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### Lanark-by-the-Sea

Posted on [January 9, 2015](#) by [Josh](#)

If you're looking for a scenic route to get you through the Florida Panhandle, there's no substitute for U.S. Highway 98, which follows the Gulf coast all the way from Pensacola to Perry. You're probably familiar with some of the larger waypoints along this road – Panama City, Destin, Apalachicola. The smaller communities, however, have a charm all their own, and a rich history in most cases. This is in part because many of these smaller communities weren't always so small.

Lanark Village in Franklin County is a prime example.

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1950s-era highway map showing Lanark and vicinity on Florida's Gulf coast.

In the 1880s, most of the Panhandle was still forested with virgin timber. The population was small, and most inhabitants had only small farms. The South was beginning to emerge from the economic malaise that followed the Civil War, and investors were beginning to take interest in Florida's plentiful land and agreeable climate. William Clark, a Scotsman who had made his fortune in the textile industry, partnered with several of his colleagues in Scotland and New York to begin developing the area just east of the Apalachicola River. The Clark Syndicate, as it came to be called, eventually controlled a whole constellation of companies, including the Scottish Land & Improvement Company, the Georgia & Florida Investment Company, the Gulf Terminal & Navigation Company, and the Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad Company.

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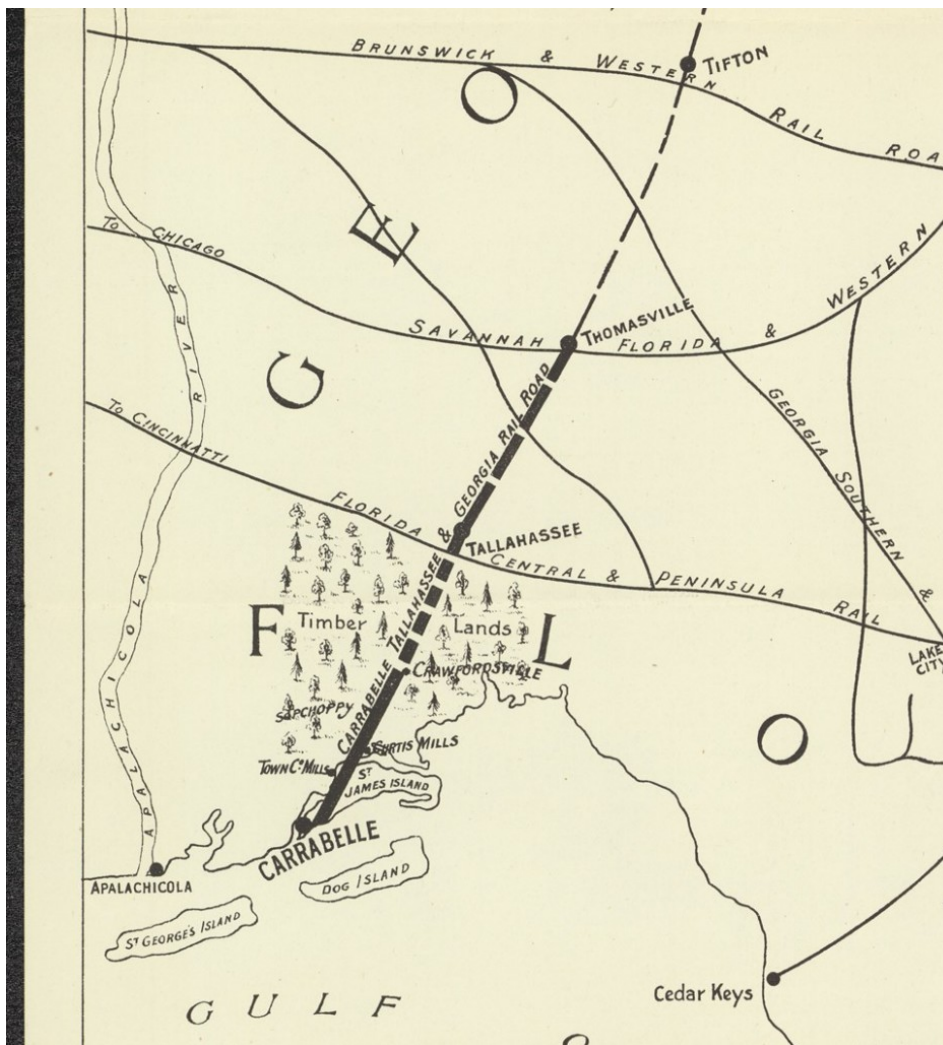
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Map of Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad showing the proposed route of the road and lucrative timber resources along the route. This map was used to sell company bonds to investors (1894). Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Gulf Railroad Collection (N2002-5), Box 1, FF11, State Archives of Florida.

