

A Walking Tour

OF DOWNTOWN LAKELAND

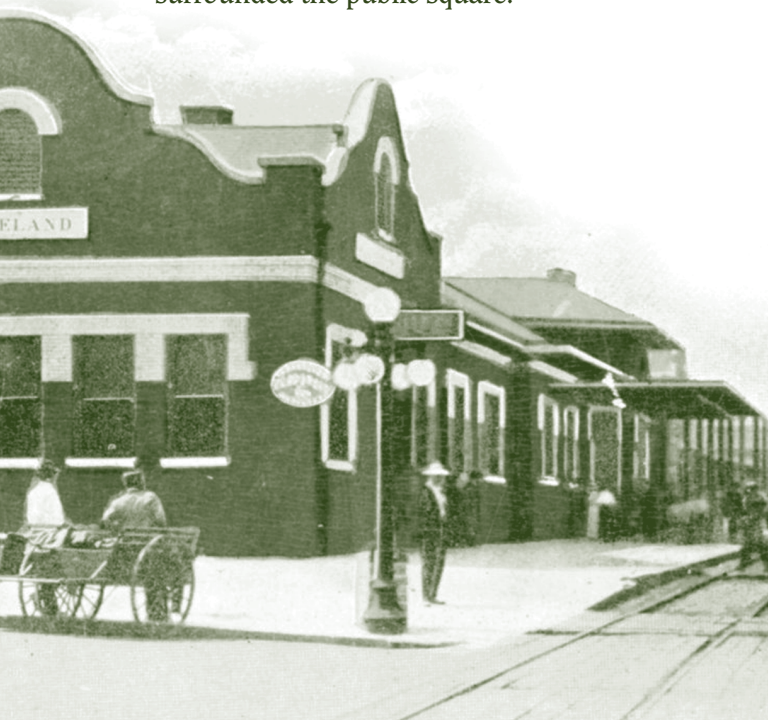


**Including the
Munn Park Historic District
and
“Antiques District”**

D O W N T O W N
L A K E L A N D . . .

In 1881 a Kentucky businessman, Abraham Munn, purchased eighty acres of Polk County land without seeing the property. While the railroad was not built yet, it soon passed through the center of Munn's property. He then assured himself a location to develop a town by sending his son to lay out a commercial subdivision.

From its establishment, Lakeland was a transportation center, growing and prospering due to its central location. The South Florida Railroad passed through in 1884 on its way from Kissimmee to Tampa. This isolated section of inland Florida was now attractive to settlers. As new residents came to Lakeland and the local economy grew, commercial establishments developed. Munn provided lots and blocks adjoining the railroad line. He also provided a railroad passenger station, a public square and a hotel. Wood-frame commercial buildings surrounded the public square.



A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In 1902 the character of the district began to change. "Permanent" masonry buildings were constructed. This transition from frame to block and brick was greatly accelerated when, in 1904, a major fire leveled the entire block east of Munn Park. While shopkeepers set up shelters in the park, new stores were constructed.

Between 1903 and 1913, Lakeland's population swelled from 1,000 to 8,000. The downtown commercial area grew. Public services, such as brick paving and electric lights, a city hall and a fire department were added.

During the Boom Years of the mid-1920s, an average of three buildings were completed every twenty-four hours. Before the boom ended in 1926, Lakeland had 25,000 residents. For the first time, high-rise buildings were constructed. Stylistic influences changed the architecture and the Mediterranean Revival style was seen even on small storefronts.

Automobiles filled the streets, and local officials wished to create a grand entrance from the east on the Old Dixie Highway into their growing city. The Lake Mirror Promenade was completed in 1928 providing a grand entry with the backdrop of the urban skyline.



HISTORICAL MUNN PARK . . .

The Munn Park historic district is a commercial district in the heart of downtown Lakeland, Florida. The district is significant because it contains the oldest and most concentrated collection of commercial vernacular architecture, as well as the first public open space in the City.



