



FORT KING NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK MASTER PLAN

PHOTO BY CHARLIE OSCEOLA



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORT KING NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK IS A 41.79 ACRE PARK dedicated to the interpretation and preservation of Seminole Wars history (1816-1858). Designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Parks Service in 2004, the park is owned jointly by the City of Ocala and Marion County and is currently under the custodianship of the City of Ocala as the operating entity. The park currently has a Visitor Center, fort palisade walls with block houses, and walking trails. To honor the importance of this site and delineate future development plans to add to the current layout, the City of Ocala prepared this Master Plan in partnership with the Fort King Heritage Association, endorsed by the Ocala City Council and the Marion County Board of County Commissioners.

This plan is broken down in two parts:

- A. Development and construction of a Museum and Education Center meeting exacting standards for purposes outlined in the plan.
- B. Development and reconstruction of the Fort King complex including necessary archaeological and archival research work on each structure to obtain the most accurate historical representation of buildings.

Each part of this plan will be implemented in tandem. The end goal is to provide a park that is not just passive in its education but immersive as well. The Master Plan shall serve as a road map for developing a park that is deserving of the National Historic Landmark status and ensures that its stewards preserve the history for generations to come. The Master Plan sets the course for interpreting the most accurate version of Seminole War history from both the U.S. Government and Seminole sides.

This Master Plan is to be completed over 15 years.

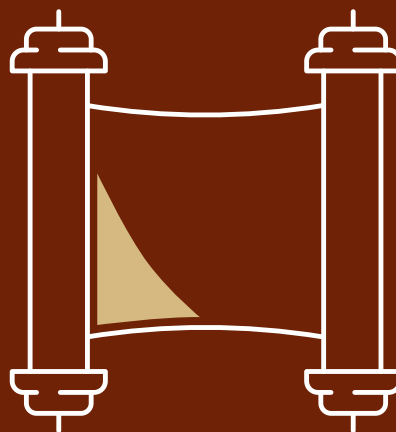
The Fort King Heritage Association will lead the charge to secure local, State and Federal funding for the project.

After successful implementation of the Master Plan, Marion County will have the most important interpretive heritage-tourism site dedicated to the Seminole Wars in the world. The Fort King National Historic Landmark will provide students and public visitors alike with the tools they need to understand the complexities of the conflicts and the challenges of an infant nation. The economic impact will be substantial.

THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES



ECONOMICS



HISTORY



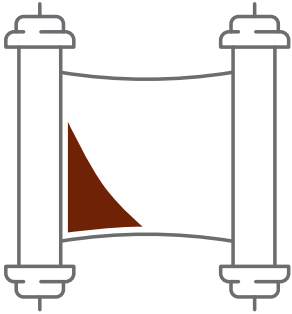
EDUCATION



ECONOMICS

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF FORT KING AND THE MUSEUM AND EDUCATION CENTER will provide an immediate and direct economic impact and enhanced interpretation of Florida during the Seminole Wars; providing much needed visitor context otherwise not provided in Florida.

- Multiple studies by the State of Florida (FDOS, FDEP) have indicated heritage tourism has a substantial economic impact in Florida. The reconstruction of Fort King will enhance heritage tourism opportunities.
- Heritage visitors spend more per day (60% more), stay longer and visit more tourist destinations in general (National Trust for Historic Preservation).
- Six in ten visitors to Florida visit history-based activities (Visit Florida/FDOS).
- The site's development and operations provides local jobs—The site currently employs two full-time employees and is supported by other professionals (management, fiscal, personnel, maintenance staff, etc). As the site continues to develop and programming expectations and visitation grow, additional positions will be added to support same.
- The services of archaeology professionals are utilized as needed to monitor any site activities.
- The construction work itself will provide labor opportunities for both professional and non-professional workers including surveyors, engineers, architects, archaeologists, department directors, crew supervisors, equipment operators, and contractors (including skilled and unskilled labor).



