and the American state of Georgia in 1783, when, in the wake of the American Revolution, the Floridas reverted from British to Spanish sovereignty. By 1788, a frontier outpost named St. Patrick was platted on the left bank of the river near its juncture with Cumberland Sound, about six miles from the open Atlantic.¹ The new town, renamed St. Marys in 1792, occupied a low bluff overlooking what was considered the best deepwater anchorage on the Atlantic coast south of Chesapeake Bay.² Intended as a port-of-entry for southeastern Georgia, St. Marys soon began to provide a similar, though largely unsanctioned, service for East Florida as well.

It was possible to reach the town from Florida by means of a water passage of three to four miles from landings along the south side of Bells River, the chief tributary channel of the St. Marys River. The most commonly used landing was at the base of Roses Bluff (Barranca de las Rosas), a prominent landmark easily seen from the waterfront of St. Marys town. It was from there that the Alachua-St. Marys Road developed, probably about 1790 or shortly thereafter. There was no such route at the time of the De Brahm map, published in 1770, which depicts only a trail "from Mills Ferry" roughly following the southern banks of the St. Marys and Bells rivers, undoubtedly linking

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1. The site is believed to be that of the former Indian village, Tlathlothaguphta, visited by Jean Ribault in 1562, and is near the position of mission Santa Maria de Guadeloupe, founded in 1568 by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, in what was then Spanish Guale. Kenneth K. Krakow, *Georgia Place-Names* (Macon, 1975), 199.
 2. William Darby, *View of the United States: Historical, Geographical and Statistical* (Baltimore, 1828), 89.

homesteads established during the British period.³ The Alachua-St Marys Road must have been in place well before 1800, however, for a series of eight early nineteenth-century Spanish land grants straddle it west of Roses Bluff, in what is now eastern Nassau County. Documents associated with these tracts indicate that the road had been there for a number of years prior to the date of the grants.⁴ Settlement obviously was drawn out along an existing route of travel (Fig. 2).

Those unknown individuals who pioneered the road from Roses Bluff chose their route well, taking advantage of an almost perfectly level watershed between the St. Marys River and the lower reach of the St. Johns, described in its natural state by William Stork as an open and easily-traversed pine barrens.⁵ Only an occasional small feeder stream had to be forded. After crossing the Kings Road, at a point within the Sparkman grant a short distance north of the present community of Dyal, the route bore to the southwest, toward the great southern bend of the St. Marys and, just north of a small tributary of the St. Marys called Deep Creek, joined an ancient Indian pathway leading to the Alachua country. The Alachua Trail had for centuries linked the Altamaha River area of interior Georgia with important aboriginal centers in the Alachua Savanna of Florida.⁶ It offered a well-beaten, easily followed trace, and for much of the distance south of the St. Marys bend it lay along the crest of what is still today called "Trail Ridge," a broad and continuous zone of sandhills which by-pass the numerous wetland tracts characteristic of Florida's physical landscape. The most difficult stretch of the Alachua-St. Marys route was that between the Kings Road and Trail Ridge, where during high water periods travel became hazardous.⁷

3. William Gerard De Brahm, *Plan of St. Marys Inlet* (London, 1770).

4. For example, the grant confirmed to Eugenia Brant, Sec. 45, T3N, R27E; originally issued to Stephen Brant in 1803. A landing at Roses Bluff is also mentioned. Archives of Bureau of State Lands, Tallahassee, Florida.

5. William Stork. *An Account of East Florida*, reprint of 1765 edition (Fernandina, 1881), 10.

6. Burke G. Vanderhill, "The Alachua Trail: A Reconstruction," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 55 (April 1977), 423-38.

7. Early in the American period it was termed a "difficult and precarious route— crossing the overflowing creeks forming the head branches of St. Mary's River." Daniel E. Burch to Isaac Clark, July 20, 1826, in Clarence Edwin Carter, comp. and ed., *The Territorial Papers of the United States*, 26 vols (Washington, 1934-1962), XXIII: *The Territory of Florida, 1824-1828*, 616.