Established abruptly with the coming of the South Florida Railroad in 1884, the district grew rapidly as a regional center of transportation, commerce, and government. Early in the district's evolution, community planning played a part in providing streets, sidewalks, utilities, and open space.

Over the next 50 years, as growth greatly accelerated, local government became increasingly sophisticated as a provider of services and amenities. But it was the 1920s which led to the district's most important public amenity, the Civic Center on Lake Mirror with its Promenade. Designed by the noted landscape architect Charles W. Leavitt, it provided a grand entrance to the Munn Park District and helps create the unique character that exists today.

Thus, Munn Park Historic District represents the first fifty years of Lakeland's development as a community, a period of rapid growth which established Lakeland as a regional center of commerce in Central Florida.

The Downtown Lakeland/Munn Park Historic District is Lakeland's most significant site historically and architecturally. It has been the focal point of business, social, political, and entertainment activities since this community's inception. It provides a rich source of history for today's residents and visitors and is a tangible link to the most dynamic period of growth in the city's history.



Walking Tour

To follow the Downtown Lakeland/Munn Park Historic District Walking Tour, refer to the numbered sites on the map.

Each number corresponds to a description below.

The entire tour takes approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

1. Munn Park

Bounded by Main Street, Cedar Street, Tennessee Avenue and Kentucky Avenue

1884

Since Lakeland's inception, Munn Park has been the City's Town Square. It was set apart for public use in 1884 and included walks, a bandstand, and a well. The first site the new residents or visitors saw as they stepped off the train, it was the location of countless band performances, political speeches, and a refuge for shop owners. In 1910, a Confederate monument was erected. In the early 1960s, Munn Park was redeveloped with a lighted "waltzing waters" fountain. Munn Park was renovated in 1990.

2. The Railroad Station Site

Cedar Street Parking Lot

The railroad came to Lakeland in June 1883 with a camp established at Lake Wire by Herbert R. Drane. The site on Munn Park's northern edge is the location of three generations of railroad stations. A bus transfer station was built here in 1961 and a new bus station was built two blocks to the west in 1994.

3. Yarnall Building

118-222 East Pine Street

1920

The vernacular masonry building housed a moving and storage business, a bank, a beauty college and retail establishments. It was remodeled with a New Orleans flavor in the 1950s and then sympathetically restored in 1990.

4. Ford Motor Company Building

235-237 North Florida Avenue

1926

Built in 1926 this building originally served as a dealership for the Ford Motor Company and was one of Ford's first sales and service locations in Lakeland. The building is a simple masonry structure built in the Mediterranean vernacular style that was in vogue at the time. Architecturally, the building is characterized by a stucco finish, mission tile parapet and extended pilasters. In the last decade the structure was thoroughly renovated and is currently being used as an antiques store.

5. Union News Company Building

206-208 East Pine Street

circa 1910

Best viewed from across the street, this is an excellent example of an early storefront along Pine Street, Lakeland's first commercial district. In addition to the Union News Company, the building housed the American Restaurant, the Palace Market and the Pine Street Drugstore during the 1920s. The building was revitalized in 1991.