These projects were cleverly integrated. The railroad company captivated the interests of prospective bondholders by pointing out all the timber the company would have access to once it had penetrated south from Tallahassee to the Gulf. As the railroad progressed, the syndicate built stations and laid out communities along the way, so that workers could begin tapping the natural resources of the area to repay the bondholders and turn a profit. Arran, McIntyre, and Sopchoppy were founded in this way.

The railroad executives had special plans for the Gulf. Just east of Carrabelle, where the Carrabelle, Tallahassee, and Georgia line passed quite close to the coast, the company laid out a town and named it after William Clark's home county of Lanarkshire. The original plan called for a street grid with 118 city blocks. The streets running north and south were named for various trees, while the avenues running east and west were named for board members of the Clark Syndicate. One broad street entering town from the north was to be called Bloxham Road, a nod to Governor William D. Bloxham.

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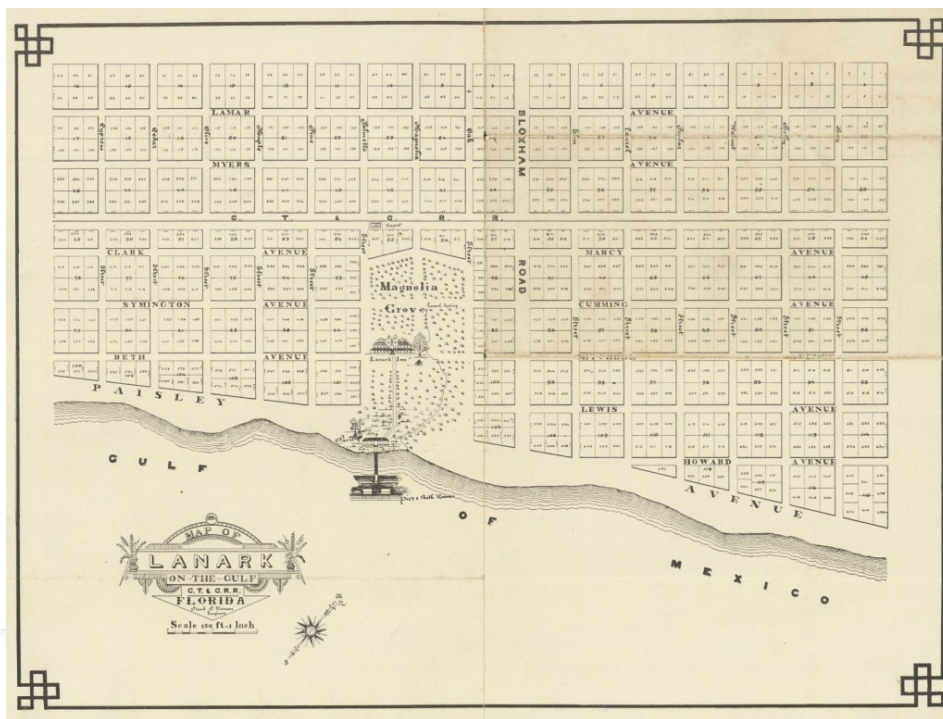


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Plan of Lanark-by-the-Sea (1894). Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad Collection (N2002-5), Box 1, FF11, State Archives of Florida.