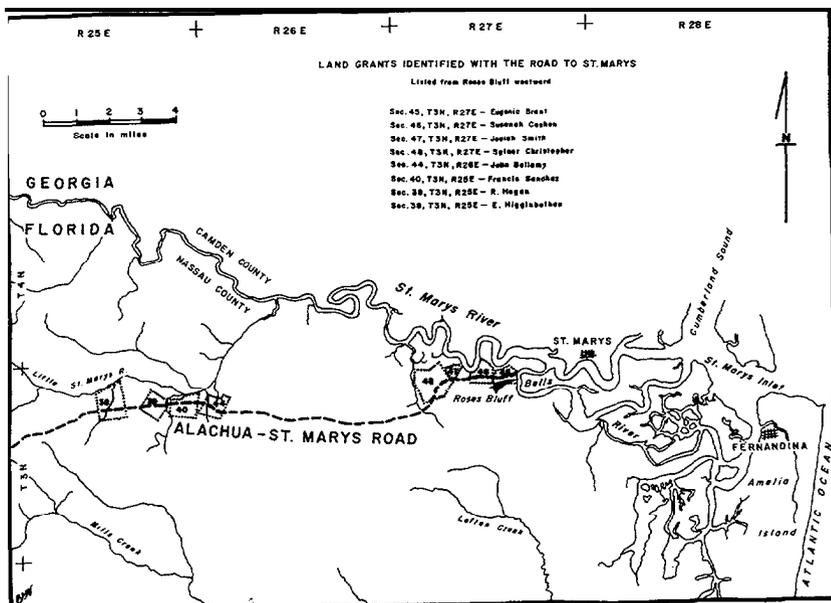


Fig. 2. The relationship between Spanish land grants in eastern Nassau County and the Alachua-St. Marys Road.

The need for a cart road connecting the back country of East Florida with the port of St. Marys arose from conditions peculiar to the second Spanish period. The transfer of sovereignty from Great Britain to Spain generated an exodus of British colonials and refugee American loyalists, leaving only a small number of people in East Florida, including a few hundred in St. Augustine and the nearby area. A scattering of families remained along the St. Marys River, but the interior, including the Alachua country, was virtually empty of white inhabitants.⁸ Into this population vacuum came people from southeastern Georgia and the Carolinas, responding to one of several invitations issued by the Spanish between 1788 and 1804, in their attempt to increase the population and thus to strengthen their hold on the Floridas at a time of almost no immigration from Europe.

East Florida was attractive to Americans for several reasons. There were extensive and largely untouched stands of timber within a short distance of the St. Marys River, and some developed or partially-developed properties lay abandoned after the flight of the loyalists. Little desirable land remained unclaimed in coastal sections of Georgia and the Carolinas by this time, while expansion westward across Georgia was restricted until 1802 by the Indian Boundary, and further discouraged by the physical barriers of the Okefenokee and Satilla River swamps. Many Georgians were familiar with areas south of the St. Marys, which during the British period had been part of a sister province. There were numerous instances of slave-hunting expeditions deep into East Florida, and raids on Indian settlements for the purpose of spirited away cattle, horses, and hogs.⁹ Following the American Revolution, there was a belief that the annexation of Florida by the United States was inevitable, another example of the idea of "manifest destiny."¹⁰ Oppor-

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8. Spanish Governor Zéspedes, in the course of a fact-gathering journey through East Florida in 1787, found twenty-two loyalist families living on the south side of the St. Marys downstream from the Kings Road ferry, totalling 123 whites and twenty-six blacks. Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Zéspedes in East Florida, 1784-1790* (Coral Gables, 1963), 129.
 9. Joshua R. Giddings, *The Exiles of Florida* (Columbus, 1858; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964), 12; Hurbert B. Fuller, *The Purchase of Florida: Its History and Diplomacy* (Cleveland, 1906; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964, 192-93).
 10. Richard K. Murdoch. *The Georgia-Florida Frontier, 1793-1796* (Berkeley, 1951), 142.

tunists crossed the St. Marys River boundary at will, occupying land as squatters, or joining the lawless groups which plagued both the Spanish authorities and the settlers and their families. So many Americans moved into East Florida that the Spanish in 1804, declared its borders closed to further entry from the United States, but enforcement of this edict was difficult.