6. Clonts Building

228 East Pine Street

1903

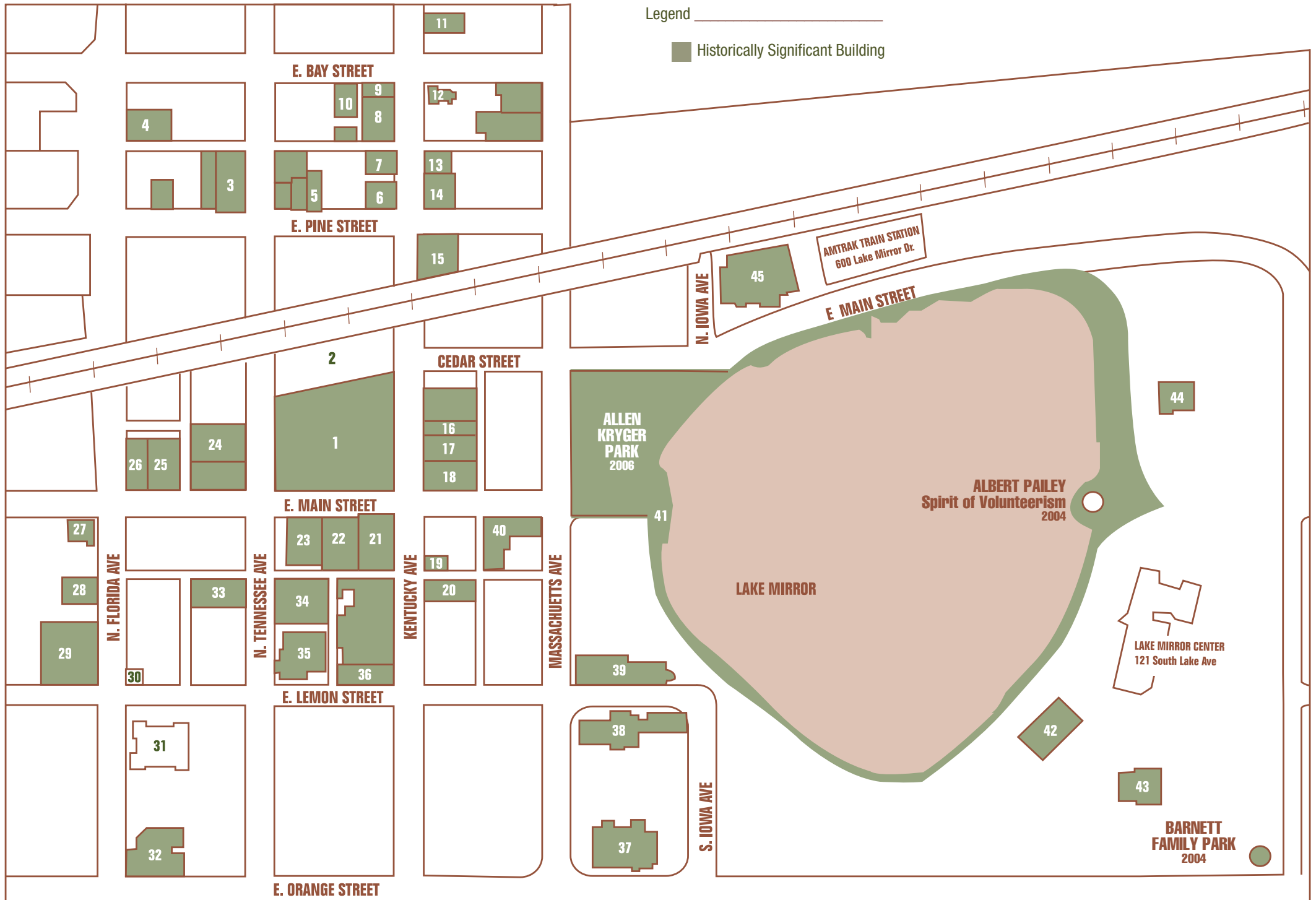
This significant building is a mainstay of the District. It housed clothing and dry goods



businesses during its early years, as well as cigar production on the second floor. In Richardsonian Romanesque style, it exhibits fine brick detailing, Corinthian capitals on pilasters, arched windows, dentil moldings, and a turret with a conical roof.

A Walking Tour of Downtown Lakeland

Including the Munn Park Historic District and "Antiques District"



7. Boswell Building

234 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1923

This brick building is the only three-story building in this portion of the district. It shows little alteration. Each level is clearly defined by the rows of paired windows.