HISTORY

FORT KING SETS ITSELF APART from other sites in Florida and the United States that are associated with the period of Indian Removal and the Seminole Wars. One of the main distinctions is that Fort King represents not only the U.S. government's Indian Removal policies, as seen through treaties or forts, but also native resistance to those policies. The Fort King site is strongly associated with major themes related to this context, including Jacksonian democracy and the forced removal of American Indians to the newly established Indian Territory west of the Mississippi.

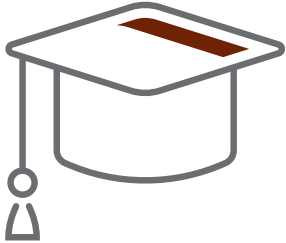
The killing of the Seminole removal agent, Wiley Thompson, and the Fort King commanding officer, Constantine Smith, outside the fort walls was one of two simultaneous attacks on the same day—the other being Dade's Massacre—which marked the beginning of the Second Seminole War (1835). Fort King was central to U.S. plans to end the conflict. It served as headquarters of the southern command for the U.S. Army for several of the Florida commanders and more soldiers than any other fort associated with the war.

The Fort King site is also closely associated with the famous Seminole leader, Osceola. It was during the removal meetings at Fort King that Osceola was first recognized as an important leader by his own people, and by the U.S. military and government agents. His charismatic stand against removal led to his imprisonment at the fort. He eventually earned revenge along with national fame and notoriety when he killed Andrew Jackson's Seminole removal agent, Wiley Thompson, Lt. Constantine Smith, and sutler store owner Erastus Rogers at Fort King.

Forts Cooper, Foster, and Pierce all saw limited action during the war and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, however the Fort King site has a higher level of integrity and documentation. There are also a few National Register sites and National Historic Landmarks associated with the Second Seminole War. Dade Battlefield (Dade Massacre) and the Okeechobee Battlefield (Battle of Okeechobee), are both National Historic Landmarks. Although these battlefields have relatively good integrity, they represent a different property type associated with the Second Seminole War. Unlike battlefields, which often represent a single isolated event, field fortifications of the Second Seminole War were established to implement the conditions of treaties, such as the removal of Indian groups west, serve as collection points for Indians and their cattle, and become gathering points.

Fort King also served as a headquarters for operations for and against the Seminole, as a location for negotiations between the government and various Indian bands and their leaders, and more generally, established a military presence in inland Florida. Additionally, field fortifications such as Fort King opened the inland territory to white settlement that had previously been confined to coastal areas. Military roads built to supply Fort King and other installations facilitated the movement of people through the territory. In addition to their rudimentary construction, this is a unique characteristic that only inland forts share (Hellmann and Prentice 2000: 31, 69, 75).





EDUCATION

THE RECONSTRUCTION OF FORT KING PROVIDES EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATIONAL VALUE to students and visitors. Students of Marion County learn that Fort King was the first county seat and the birthplace of the City of Ocala, and get to stand on the ground where their community started.

This reconstruction is a long term endeavor which began with construction of the palisade walls and block houses in 2017/2018.

The site's utility as a tool for lifelong learning and supplement to the student's learning experiences in the classroom is exceptional. For the past three years, almost 1,000 students per year participated in student programming designed to compliment classroom instruction and provide awareness of this dramatic and traumatic period of American history; particularly of how the Indian Removal Act played out on the Florida landscape.

In 2020, with a small matching grant, the City developed an Education Guide that provides a teaching resource for educators. It provides guiding questions, classroom activities and worksheets, and correlates activities directly to the Florida common core standards for history, social studies, reading, language arts, and college and career readiness.

The same historic preservation grant also funded on-site interpretive signs that provide a better than average understanding of Fort King in the larger context of the Seminole Wars, slavery and Federal Indian Removal policies.

Educational exhibits at the newly acquired Archaeological Resource Center will provide the visitor with an understanding of the art and science of archaeology in general and help them better understand how the archaeological and archival research informs the replica construction to meet guiding reconstruction principles.