Due to its proximity to Georgia and the Carolinas, the impact of settlers was felt initially in the area between the St. Marys and the St. Johns, presently Nassau County. By 1812, the so-called "Patriots" were bold enough to proclaim a "Republic of East Florida" at Roses Bluff, supported eventually by a contingent of United States troops, although these were withdrawn in 1813.¹² After a long period of chaotic conditions, a group of local residents in 1816 drew up a constitution for a kind of republic in the area south of the St. Marys. Called the "Northern Division" of East Florida, it functioned as a largely self-governing entity grudgingly tolerated by the Spanish.¹³ By the time of the American take-over of Florida, the area east of the Kings Road and north of the St. Johns could be described by Vignoles as "entirely covered by grants in occupancy and cultivation."¹⁴

Americans had been infiltrating the Alachua country for many years, either as freebooters or as squatters. A military force was dispatched there from Georgia in 1812, in response to continued Indian attacks on the Americans, and in 1813, a Georgia survey party arrived in defiance of Spanish regulations for the purpose of laying out land for organized settlement. By January of 1814, a petition for a "District of Elotchaway, Republic of East Florida," was able to muster 105 signatures locally, nearly all of them non-Spanish names.¹⁵ Following an ambush of the Georgia surveyors, reportedly by a band of blacks who shared the Alachua area with the Indians, most of the early

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11. Bolton A. Copp to John Quincy Adams, April 1, 1818; "The Patriot War—A Contemporaneous Letter," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 5 (January 1927) 163-66.
 12. Rembert W. Patrick, *Florida Fiasco: Rampant Rebels on the Georgia-Florida Border, 1810-1815* (Athens, 1954), 121.
 13. T. Frederick Davis. "MacGregor's Invasion of Florida, 18 17," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 7 (July 1928), 9-10.
 14. Charles Vignoles, *Observations upon the Floridas* (New York, 1823; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1977), 146.
 15. T. Frederick Davis, "Elotchaway, East Florida, 1814," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 8 (January 1930), 145.

settlers fled north.¹⁶ The farming and grazing lands they had encountered, however, drew renewed colonization over the years, notably to the area south of the Santa Fe River within what is now northern Alachua County, and to tracts south and east of the Alachua Savanna in present-day Alachua and Marion counties. Pioneers in Florida's interior were predominantly Georgian well into the American territorial period.¹⁷

The influx of people into Spanish East Florida from beyond the St. Marys River was channeled along several routes. The fords and ferry crossings upstream from St. Marys town gave easy access to nearby areas, while those in the vicinity of the Georgia outposts of Traders Hill and Coleraine had the added virtue of feeding into the Kings Road. This route could be followed to the Cow Ford at the bend of the St. Johns, later the site of Jacksonville, and the Alachua area could be reached by overland marches from landings along the middle course of that river.¹⁸ Alternatively, the Alachua Trail, which branched off from the Kings Road about ten miles south of the St. Marys, at present-day Hilliard, provided a more sheltered inland route to the Alachua country. The Alachua-St. Marys Road combined the advantages of the relatively secure route of the old Alachua Trail with more direct access to the deepwater port of St. Marys.

The St. Marys hinterland included the area along the Georgia coast, the most highly developed and densely populated section of the state and the principal source of migrants into Spanish East Florida. Frequently, settlers were actively recruited at St. Marys.¹⁹ Many of the newcomers must have felt a special affinity for St. Marys town and Camden County in which it was located. Roses Bluff served as a convenient jumping-off place for various Florida adventures, and trade carried along the Alachua-St. Marys Road avoided the narrow and winding upstream channel of the St. Marys River which, despite the regula-

16. Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida*, 2 vols. (Atlanta, 1902), I, 122.

17. *Ibid.*, 163.

18. The military expedition to Alachua in 1812, under the command of Colonel Daniel Newnan, inspector general of Georgia, arrived via the St. Johns and a landing opposite Picolata, through which it later retreated as well, despite the possibility of Spanish intervention. George R. Fairbanks, *History of Florida* (Philadelphia, 1871), 258-59.

19. George I. F. Clarke to Alexander O'Reilly, March 19, 1812, in "The Surrender of Amelia," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 4 (October 1925), 90-91.

tory effect of the Okefenokee Swamp, was hazardous for navigation at times of high or low water. The much older port of Fernandina, south of St. Marys Inlet, was of limited use to East Florida, for it was situated on Amelia Island, not linked to the mainland by causeway until 1853. As a Spanish outpost it held little attraction for the Georgian settlers.