8. Kinsinger Building and Strand Theatre

236-240½ North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1926

The ground floor of the Kinsinger Building has housed a variety of retail tenants and has served as the entrance to the Strand Theatre and the annex building directly west. The Placid Hotel was housed on the second floor. The exterior is Mediterranean and included an arched entrance. The light sockets from the marquee of the Strand are still visible. The theatre itself was never intended to be viewed from the outside (except for the marquee which was on Kentucky Avenue next to the alley), and the brick exterior (seen from the alley) is unadorned. The building was renovated in 1987.

9. Boswell and Kinsinger Building

256 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1920

This well-designed masonry building makes good use of its brick structural material, including panels, sills, and gable parapet. It was rehabilitated in 1993.

10. The Studebaker Building

211 Bay Street

circa 1925

Originally built in 1925 for use as an auto repair garage and sales showroom, it also housed the Crescent Club, an active social group. This masonry vernacular building exhibits important features including an arched entrance with French doors, small light clerestory, pointed one-half story pilasters and stepped front parapet. The Studebaker Building was rehabilitated in 1993.

11. The Orange Blossom Hotel

321 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1916

The Orange Blossom Hotel is the last remaining railroad hotel in Lakeland. At one time there were fifteen rooming houses for blue-collar workers in the City. Built in 1916 as a wood frame rooming house, the only reason for its existence was the railroad and its workers. The Craftsman style architecture features simple lines with a tin roof and wide covered porches. On the east side of the property a small wash house still stands. The building was renovated in 1995 for retail and office space.

12. Guideon Apartment Building

255 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1914

This frame vernacular building is the only original single-family residential structure in the district. This two and one half story residence combines the qualities of Victorian gables, Colonial Revival soffit with modillions and cornice and Bungalow influences reflected in porch columns and piers. Altered in 1970 with additions to the rear of the structure, it was revitalized in 1992 and served as a bed and breakfast and restaurant for several years as well as an antique shop.

13. Royal Café Building

207-211 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1913

This building, constructed of rusticated block with brick on the street front, is one of the oldest buildings in the district. It reflects the architecture during the growth of downtown between 1900 and 1920, pre-boom times. A restaurant was on the first floor and a hotel on the second floor.

14. Bowyer Building

201-205 North Kentucky Avenue

1902

In 1907 R.M. Marler opened the Electric Theater, Lakeland's first movie house, in this building. The first floor has served retail purposes, and the second floor housed the Hotel Savoy in the teens and the Hotel Caroline during the 1920s. A central parapet proclaims "Bowyer Bldg. -1902." The building still has a wooden storefront and wood floors. It was renovated in 1993.

15. Adams Building (Bryant Building)

221 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1908

Originally a three story building, the Adams Building was predominantly constructed of rusticated block. A series of fires caused the top floors to be removed and the widening of the alley, which became Pine Street, took another 20 feet of the building. In its early days, the Bridges Hotel occupied the second and third floors. Polk County's first self-serve grocery store was located here in the 1920s.

16. Raymondo Building

115 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1905

This was the residence of Mr. Raymondo, one of Lakeland's early developers. The unusual scale and asymmetrical façade are a result of the removal of the southern three-quarters of the original building to make way for the Kress Building. The building is Italianate. It was renovated in 1986.

17. Kress Building

109 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1929

One of a series of S.H. Kress & Co. stores, the building is of an elaborate Renaissance Revival style. The first floor has a monumental twenty-foot ceiling. Four urn-like ornaments and other decorations adorn the façade. The architect, L. Seibert, was an outstanding designer of terracotta. He moved to Lakeland when he retired. The building was rehabilitated in 1982.

18. Bryant Block

101 North Kentucky Avenue

circa 1924

Built by Robert Bryant, a member of a prominent Lakeland family during the 20th century, this building has two street front Neo-Georgian facades. The dark red exterior contrasts with the cast stone quoins and window lintels. A drugstore occupied one portion of the building for 48 years. It has an annex to the east that is of the Commercial style. Both were renovated in 1988.

