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Camp Mack Inducted Into Polk County History and Heritage Trail Guide

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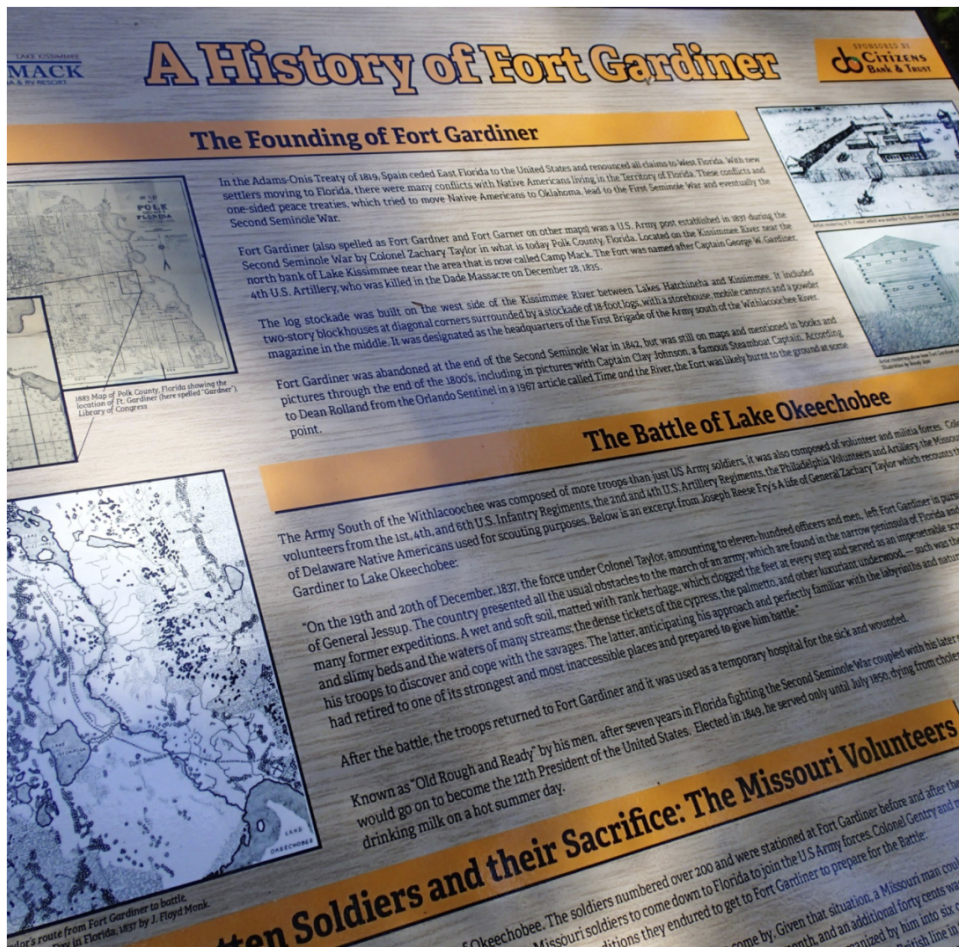
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Camp Mack Inducted Into Polk County History and Heritage Trail Guide

by James Coulter

Along the gentle waters that snake past the Spanish moss-covered oak trees by the banks of the Kissimmee River sits Camp Mack River Resort. 100 years ago, the place was a small outpost where steamboats used to churn along and stop. One century earlier, it was a fort that housed soldiers during the Second Seminole War.



Fort Gardiner, south of the site where Camp Mack currently resides, was an army post during the Second Seminole War. The fort was established on Dec. 2, 1837 by Col. Zachary Taylor, and named after Captain George Washington Gardiner. It served as a supply depot, and later housed the 4th and 6th Infantry Regiments during the Battle of Okeechobee.