Use of the Alachua-St. Marys Road was suggested in the materials associated with the several land grants west of Roses Bluff, and was made clear in those connected with the Sanchez grant of 1815 in the Alachua area. However, in the absence of specific documentation, the nature of the traffic over the route must be inferred from the general character of the East Florida frontier.²⁰ Areas contiguous to or near the Alachua-St. Marys route chiefly supported subsistence-level activities, but even subsistence producers would require an array of items beyond local capabilities. These would have included guns and ammunition, certain tools and equipment, types of cloth and cordage, spices and flour, perhaps tea and coffee, and very likely rum and other spirits. Once established in East Florida, the frontiersmen would send to market whatever was available to them in exchange for the desired supplies. Nature provided several products, such as deerskins, the pelts of fur-bearing animals, and beeswax. Cowhides could be obtained from animals pilfered from the Indians or from the wild cattle, or "heretics," which roamed the deep interior, and later from their own herds, and livestock could be driven to market. Thus, in addition to the movement of people into Florida there was a continuous flow of trade between these areas for many years.

Formal transfer of the Floridas to the United States in 1821 set new forces in motion with significant implications for the Alachua-St. Marys Road. In that year, before effective American control could be extended to the interior, a trading post called Wanton's was established south of the Alachua Savanna on Lake Tuscawilla, within the 293,000-acre Arredondo tract granted in 1817 by the Spanish crown. Wanton's, later named Micanopy, became the terminus of the route to the St. Marys. Edward M.

20. A grant was made in 1815 to Francisco Sanchez of 4,000 acres on the south side of the Santa Fe River "about ten miles west of the road from Alachua to St. Marys." Historical Records Survey, Florida, Division of Professional and Service Projects, Work Projects Administration, *Spanish Land Grants in Florida, Confirmed Claims*, 5 vols. (Tallahassee, 1940-1941), V, 22.

Wanton had been an Indian trader in St. Augustine during the British regime, and he had no links with the Georgia port of St. Marys.²¹ He began immediately to organize a settlement in the vicinity of Lake Tuscawilla, and in 1822 additional settlers, among them some thirty German immigrants, were moving onto the Moses Elias Levy tract, a 20,000-acre block of land north of Wanton's, which was also located within the Arredondo grant. By 1823, these newcomers had completed a road, including bridging work, along the old trail to the St. Johns opposite Picolata, the landing nearest to St. Augustine, thus reducing the need for the route to St. Marys.²²

The Georgians, who for a number of years had lived southeast of the Alachua Savanna, probably maintained some linkage with St. Marys, and the growing settlements in northern Alachua lying beyond the Arredondo lands were not located convenient to the new Picolata road and had to depend upon access to the Alachua-St. Marys Road.²³ However, having gained the St. Marys Road by means of cart roads on either side of the Santa Fe River, the pioneer settlers were then faced with two alternatives: to trade with the St. Marys via the long inland route, or to trade along Black Creek, a navigable tributary of the St. Johns. The trail to Black Creek departed the St. Marys Road at "Mrs. Monroe's," undoubtedly a roadhouse, which was located southwest of Kingsley's Pond, now Kingsley Lake, a few miles east of present-day Starke. The choice was between a distant area with which many of the settlers had strong ties and one closer that was now freely open to them.

The decisive factor in the decline of the Alachua-St. Marys Road as a through route was the completion in late 1826 of a

21. Wanton was described by Andrew Jackson in 1821 as a "profligate," in reference to his unsanctioned activities in the Alachua area. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXII, 208.
22. Fritz W. Buchholz, *History of Alachua County, Florida* (St. Augustine, 1929), 48. This road later became the eastern anchor of the famous Bellamy Road. See also, Caroline B. Watkins, *The Story of Historic Micanopy* (Gainesville, 1976), 26-35.
23. "The inhabitants at and below Sanfalaski fall into the 'St. Marys Road' by cart paths, south of where it crosses the St. Fe; & those of Dills' Settlement to the northward of same, by a cart path which crosses the St. Fe at a fording place lower down." Burch to Clark, July 20, 1826, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 616. Sanfalaski was within what is now known as San Felasco Hammock, a few miles northwest of Gainesville, while Dills' Settlement became Dells Post Office in 1826, later renamed Newnansville, and now near the town of Alachua.