The Clark Syndicate planned to advertise Lanark-by-the-Sea as a healthful and luxurious Florida resort, and sell town lots to wealthy Northerners who craved a little rest from the crowded cities and chilly weather. To get them to stick around for a bit while they fell in love with the place, the Scottish Land & Improvement Company built a fine hotel at the center of town. The establishment opened July 4, 1894. Water was drawn from nearby Lanark Spring into a 20,000 gallon water tank, where it could be used for the hotel, nearby town lot owners, or for fire protection. The coastline around Lanark doesn't normally lend itself to white sandy beaches, but the developers were undaunted. According to one of the company's annual reports, workers managed to fill in a section of shoreline with sand and invent a beach for guests to enjoy. The hotel also featured a wide veranda with rocking chairs, and a 500-foot boardwalk connecting the main building with a dancing pavilion near Lanark Spring. Parts of the spring were covered with a bath house, including private dressing rooms for men and women.

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Newspaper ad for the Lanark Inn, date unknown. Carrabelle, Tallahassee & Georgia Railroad (N2002-5), Box 1, FF11, State Archives of Florida.



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**Front view of the Lanark Inn, Franklin County (1898).**

The Lanark Inn, as it was called, became a popular getaway spot, not only for tourists, but also for wealthier locals from nearby Tallahassee. The railroad company offered special excursion ticket prices to entice visitors. In 1896, company executives reported offering \$1.00 tickets from any point on the railroad to Lanark each Sunday during the summer. In addition, the steamer “Crescent City” brought more guests over from nearby Apalachicola.

The hotel was the center of the community. After the train arrived each day, it was common for all of the cottage owners from around town to gather in the lobby to chat and receive their mail. Saturday nights were spent dancing in the hotel ballroom, and bridge games were popular during the day. The dock that extended out over the Gulf in front of the main building was a popular place to gather after supper for swimming, dancing, and reminiscing.



**Florida Railway and Navigation Company Engine #15 at the Lanark Hotel (circa 1890s).**

Over time, the fortunes of the Clark Syndicate began to decline. By 1926, a hard-surface highway between Tallahassee and Carrabelle was complete, which rendered the passenger railroad increasingly unnecessary. Timber was getting more scarce, and the Clark companies eventually

began selling off parts of their former North Florida empire. The hotel suffered severe damage during a hurricane in 1929, and a fire destroyed the old hotel in the 1930s. It was rebuilt, but like most sequels, it never recaptured the vibrancy of the original.

Lanark was changing, but it had glory days yet to come. During World War II, the new hotel building served as the headquarters for a training base called Camp Gordon Johnston. Entire divisions of soldiers were trained in amphibious warfare techniques on the beaches here, including the use of amphibious vehicles. A number of the soldiers who trained here participated in the D-Day invasion of 1944.



**Soldiers training on the beach at camp Gordon Johnston (circa 1943).**

After the war, the camp buildings fell into disrepair, but developers began planning for an entirely new settlement at Lanark. In 1955, Lanark Estates, Inc. filed a plat laying out a new subdivision where the Lanark Inn had once been a social center. The new community was called Lanark Village, and it is still visible today as you drive through on U.S. 98.

Florida is covered with small communities having stories like that of Lanark-by-the-Sea. The State Library and Archives of Florida have a wide variety of print and manuscript materials to help you uncover these gems of local history. Visit [info.florida.gov](http://info.florida.gov) to learn more about our resources!

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#### 4 thoughts on “Lanark-by-the-Sea”

1.



Georgia says:  
[January 9, 2015 at 3:40 pm](#)

I had an old friend who fought in WWII and he trained at Camp Gordon Johnston. His name was Homer Green. Thank you for sharing this article.

[Reply](#)

2.



Cindy Miller says:  
[January 11, 2015 at 10:16 am](#)

I really appreciate this info! I have a little place at Lanark and this makes it more meaningful.

[Reply](#)



Ray Spitz says:  
[December 16, 2015 at 7:38 pm](#)

I have a little place at Lanark Village, too.  
Isn't it the best?

[Reply](#)



3.

Charles Blankenship says:  
[April 20, 2017 at 10:30 pm](#)

We lived in the Pickett Apts from the summer of 1943 to 1947. After the end of WWII, only a few families remained and were able to use two Apts. My sister, brother and I attended school in Carrabelle. We moved to the Beach in late 1947 and out west in 1948. My sister and I attended a school reunion in Carrabelle several years back and renewed schoolmates friendships.

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