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Camps, Taylor-Collins',
MackKays and Rays.

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great ocala families

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5 Great Ocala Families

Wednesday, March 05, 2008 - Toni James scales the branches of Ocala's great family trees.

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The Drake Family



The first great Ocala families to settle in the area were the Drakes and the MacKays in the 1870s. Trusten Drake Sr. was a graduate of Princeton University and pioneer in developing the decorative asparagus fern for export to the north. He married Alice Walton Hocker in 1902 (their fathers were classmates at University of Virginia Law School) and had two sons — William Hocker Drake and Trusten Polk Drake Jr. The family built their home on Ocala's historic Fifth Street in 1919.

Trusten Junior, born in 1903, graduated from the University of Florida in 1928 and followed his family into the fern business. That same year, he married Annie MacKay in the first wedding to take place in the newly built First



Presbyterian Church of Ocala, and the union began a tie to another of Ocala's great families. The elder Trusten Drake had also developed an extensive cattle business, and upon his death in 1928, Trusten Junior took over the fern business and bought out his brother William's interest in the Drake cattle ranch operation. He eventually went into the timber business as well. The family's holdings totaled over 22,000 acres in Marion and Sumter counties.

Trusten P. Drake Jr. was appointed to the then powerful State Road Board in 1949, and he drew state attention to four-laning U.S. Highway 441/301/27 and re-routing it to Pine Street, the first four-lane road in Ocala. The four-laning was criticized as diverting traffic away from downtown Ocala but was also the catalyst for Ocala's first shopping center, the Pine Street Plaza. Drake chaired the local Committee of 100, was a director of Munroe & Chambliss National Bank (now Bank of America), president of the Chamber of Commerce and a member of the first board of directors of United Appeal of Marion County (now United Way of Marion County).



Trusten Junior's wife, Annie, was also a community leader as one of the original organizers of the Cub Scouts. She was known as "Mrs. Camellia" in the Pioneer Garden Club for her extensive cultivation of the flower. Both were also very active in the First Presbyterian Church.

Trusten and Mrs. Camellia had two sons — George MacKay "Kay"



Drake and Trusten “Trusty” Polk Drake III. “Trusty” and his wife, Charline, have three children — Lisa Drake Lancaster, Robert Polk Drake and Laura Drake. He followed his father as a director of Barnett Bank, a successor to Munroe & Chambliss Bank, and as a deacon and elder in the church. Trusty also served on the board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Kay Drake has three children — Holland, Ann Louise and MacKay. He now lives in Atlanta. Most of the agricultural land holdings of the Drake Family were deeded to the State of Florida in a conservation easement, which preserves the land in its natural state, protecting it from development.



Trusty and Kay went into the construction business and built numerous Ocala landmarks, including Ocala City Hall, the Central Florida Community College Administration and Fine Arts buildings, Golden Hills Turf and Golf Club, the Cascades Office Complex on Silver Springs Boulevard and the Greiner’s retail complex. The famous Big D Restaurant on South Pine Avenue was also owned by the Drakes, serving up breakfasts and hamburgers of great renown until it closed in the late ‘60s.

The MacKay Family

Linked closely to the Drake family was the MacKay family. Patriarch George MacKay



emigrated from Scotland in the 1870s by way of Jamaica and the Panama Canal, and it was while in Jamaica that George met and married Elizabeth Lewis. George's brother had purchased an orange grove in Florida, sight unseen, and George's first visit to the state was to inspect that orange grove.

Phosphate was discovered in the Dunnellon area while George was in Florida during the 1890s. In the 1920s, he invented the first phosphate crushing machine, which separated the phosphate from the harder flintrock. This innovation grossed him a fortune, which he invested in numerous businesses that many Ocalans will recognize today.

He quickly became the proprietor of a thriving construction company, then a foundry, and he designed most

of Florida's early phosphate plants. He started MacKay Funeral Home (the first licensed funeral home in Florida), which became Hiers and now Baxley Funeral Home. He owned MacKay Automotive Parts, which became Lovell Auto Parts and now NAPA Auto Parts, and built the Marion Hotel (Ocala's tallest building — now called the Ocala National Bank building). The family still owns orange groves in the Lake Weir area north of Ocklawaha, and they once claimed the land now known as Silver Springs Shores.