military road from Tampa Bay to Coleraine on the St. Marys River, the northern division of which utilized only that portion of the St. Marys Road from Wanton's to Mrs. Monroe's near Kingsley's Pond. After evaluating the alternatives and consulting with the settlers in the interior districts, the Army Corps of Engineers decided to improve the Black Creek Trail and link it with the Kings Road near Jacksonville so as to take advantage of this long-established road to the St. Marys crossing opposite Coleraine, Georgia. The decision was based upon two major suppositions: that the old route along Trail Ridge would serve very few people, given the low productivity of its sandy lands, and that the stretch between Trail Ridge and the Kings Road would require more costly engineering work in the form of causewaying and bridging.²⁴ From this time on, the Alachua-St. Marys Road would carry only local or short-distance traffic, and sections were apparently soon abandoned.

Evidence of the deterioration of the route to St. Marys is more circumstantial than direct. Maps of the period do not clarify the situation. The Swift map of 1829, for example, shows the military road from Wanton's to the St. Marys River, and a stub of the Alachua Trail south of the Kings Road, but the Alachua-St. Marys Road is entirely missing.²⁵ Whether this indicates abandonment of the Trail Ridge portion of the route or the cartographer's ignorance of its existence is unclear. Nearly all of the St. Marys Road that appears on the manuscript maps of the General Land Office surveys of 1831 are identified either in terms of the Alachua or St. Marys terminuses. There are occasional gaps in the route, which might be construed as signs of disuse, but simply may have reflected the fact that individual surveyors sometimes chose not to extrapolate from what was immediately observable along their survey lines. The route seems to have been generally intact, whether used or not, and was still recognizable.²⁶ The map accompanying the Williams report of

24. Confirmation of the route decision and authorization to let construction contracts, along with a statement of general engineering specifications, are found in OMG (Thomas S. Jesup) to Burch, April 5, 1826, in Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXIII, 595.

25. H. W. Swift, *Map of the Territory of Florida* (Washington, 1829).

26. Manuscript records, Archives of Bureau of State Lands, Tallahassee. The original General Land Office surveys were not extended to eastern Nassau County, which was already in private hands in the form of numerous land grants of the Spanish era, thus the last few miles of the St. Marys Road to Roses Bluff lay beyond the limits of the surveys and were not recorded.

1837 portrays the St. Marys Road terminating west of Kingsley's Pond, while there is no sign of a road from Mrs. Monroe's north on a military map commissioned in 1838 at the time of the Seminole War.²⁷ In contrast, the Burr map of 1839 and military maps from 1861-1865 show the St. Marys route in its entirety from Micanopy to Roses Bluff.²⁸ The "Jefferson Davis map" of 1856, however, which is quite detailed, depicts the Alachua Trail rather than the Alachua-St. Marys Road, for the leg from Deep Creek east to Roses Bluff is missing.²⁹ There is a strong suggestion in this seemingly contradictory map material that the trace of the St. Marys route remained clearly visible on the landscape long after traffic had virtually ceased over sections of it. This is borne out by the fact that several county boundaries were drawn along "the old Alachua Trail" in 1844, while there is no reference in the legislative enactments to an Alachua-St. Marys Road.³⁰

The approximately thirty-five mile stretch of the Alachua-St. Marys Road from Micanopy to Kingsley's Pond continued in use for many years, chiefly because it linked the population clusters of northern and southern Alachua County with the Black Creek Trail. The country immediately contiguous to the route was thinly settled and produced little traffic. This route had special significance during the Seminole War, when military posts were established at Micanopy and at the crossing of the Santa Fe River (Fort Harlee), as well as at Black River (Fort Heileman). The journal of Lieutenant Sprague, written in 1839, provides a rare first-hand account of the route during the war period. The road from Black Creek to Micanopy was described as traversing "pine barrens with a deep sandy soil," making cultivation difficult for any length of time. The few inhabitants

27. John Lee Williams, *The Territory of Florida* (New York, 1837; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1962), map in pocket, endpiece; United States War Department, Bureau of Topographic Engineers, *Map of the Seat of the War in Florida* (Washington, 1838).

28. Daniel H. Burr, *Map of Florida* (Washington, 1839); United States War Department, Bureau of Topographic Engineers, *General Topographic Map of Florida* (Washington, 1861-1865), sheets X and XI; United States Coast Survey Office, *North Part of Florida* (Washington, 1864).

