

A glance at Lincolnville by Valerie Etienne-Leveille



An 1885 map of St. Augustine showing the location of Lincolnville. (State Archives of Florida)

Lincolnville was called Africa or Little Africa and was a settlement that was developed by recently freed slaves in 1866. Lincolnville was established on the land of the former Yallaha Plantation (In the marshes of Maria Sanchez Creek west of St Augustine). Lincolnville expanded rapidly by 1886 due to the enormous investments that were developed in the city of St Augustine⁽¹⁾.

Although many history books mistakenly state that Black people first arrived on these shores in 1619 at Jamestown as slaves, Blacks were present with Pedro Menendez at the founding of St Augustine in 1565. The St Augustine Cathedral Parish archives include the first recorded birth of a Black child in the United States in 1606. Therefore, St Augustine is not only the nation's oldest city, it also includes the oldest African-American heritage of any continuous settlement in the continental United States⁽²⁾.

Lincolnville is home to the largest concentration of late Victorian era buildings in the city. It was the launching place for civil rights demonstrations in the 1960s that changed America and inspired the world. Because of this rich and important background, Lincolnville was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1991.

The famed abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, spoke here in 1889 at Genovar's Opera House on St George Street⁽³⁾.

Today, the neighborhood offers many sites to explore. It has become home to many artists and students of Flagler College. The Anniversary to Commemorate the Civil Rights Demonstrations (ACCORD) has placed historical markers at notable sites throughout the area⁽⁴⁾.



The First Baptist Church of St. Augustine was established through the efforts of Mrs. Hannah Jordan in 1872. This building was erected in 1915. During the 1960s, it was a place for mass meetings involving the N.A.A.C.P. (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and S.C.L.C. (Southern Christian Leadership Conference). The church is considered the cradle of the civil rights movement in St. Augustine.

Courtesy of the Jaxson⁽¹⁾



The Lincolnville Museum & Cultural Center is an African American history museum sharing the history of Lincolnville's growth from a cluster of plantation shacks into a Gullah Geechee neighborhood listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum is housed in the former Excelsior School building. Constructed in 1925, Excelsior was a school for Black students during Segregation.

Courtesy of the Jaxson⁽¹⁾



St. Marys Missionary Baptist Church was organized in 1875. This building was completed in 1937 and is the site where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. announced on June 9, 1964 that he would participate in a sit-in at a St. Augustine motel restaurant. Because of this, St. Mary's is known as the "Birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement."

Courtesy of the Jaxson⁽¹⁾

References

1. The Jaxson. (2020, April 8). *St. Augustine's Lincolnville Historic District*. [https://www.thejaxsonmag.com/article/st-augustines-lincolnville-historic-district/#:~:text=Originally%20called%20Africa%20or%20Little,Augustine%20in%201866.&text=Soon%2C%20this%20E2%80%9COutside%20the%20Walls,Geechee\)%20became%20known%20as%20Lincolnville](https://www.thejaxsonmag.com/article/st-augustines-lincolnville-historic-district/#:~:text=Originally%20called%20Africa%20or%20Little,Augustine%20in%201866.&text=Soon%2C%20this%20E2%80%9COutside%20the%20Walls,Geechee)%20became%20known%20as%20Lincolnville).
2. Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center. (n.d.). *The Road to Black History Runs Through Lincolnville*. <https://www.lincolnvillemuseum.org/about>
3. Nolan, David. (n.d.). *St. Augustine, Florida: Birthplace of African American History*. Visitstaugustine.com. https://www.visitstaugustine.com/history/black_history/introduction/black_community.php
4. Kaylor, Lisa. (2018, August 28). *Explore History in St. Augustine's Lincolnville Neighborhood*. Wheretraveler. <https://www.wheretraveler.com/jacksonville/play/explore-history-st-augustines-lincolnville-neighborhood>