George MacKay fathered seven children: George, Robert (a link to a fourth Ocala family), Reginald, Alfred ("Red"), Kenneth, Bessie (who became the link to a third Ocala family) and Annie (who married the elder Trusten Polk Drake). As with many large families, adversity struck when the oldest son, George, died in World War I. The second son, Robert, was seriously wounded. Alfred took over MacKay Construction Company and MacKay Funeral Home; Kenneth MacKay Sr., purchased MacKay Lumber Company and MacKay Auto Parts, and the monthly payments supported the now elderly George and Elizabeth MacKay.

Kenneth "Buddy" MacKay Jr. was elected to the Florida Legislature in 1968, the Florida Senate in 1974 and U.S. Congress in 1982, where he served until 1988. He joined the law firm of Steele Hector & Davis in Miami, and was elected Lieutenant Governor under Governor Lawton Chiles in 1990. He served out Lawton Chiles' term as governor upon Chiles' sudden death. In 1998, he ran for Governor and lost to Jeb Bush, whereupon he joined the Clinton administration as a trade representative in Latin America.

Buddy and his wife, Anne Selph, first lived in a house on N.E. Third Street, just across from the cemetery, and had four children — Kenneth III, John, Ben and Andy. (They later moved to a home on Southeast Eighth Street built by his great-grandfather George, and now live on family property at Lake Weir).

Kenneth III started his business career while in high school, making deliveries to various law offices from Florida Title & Abstract (now First American Title). He graduated from Furman University in 1982 with a degree in business administration and was rehired by John Lane of Florida Title to search titles.

Kenneth earned his MBA from UF in 1986 and was hired by the Orlando American Pioneer Savings & Loan Association in their real estate arm. There, he met his future wife, Cindy, on a blind date, and they were married in 1989. But John Lane eventually called him back to Ocala, this time with the idea that he would buy out Lane, who wanted to retire.

Ken saw changes about to happen in the title business, and in 1998 he sold to First American Title based in California, staying on as vice president and area manager. Now Ken is an investor in limited partnership real estate holdings and helps his dad with the remaining 60 acres of orange groves and 70 head of cattle. He is a director of Nature Coast Bank and Gateway Bank. Ken and Cindy have three children — Kenneth H. MacKay IV “Mack,” Ted and Lilli.

The Taylor-Collins Family

The largest holder of land in the area has been the Taylor-Collins family. William D. Taylor migrated to Florida from North Carolina in 1887, when the area had extensive hardwoods and pine timber — the building blocks in accumulating great wealth for many. Along with owning and harvesting timber, William Taylor created Taylor Mills, providing building products to the area from 1890-1920.

William had three sons — James “Jim” J., John H., and William — and two daughters — Mary and Margaret. Jim took over Taylor Enterprises in 1920 and consolidated several holdings, including a wire-bound box manufacturing business, an ice-making business and a citrus packing business under the name of Ocala Manufacturing, Ice & Packing Company, located in what is now known as Tuscawilla Park. Ocala Manufacturing was the area’s largest employer. Residents used the whistle from the plant to gauge the time of day. The highly successful Seminole Stores, now owned by the Branch family, were also organized by Jim Taylor.

Jim has two children: Martha, whose mother was Mae Linton Taylor, and Jimmy, whose mother was Katherine Taylor. The family lived on a farm, which fronted what is now Fort King Street and included “Taylor Pond” just south of their two-story brick home.

Jimmy attended Harvard University but was killed in 1947 on C.R. 25 north of Ocklawaha, not far from family-owned orange groves. Martha married Alex Collins from Tallahassee in 1933 at the First Presbyterian Church in Ocala, and Alex took over the day-to-day management of the Taylor holdings prior to serving in World War II. Martha and Alex had two children — Darien Bailey Ferguson and Alexander M. “Zandy” Collins Jr. An accomplished painter, Martha selected many area outdoor scenes as her subjects, along with the flowers she loved. Jim Taylor died in 1958 of a heart attack following surgery.