29. United States War Department, Bureau of Topographic Engineers, *State of Florida* (Washington, 1856). Issued under the authority of Jefferson Davis as secretary of war, the map has been commonly identified with him.

30. *Acts and Resolutions of the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida, 22nd Session, 1844* (Tallahassee, 1844), Act 13, Section I.

were said to have sought "safety in the more thickly settled parts of the country," while their properties were ravaged and burned by Indians.³¹ With the end of hostilities, traffic again began to flow to and from Black Creek, where Middleburg functioned as one of antebellum Florida's leading cotton-shipping ports, serving interior agricultural districts including the Alachua country.³² At the same time, an elaboration of the state's transportation pattern was reducing the role of the southern reach of the St. Marys Road and the Black Creek Trail. A wagon road from St. Augustine to Micanopy via the "Alachua Ferry" across the St. Johns had been developed during the decade of the 1830s and in 1845 a mail route was established to the Paynes Prairie area (earlier known as the Alachua Savanna) utilizing the navigable Oklawaha River and a stage line from Orange Springs.³³ By 1859, the pioneering Florida Railroad had been constructed from Fernandina as far as Gainesville in central Alachua County, and soon the town of Starke was founded upon the new rail line.³⁴ Cotton ceased to move to Middleburg, and areas along the St. Marys Road became little more than backwaters by the time of the Civil War.

The northeastern segment of the Alachua-St. Marys Road, from the Big Bend of the St. Marys River to Roses Bluff, was throughout the territorial period a significant corridor across Nassau County that had been carved out of northern Duval County in 1824. The road's central location contributed to its continued use well into the latter part of the nineteenth century, despite a reduction in traffic resulting from new transportation alignments. The early importance of the St. Marys Road is shown by the fact that in 1834, a mail route was established along it from St. Marys via Roses Bluff to Frink's Post Office, later called Kirkland, a few miles southwest of the Kings Road junction, before bearing south to Jacksonville.³⁵ The site was

31. Frank F. White, Jr., ed., "Macomb's Mission to the Seminoles: Lt. John T. Sprague's Journal Kept During April and May, 1839," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 35 (October 1956), 157-58.

32. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida*, II, 329.

33. See the Burr map of 1839; Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida*, II, 171.

34. George W. Pettengill, Jr., *The Story of the Florida Railroads, 1834-1903* (Boston, 1952), 22.

35. From Frink's, the route rejoined the Kings Road near modern Callahan, then to Jacksonville. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXV, 35. The mail route is depicted on the Burr map, cited above.

adjacent to that of Dyal, founded later. Frink's was a frontier trading post which had been awarded a post office the preceding year.³⁶ The St. Marys Road also attracted the seat of county government when, not long after the establishment of Nassau County, Fernandina was deemed too isolated to reach from distant parts of the new county. A site was selected along the road within the land grant of John Bellamy, and in 1835 this was designated "Nassau Court House."³⁷ The county seat remained there until 1862, when, for security reasons, it was moved to a point on the Kings Road near its juncture with the St. Marys Road.³⁸ Fernandina, however, regained the county seat following the Civil War—its accessibility having been greatly improved. The small community which had developed around Nassau Court House was renamed Evergreen about 1880, early in the lumber boom era.

The role of St. Marys, Georgia, as a port-of-entry for northern Florida was sharply reduced after the late 1830s as the port functions of Jacksonville were undergoing development.³⁹ Roads, including those of Nassau County, began to focus upon the new port. The Hart Road, built in 1839, is a notable example, its route essentially that of modern U. S. Highway 17.⁴⁰ Even more important in its impact upon the St. Marys Road was the construction of the Florida Railroad from Fernandina, completed across Nassau County during 1856. The town of Callahan was established in 1860, where the new rail line crossed the Kings Road, thus leaving the old route to Roses Bluff some distance from the growth areas of that period. Lastly, the lumber era, beginning about 1880, spawned a number of new towns, including Hilliard on the Kings Road, and Crandall on the St. Marys River a few miles upstream from Roses Bluff, further diminishing the traffic flow along the St. Marys Road. Most of its alignment west of Evergreen was soon superseded

36. S. H. Dike, *The Territorial Post Offices of Florida* (Albuquerque, 1963), n.p.

37. Jan H. Johannes, Sr., *Yesterday's Reflections: Nassau County, Florida* (Callahan, 1976), 337.

38. Apparently the site in the Bellamy grant was considered a temporary location, for in 1851 the State Assembly authorized the selection of a more central site for the county seat, although this authorization was never implemented. Carter, *Territorial Papers*, XXV, 146.