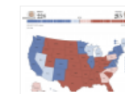
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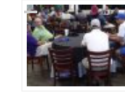
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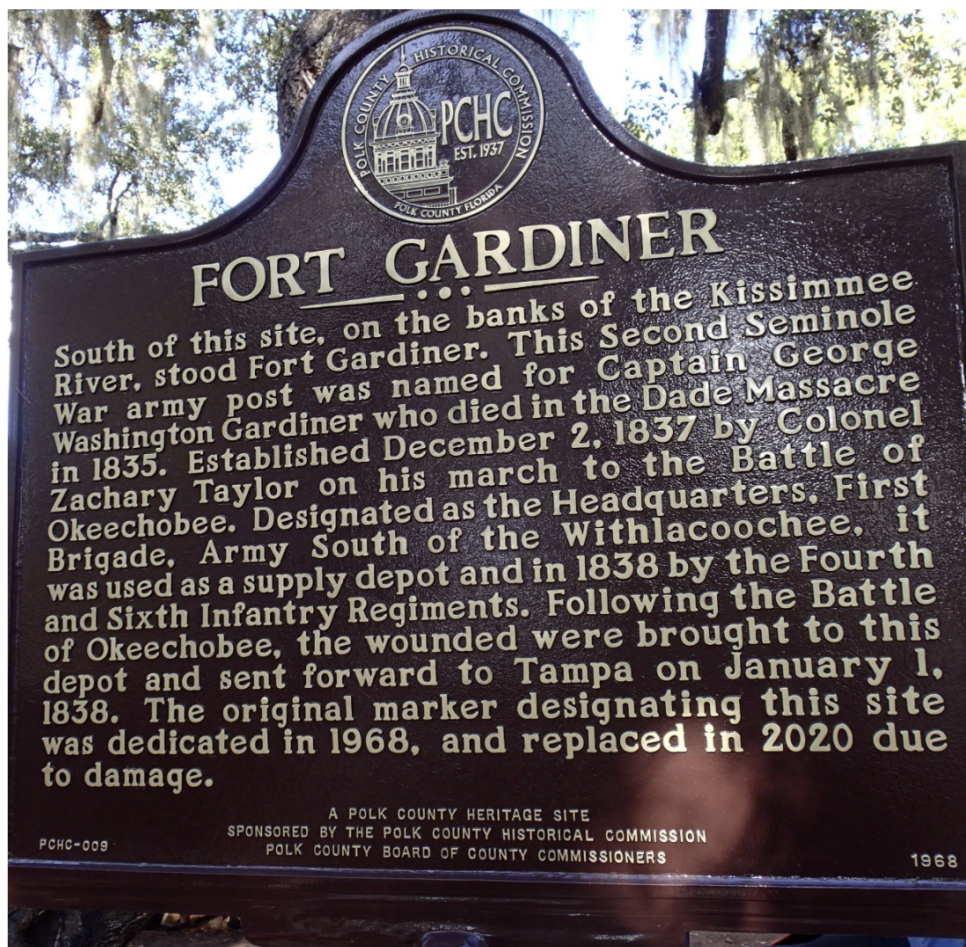
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Camp Mack Inducted Into Polk County History and Heritage Trail Guide
November 4, 2020



For its rich history ranging from an army post to a steamboat landing, Camp Mack was officially designated as a location along the Polk County History and Heritage Trail Guide on Saturday with a dedication ceremony during the Rock n Brews BBQ Competition.





Encompassing more than 150 years of history, the Heritage Trail consists of hundreds of historical landmarks, buildings, and other sites across Polk County. These historic sites include cemeteries, museums, buildings, churches, schools, and even whole communities.

The trail begins with the entire history detailed within the Polk County History Museum in Bartow, branching out to countless other sites in cities throughout the county. Notable landmarks include the Ritz Theater in Winter Haven and Florida Southern College in Lakeland.

"The Heritage Trail reminds us that we are a land of small communities partly defined by places with lyrical names such as Golden Bow, Cherry Pocket, Masterpiece Gardens, and Lake Hammock," said Myrtice Young, Historic Preservation Manager for the Polk County History Center. "These places evoke memories, stir emotions, and remind us of days gone back. These names define our sense of place."

Bill Braswell, Chairman for the Polk County Board of Commission, attended the dedication ceremony on behalf of the other county commissioners. He loves being able to attend such events, as it allows him the opportunity to discuss his personal passion for local history.

"Today is a Florida day out on the oak and by the river," he said. "It is a chamber of commerce day. It is great to be here, great to have you here. Every chance I get to talk about Polk County, I want to talk about the history [and] all the things we are doing out here."

Encompassing more than 200,000 square miles, Polk County is a large community consisting of millions of people, a place rich with history and heritage hidden in every brick of every building and in the bark of every tree.

He especially loved the growth occurring in the part of the county near Camp Mack, especially with the camp under new management and hosting such events to draw in countless tourists and guests. With the addition of the Heritage Trail, he hopes the area draws in more people and more growth with it.

"On behalf of the Board County of Commissioners, it is my pleasure to be with you today to celebrate the new Camp Mack Historical Site as part of Polk County Heritage Trail," he said.

"Congratulations and thank you to Camp Mack for a job well down to preserve local history," he continued. "Ultimately, it improves the quality of life for our residents, and that is what it is all about. PC Board of Commission recognizes the value of heritage tourism and historical preservation in our county. Camp Mack is a historic site."

Mark Ellert, President for Guy Harvey Outpost Resorts, which owns Camp Mack, commended all of the commissioners, historians, and researchers who helped designate Camp Mack as a location along the trail.

Upon the discovery of a keystone, it was believed that Camp Mack was the official location of Fort Gardner. This discovery led to other discoveries which uncovered the history of the area and helped designate its inclusion in the trail.

"Once we started pulling on that string, a lot of history began to unfold," Ellert said. "It is really all that history that got us to a point where the marker was moved over there because it was determined that this was the actual site of Fort Gardner, and now we have a whole history trail."

Camp Mack, A Guy Harvey Lodge, Marina, and RV Resort is located at 14900 Camp Mack Rd, Lake Wales, FL 33898. For more information about the Polk County Heritage Trail, visit their website at: <https://www.polk-county.net/history-center/history-and-heritage-trail>





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