Taylor Enterprises and later Ocala Manufacturing owned substantial commercial real estate in the Ocala area, including the first airport in Ocala (where the Target Store and various auto dealers now stand). The present Ocala International Airport still carries the name “Jim Taylor Field.” Also owned by Ocala Manufacturing were downtown buildings such as the original JC Penney and Sears buildings, which stood across from the Marion Hotel until the 1960s. Taylor-Collins’ holdings also included extensive orange groves in the Lake Weir area, which despite crippling freezes in the 1980s are still productive, timberlands in the Burbank area just north of Silver Springs and the land that is now the Country Club of Ocala.

All three generations of the Taylor-Collins family were committed to public service. Jim, Alex and Zandy sat on the Ocala City Council, and both Alex and Zandy were chairs of the Chamber of Commerce. Alex was the first campaign chairman of the fledgling United Appeal (now United Way) in 1961 and 1962, and Zandy chaired the Economic Development Council. Jim was an original organizer of the Bonita Club near Yankeetown, a private fishing and recreation place, which still operates today.

The Taylor-Collins holdings consist of approximately 25,000 acres of timberland in Dixie and Flagler counties, actively managed by Jim Taylor’s great-grandsons, Jim and Winston Bailey, sons of Darien Bailey Ferguson. Winston is on the board of Community Bank and Trust Company in Ocala. Zandy’s son, Chuck, lives in Ocala and has two sons of his own, and his older brother, Lex, lives in Tallahassee with two sons. Lex’s younger brother, Craig, lives in Orlando, also with two sons. Alex “Papa” Collins died in 1991, and tragically his son Zandy died in 1992. Martha Collins passed away in 2005 at age 91.

The Camp Family

One of the most colorful and flamboyant great Ocala families was the Camp family from Franklin, Va. According to author Parke Rouse, Jr. in his book *The Timber Tycoons*, William Nelson Camp was one of 10 children, and he split off from Union Camp, a giant timber and

paper company in Virginia, in 1891 to come to Florida. By 1907, he had Florida holdings of 55,000 acres of pine timber.

Camp had an extensive head of beef cattle, and to supply cheap grazing land for them, he bought Merritt Island on Florida's east coast without knowing it was infested with mosquitoes. He quickly sold the land at a substantial profit, and it eventually became the site of NASA's Kennedy Space Center. After his death in 1911, his family sold a power company he had created on the Withlacoochee River west of Dunnellon to Florida Power Corporation (now Progress Energy) for \$1.5 million.

Florida's phosphate boom lured William N. "Bill" Camp to Albion, northwest of Gainesville, where he began mining operations. By 1903, Bill, a Civil War veteran, and his wife, Texie, moved to Ocala to be near the phosphate deposits in Dunnellon. They had nine children, including Robert Clifton Camp, Jack Camp and William Nelson Camp, Jr., and built a home on Ocala's historic Fifth Street. Several other homes for Camp sons and daughters were built in the area, including the Georgian style brick mansion on Fifth Street, which was restored by current owners Dr. and Mrs. Craig Kuykendall. The Jack Camp Sr. house at 915 S.E. Fifth Street, restored by Mike and Paulette Millhorn, was the birthplace of Clarence Camp. Across the street is the Robert Clifton Camp house, now owned by Dr. Sol and Linda Anker.

The phosphate boom went bust in the late 1890s, but Bill bought up plenty of cheap property. Before the 1907 financial panic, his holdings were estimated at 150,000 acres in Marion, Citrus, Hernando, Sumter and Columbia counties. Eventually, he bought more grazing land for his cattle in Alachua County on what is known as Payne's Prairie, which the family sold to the State of Florida as a wildlife sanctuary in 1970. The property now known as Silver Springs Shores and earlier the Godfrey Ranch was also part of the Camps' expanded grazing land.

Public service was important to the Camp family, evidenced by the elder Clarence's leadership in developing the Florida State Golf Association, where he served as president from 1913-1940. Jack's son, Clarence "Mank" Camp II, served a term in the Florida House of Representatives (where he exposed alleged bribery), was a leader in the success of the Southeastern Fat Stock Show and Sale, president of the Chamber of Commerce and third campaign chairman for the United Appeal in 1963. He was also known for his generosity to the Children's Home Society.