There are no sites currently under public ownership that are better suited to meet the important educational needs related to Fort King and the Seminole War.

Fort King provides amazing life-long learning opportunities to support learners of all ages. The City of Ocala provides year-round educational/cultural heritage programs and thousands of people participate in these programs.



THE PROJECT

THE FORT KING NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK MASTER PLAN includes key development activities including:

- Construction of a Museum and Education Center – \$7.35 Million
- The Fort Complex Reconstruction – \$6.68 Million
- Ancillary Support Facilities – \$700,000

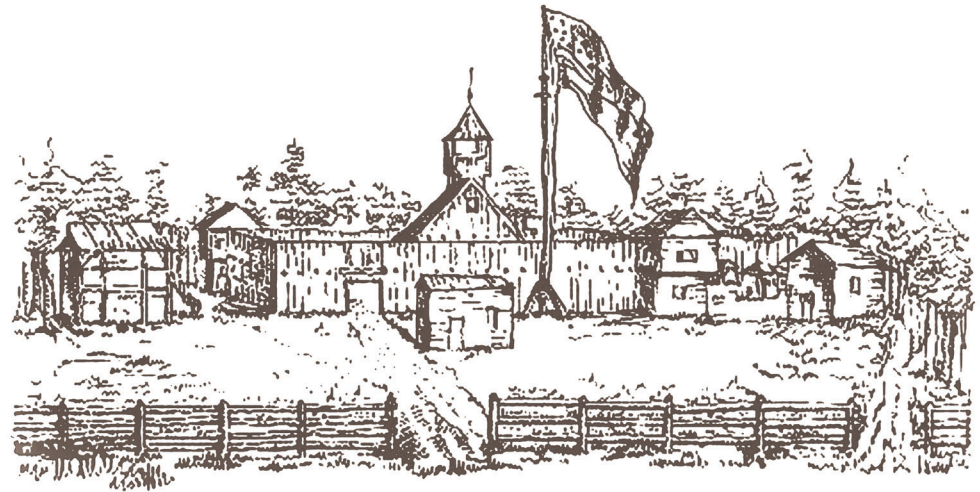
Total \$14.73 Million



FORT COMPLEX RECONSTRUCTION

AS WE CONTINUE TO MOVE THROUGH the reconstruction of Fort King, it is important to maintain perspective in terms of the layout of all structures inside and outside of the fort. We are sensitive to the fact that when reconstructing a historical property it is difficult, yet imperative to recreate the property in a manner that conveys its appearance as it would have appeared at its time in history including recreation of the landscape within and around the structure.

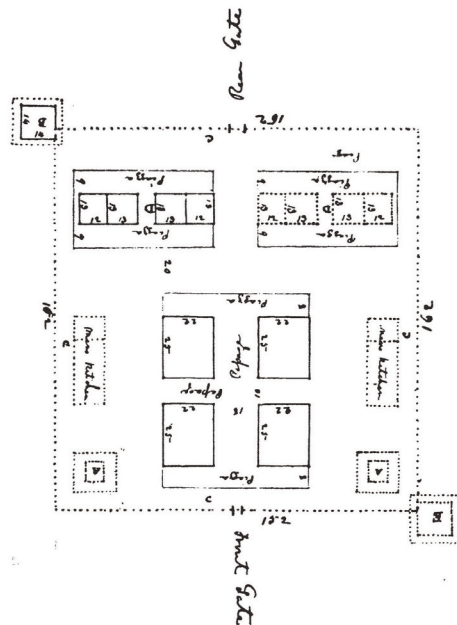
The replica reconstruction of all structures associated with Fort King will be representative of this hastily constructed frontier fort.



The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Reconstruction advises that reconstruction may be used to depict vanished or non surviving portions of property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and reconstruction is essential to the public's understanding of the property. At Fort King, the ongoing archaeological and archival research is informing a better understanding of the fort layout.