39. T. Frederick Davis, *History of Jacksonville, Florida, and Vicinity, 1513-1924* (St. Augustine, 1925; facsimile ed., Gainesville, 1964), 74-75.

40. Johannes, *Yesterday's Reflections*, 173.

by a more direct approach to Hilliard, while many sections southwest of the Kings Road were abandoned by the turn of the century.

Eventually, portions of the Alachua-St. Marys route were obscured or completely obliterated. In thinly-settled areas it was sometimes shielded from view by regenerating forests, and in places its surface was scarified in the course of agricultural development or, more recently, in the process of tree-planting. Several towns were superimposed upon the old roadway, creating new patterns on the land and effectively erasing signs of the old. Conversely, within certain large tracts of land now in corporate ownership, traces of the route have been preserved in the form of forest roads closed to public entry.⁴¹ Likewise, a length of it remains as a jeep trail within the Camp Blanding Military Reservation surrounding Kingsley Lake.⁴² Residual fragments of the route to St. Marys are numerous enough to make their identification possible through their orientation and sequential arrangement (Fig. 3).

The longest segment of the historic route enjoying continued use is a fifteen-mile stretch in Alachua County from Micanopy northward, through the villages of Rochelle and Windsor, to an intersection with east-west Highway 26, northeast of Newnans Lake. Denominated State Highway 234 as far as Windsor and 325 from there to its terminus, this paved secondary road adheres closely to the alignment of its predecessor, save for a recent by-pass around Rochelle. The principal residential street of the community, however, is developed along a long curve in the original Alachua-St. Marys Road.

The old route continues north of Highway 26 as a gated, private woods road, which after about five miles, becomes lost in the outskirts of Waldo. From the center of town, the St. Marys route is followed by four-laned U.S. Highway 301 for a distance of four miles before the latter leaves it just north of the crossing of the Santa Fe River, near the village of Hampton in Bradford County. From that point, there is no clear sign of the former St.

41. Such forest roads and jeep trails appear on the highway maps of the various counties issued by the Florida Department of Transportation; these are updated from time to time.
42. While this section of the old road does not appear on the general highway map of Clay County, it is shown on the Starke Quadrangle of the U.S. Geological Survey 15" Series of 1949, and on the Starke Sheet (#478) of the Mark Hurd Aerial Surveys of the State of Florida, 1973.