Robert Camp became a well-known painter, whose works have been exhibited in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. These paintings are also in the collection of the Nelson Rockefeller family. It was Robert who designed the official Marion County seal depicting a Native American with arms raised toward the sun holding an orange and a sheath of corn.

Still living in Ocala is the daughter of Henry Camp, another of Jack's sons, who also happens to be the namesake of the Henry N. Camp Invitational Golf Tournament held at Ocala Municipal Golf Course since 1952. Ivy Camp Bitzer is the granddaughter of Judge William

Adam Hocker, the only person from Marion County to be a Florida Supreme Court Justice. (Judge Hocker was also the father of Alice Walton Hocker, who married Trusten Polk Drake Sr. in 1902.) Ivy, the family historian, chronicles this vast, illustrious family and its many branches. Her grandmother, Elizabeth Hocker, organized and was the first president of the Ocala Woman's Club. In 1912 she was elected president of the Florida Federation of Women's clubs, and in 1916 she was the first woman in Florida elected to public office — four years before the 19th Amendment granted women's suffrage — for a position on the Ocala school board.

Mank Camp adopted four children — Gene, Gay, Jack and Jackie. Gene and Jackie still live in Ocala today.

The Ray Family

Walter Ray, who came to Florida during the 1880s, began his fortune in the turpentine industry with naval stores, which were tapped from Florida pine trees. At one time his company, called Clark-Ray-Johnson, owned or serviced 400,000 acres in northeastern Florida. Any land on the current Fifth Street between Ninth and Eleventh Avenues not owned by the Camps was owned by the Ray family.

Walter Ray had four children: Walter Carlyle Ray Sr., Ruby, Pearl and Hugh. Their home was originally in the Martel-Cotton Plant area west of Ocala, but in 1922, after all the timber was cut in the area, the family moved into town. Oldest son Carl built the Ocala home at 1010 E. Fifth Street for his mother and father (now owned by attorney Charles Ruse), and one for his own family (now owned by Kathy Perry).

In 1924 Carl saw an opportunity to develop a tourist attraction at the first-magnitude Silver Springs. Ed Carmichael owned the 80 acres of land surrounding the springs, and after repeated offers to lease it, which Carmichael turned down, Carl discovered his friend Shorty Davidson was also a bidder. The two joined forces, and along with advertising help from Carl's brother Hugh, the springs became the oldest tourist attraction in Florida, with tourists traveling round the world to ride on Glass Bottom boats and see Ross Allen wrestle alligators and milk rattlesnakes.

Eventually, with financial support from father Walter Ray, the Ray and Davidson partnership would own 4,000 acres of land on both sides of the Silver River, in addition to leasing the 80 acres at the springs' headwaters from Carmichael. The land just north of the springs adjoined land owned by the Taylor family.

After college and World War II, Carl's sons, Buck and Bill Blue, took over the operation of Silver Springs as general manager and public relations/assistant general manager respectively. They were instrumental in attracting the movies made there, as well as the unique gift shops, but in 1955, they watched in horror as a fire overtook all the buildings at the headwaters. Buck and Bill Blue rebuilt the property and sold it to ABC-Paramount for \$7 million in 1962. Today the property is owned by the State of Florida and operated by an entertainment investment company, which has turned over management multiple times.

The Ray family has had a long involvement on the board of directors of Commercial Bank & Trust Company in Ocala, now known as SunTrust Bank. Pearl Ray Long's husband Clyde was a vice president and founded the trust department. He suffered a heart attack at a young age and was forced to retire in 1950, but he remained a partner in an import/export business in Jacksonville. He was a long-time elder in the First Presbyterian Church of Ocala. Pearl was a founder of the Ocala Community Concert Association, a musical organization that continues to thrive today. Bill Blue and his wife Miriam have four children — Marguerite Ray Blocker, William B. Junior, operator of Sport City, Miriam Ray Mitchum and Edward M. Ray.

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