

**DUDLEY:***Continued from page A1***Secretary of the Interior makes final decision**

entities, or federal, state, or local governments. The laws that govern property rights still apply to National Landmarks and actually help preserve the sites from demolition. Designation of a property as a National Historic Landmark does not give ownership of the property to the federal government or the National Park Service, but does allow the Park Service to offer advice and support to a place designated as a NHL. It also helps facilitate eligibility for grants, tax credits, and other opportunities to maintain its historic character.

Already listed on



Photos by RAY CARSON/Alachua County Today

buildings were not part of the original farm but were relocated in the park to give a more complete picture of what life was like in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

After Florida became a state in 1845, settlers from South Carolina arrived seeking land for cotton production. Philip Benjamin Harvey Dudley and his wife, Mary, were part of that migration, settling in Archer in 1852 and purchasing the land that became Dudley Farm in 1859. The original homestead was a log cabin northwest of the present farmhouse. No remains of the original cabin still exist except for the possible location of a well.

Dudley Sr. served the Confederacy during the

Civil War as a captain of the Alachua Rangers 7th Regiment. After the war, he returned home to the challenge of managing a large cotton plantation.

Dudley Sr. and his oldest son turned to grazing cattle, in addition to raising cotton and crops with hired help. Work also began on a road from the farm to Gainesville so cattlemen could drive herds to market. Another road intersected at the farm that connected Newberry, Archer, Jonesville and Gainesville. The old road is still visible today as the main path to the farmhouse. These roads and cattle production put Dudley Farm on the map as an important crossroads and commercial center.

When his father died in

1881, his eldest son Ben Dudley Jr., built the present farmhouse to accommodate his family that grew to eight girls and four boys. He also added a general store, kitchen, smokehouse, sweet potato storehouse, dairy and canning house, outhouses, corn crib and barn. All were constructed of heart pine from the property. The prosperous farm produced cotton, corn, rice, millet, rye, oats, sugar cane and sweet potatoes. Milk, butter, eggs, turkeys and sausage were taken to Gainesville to be sold. In the Reconstruction era, when jobs were scarce and poverty high in the decimated south, the farm laborers and tenant farmers were paid only with a “furnish” partly consisting of pork and sugarcane. But the farm prospered, and after Ben’s death in 1918 his widow continued to work the farm along with her three sons.

Over the years, most of the siblings moved away to start their own careers and families. One son, Ralph Dudley stayed and continued to raise cattle, tobacco and vegetable crops until his death in 1967.

The youngest of Ben’s 12 children, Myrtle Dudley, was the last to remain on the farm. She managed a small cattle herd and vegetable and flower gardens. As she got older, Myrtle carried out her mother’s wish to keep the farm intact by donating 24 acres to the park service in 1983.

In 1986, the state purchased an additional 232 acres to preserve the rural landscape that was part of the original Dudley land. The farm not only contained the buildings, but a wealth of documents and furnishings from the generations of Dudleys. One of the conditions of giving the state the property was that Myrtle would live

on the farm until her death in 1996 at the age of 94.

Today, living history interpreters conduct daily farm work including the care of cattle, poultry, crops and building maintenance. Cane grindings take place in the fall as it did when the Dudleys lived here. A tour of Dudley Farm is a trip back in time to when Florida was a frontier. The park is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday with an entry fee of \$5 per vehicle. COVID-19 has affected the park hours and opening. Effective Nov. 13, 2020 the park is open, but due to local orders, facial coverings or masks are required inside buildings for staff and visitor safety. The visitor center is closed. Picnicking and trails are available, but visitors are expected to maintain distances of at least six feet apart. The park is located at 18730 W. Newberry Road, east of Newberry.

On Dec. 10, the National Park System Advisory Board will review current nominations, including Dudley Farm, for designation as a National Historic Landmark, before making a recommendation to the Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary will make the final decision whether or not to designate the property as a National Historic Landmark.

Both the City of Newberry and the Alachua County commissions are submitting letters of support of the designation. Newberry staff is also preparing a letter of support from Newberry’s Historic Architectural Review Board, which will be considered for authorization at their Dec. 7 meeting.

# # #  
Email rcarson@  
alachuatoday.com