Glassell's fort plans (1827), Sprague's journal drawing of the fort (1837), Prince's drawing of the first fort, myriad written descriptions of the fort in terms of construction materials, dimensions, buildings (uses, sizes) and ongoing archaeological research is helping us to ensure the fort is reconstructed with historical accuracy and minimal conjecture.

Every proposed building and structure built on Fort King goes through a lengthy process of research and archaeology.



FORT KING

Plan of original buildings, erected in 1827. Included were barracks for enlisted men, officers' quarters, mess halls, etc.
(From the National Archives, Washington)

FORT KING TIMELINE

- »»»»»»»» 1827 The first fort was originally constructed to implement the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, restricting Florida Indians to reservation lands and prohibiting others from entry
 - »»»»»»»» 1832 Payne's Landing Treaty enforced by U.S. Army, requiring the Seminole to give up their Florida lands and move West
 - »»»»»»»» 1835 Seminole removal agent Wiley Thompson and the Commanding Officer of Fort King were killed by Seminole leader Osceola outside the fort walls
 - »»»»»»»» 1835 Dade Massacre marked the first day of the Second Seminole War
 - »»»»»»»» 1836 The first fort was abandoned and burned to the ground by the Seminole
 - »»»»»»»» 1837 U.S. Army rebuilt the fort
 - »»»»»»»» 1842 End of the Second Seminole War
 - »»»»»»»» 1843 Abandoned as a military base and became Marion County's first courthouse and public building
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- »»»»»»»» 1927 The DAR Ocala Chapter purchased the Soldier Cemetery to begin community efforts to preserve Fort King
 - »»»»»»»» 1992 Marion County Purchased the first 15 acre parcel that comprises the greater Fort King site
 - »»»»»»»» 2001 City of Ocala spearheaded local efforts to secure a State of Florida grant to purchase the 22 acre "McCall homestead" on which Fort King was situated



- »»»»»»»» 2004 Designated a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service
- »»»»»»»» 2014 The park and visitor center were open to the public
- »»»»»»»» 2015 City of Ocala awarded State of Florida Division of Historic Resources grant for replica of the fort palisade walls and block houses
- »»»»»»»» 2015 FKHA expanded the park boundary with the purchase of a parcel on the west peripheral with funding assistance from Selburn Foundation
- »»»»»»»» 2017 First Phase of fort reconstruction complete
- »»»»»»»» 2019 East parcel purchased for temporary Fort King Archaeology Resource Center (City, County/TDC, Felburn Foundation)

PARTNERS

THE SUCCESS OF THE FORT KING PROJECT is highly dependent on many partners. Some of these are operations partners. Some are development partners and some are funding partners.

The three primary partners are:

- The City of Ocala
- Marion County
- The Fort King Heritage Association

Other partners include:

- Marion County Public School System
- Silver River Museum
- State of Florida—Division of Historical Resources
- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Gulf Archaeology Research Institute
- Felburn Foundation
- Seminole Wars Foundation
- Marion County Tourist Development Council

Many other **stakeholders** have or will be involved as this project moves forward and we continue to discover and retell the story of Fort King.



FORT KING HERITAGE ASSOCIATION, INC.

THE FORT KING HERITAGE ASSOCIATION INC, IS A 501(C)3 ORGANIZATION whose mission is to Preserve, Protect, and Promote the Fort King National Landmark Site located in Ocala, Marion County, Florida, while serving as a citizen support group to cultivate and sustain a public private partnership with private donors, and our Local, State and Federal Governments.

The Fort King Heritage Association (FKHA) has a crucial role in the acquisition and development of Fort King. In 2012 the City of Ocala, Marion County and FKHA entered into a memorandum of understanding (amended year to year as needed based on changes in site boundary and operations). This MOU outlines each of the parties roles in fundraising, design, development and management of the site.

FKHA provides for support in fundraising for capital improvements, advocacy efforts, and guidance with development of the park. In 2019, FKHA received the Florida Recreation and Parks Association's Corporate Support Award for their efforts in funding and development of the Fort King National Historic Landmark.

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