THE ALACHUA-ST. MARYS ROAD

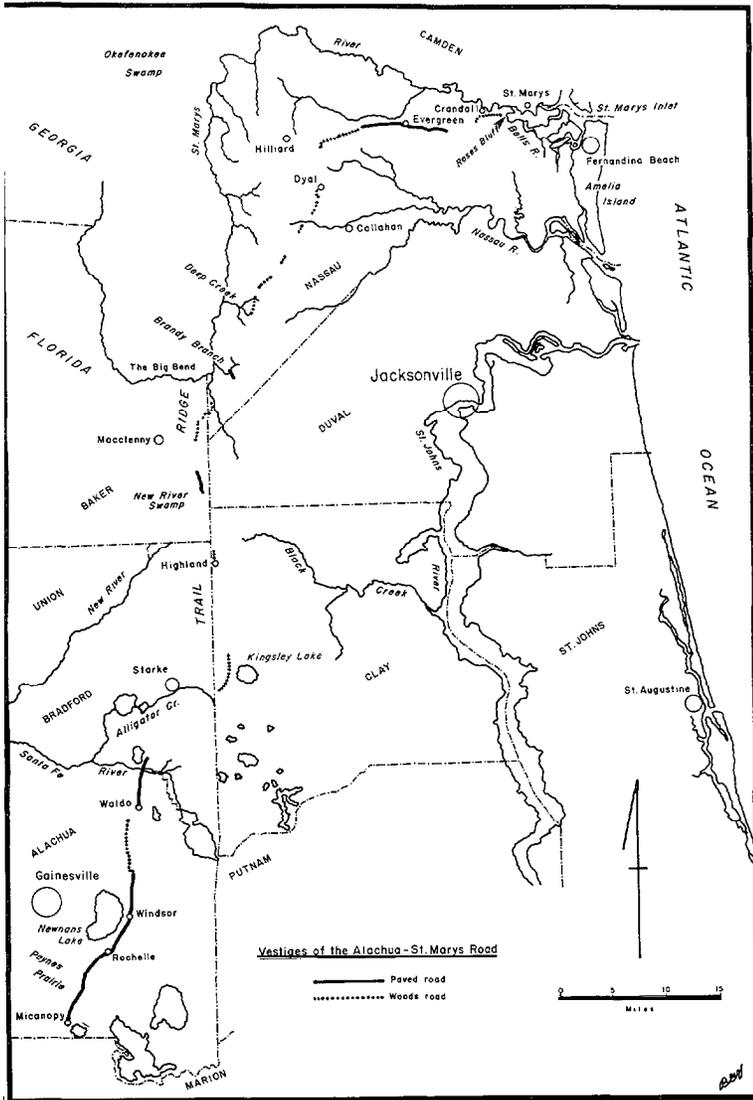


Fig. 3. Portions of the Alachua-St. Marys Road presently in use.

Marys Road until the Camp Blanding Reservation is reached, inside Clay County. A jeep trail within the military reserve preserves a sweeping arc of the former cart road as it ascends Trail Ridge. It becomes evident at or near the site of Mrs. Monroe's of territorial days, and can be traced to a point northwest of Kingsley Lake, where it is obscured by more recent roads leading from Starke to the north shore of the lake.

Despite a long history as a pathway, heavily-forested Trail Ridge reveals only a few segments of the Alachua-St. Marys route. The hamlet of Highland, at the Bradford-Clay county line, lies along the trace, and there are a few short pieces of county road north of that community which appear to represent its alignment. A two-mile stretch of State Highway 228 in Baker County, south of Interstate 10, must have been built upon the old route, while an unpaved country road, which departs U.S. Highway 90 about three miles east of Macclenny and descends the eastern flank of Trail Ridge toward the big bend of the St. Marys River, follows the path of the St. Marys Road and its predecessor, the Alachua Trail, for several miles along the boundary between Baker and Nassau counties.

The crossing of Brandy Branch, a minor tributary of the St. Marys in southwestern Nassau County, has been fixed for centuries. A fording place of the "Camino para Alachua" was shown at this point on the map accompanying the Mizell grant of 1818.⁴³ Presently, paved State Highway 121 bridges the creek here, and utilizes a bit of the historic route in its southern approach to the crossing. North of Brandy Branch, however, only a cut in the creek bank, a few yards west of the present grade, remains of the former alignment.

Between Brandy Branch and the community of Dyal, near the Kings Road, there are a half-dozen fragments of the St. Marys Road of varying lengths, all of them private woods roads today, located within large corporate holdings. The historic route is lost on either side of the Kings Road, although a pasture footpath north of Dyal, visible on aerial photos, strongly suggests the southern approach to the former crossing.

Northeast of the Kings Road, a stretch of private forest road over three miles in length preserves the sharp bend of the

43. Grant to John Mizell, 1818; 200 acres in Section 33, T 1 S, R 23 E. Archives of Bureau of State Lands, Tallahassee. The English language copy of the map labelled the route the "Alotchua Trail."

former St. Marys Road and finally intersects with paved State Highway 108 about six miles east of Hilliard. That highway utilizes the alignment of the old cart road for a distance of about eight or nine miles, passing through the small community of Evergreen which is sprawled along the highway. In the vicinity of Interstate 95 and the roughly parallel railroad right-of-way to the east of it, the trace of the old route to the Bells River landing is lost. Gated forest roads south of the St. Marys River, however, both southwest and southeast of the river-bank community of Crandall, represent the historic approach to Roses Bluff. While the woods road veers away from Bells River and by-passes the summit of the bluff, recent aerial photos reveal a footpath leading down to the river bank, presumably following the old track to the landing opposite St. Marys, Georgia.

A number of remnants of the Alachua-St. Marys route remain in existence, some of them in public use but even more in private, restricted use. There is no apparent local identification with the historic cart road which these various segments represent. They have undergone grading, bridges and culverts have been installed, some have been paved, and their original meanderings have been modified, yet they continue to bear witness to the former alignment, thus impressed upon the contemporary Florida landscape.