19. Munn Annex

110 South Kentucky Avenue

1907

Lakeland's founding family built this building in 1907 as an annex to the Munn Building located on the southeast corner of Main Street and Kentucky Avenue. It housed the Postal Telegraph Office. Its symmetrical façade is of the Italianate style with arched upper story windows and a cornice with modillions. The owner and occupant renovated it in 1986.

20. The Casino/Palace Theatre

112 South Kentucky Avenue

1913

The Casino, later known as the Palace Theater, was one of the city's earliest full-size movie theaters. Built in 1913, it was part of the Thelma Hotel, which extended south along Kentucky Avenue to Lemon Street. The Hotel burned in 1962 leaving only the theater building standing. The Mediterranean façade is distinguished by three arched (arcaded) windows with hood molds, keystones, and Corinthian colonnades. The façade was probably the building's second, since the Mediterranean influence was not seen locally until the 1920s.

21. Deen-Bryant Building

221 East Main Street

circa 1912

Overlooking Munn Park, this building has serviced retail and office businesses. It was owned and occupied for close to 70 years by Thomas W. Bryant, one of Lakeland's most influential civic and political leaders. The style is Italianate, evidenced by a heavy bracketed mission tile mansard. The tan brick contrasts with the wood brackets and red tile. This building's age, condition, location and design make it a local landmark. It was renovated in 2000.

22. Skipper and Elliston Buildings

211 and 217½ East Main Street

circa 1912

The two story Elliston Building is of the commercial style, while the three story Skipper Building is Sullivan-esque Commercial. The first floor of the Skipper Building was used as a post office under the direction of J.L. Skipper, Postmaster. Both of these fine buildings were hidden under modern metal panels. You can now see the tri-partite windows of the Skipper Building since restoration was completed in 2000.

23. The Kentucky Building

205 - 209½ East Main Street

circa 1903

This was the first masonry building south of the railroad and housed the agents of Abraham Munn, who was from Kentucky. The Italianate façade was altered in the 1940's and the balcony was closed in.

24. The Autotel

111 North Tennessee Avenue

circa 1927

The Autotel was one of the first and finest auto garages in Lakeland as well as the State of Florida. Built of poured-in-place reinforced concrete, the Florida Boom time masonry vernacular building housed 240 cars. In later years, the building was used for a restaurant and retail shop. In 1992 the rehabilitation to its present use as a bank, preserved the large concrete columns in the interior space. The fenestrations were also preserved as was the metal canopy on the front east façade.

25. Hartsell Building

106 - 114 East Main Street

circa 1925

This E. C. Hosford designed building contains a second-story atrium most likely built to give outside window exposure to offices in the second floor. This building is a vernacular composition of diverse architectural elements creating a complex but functionally and stylistically integrated façade.

26. Old City Hall

100 East Main Street

circa 1913

This building served as local government headquarters from 1913 to 1926. It housed city offices, the fire department, and jail. It is Italian Villa style with ornamental brackets and fine brick and stone detail. The tower was removed from the southeast corner but rebuilt during the sympathetic restoration in 1987.

27. C.V. McClurg Building (Peoples Bank)

101 South Florida Avenue

circa 1924

This building originally housed a grocery store, offices, and the Masonic Hall. In the mid 1920s it was renovated and became the home of two successive financial institutions. It was altered in the Art Deco style in 1942. In 1983, it was renovated with a brick façade.

28. W. Fisk Johnson Building

113- 115 South Florida Avenue

1912

This building has been used for retail purposes throughout the years. It was the first historic renovation in the District in 1983.

29. Polk Theatre and Office Building

121 South Florida Avenue

1927

Originally known as the Melton Theatre, it was Lakeland's largest and most elaborate theatre. It was designed for both stage shows and movies. Many famous names performed at the Polk, including Sally Rand & Fans, Tim Mix and his horse Tony, and Elvis Presley. In 1989 many of the Munchkins from the Wizard of Oz appeared on stage to commemorate the 50 year anniversary of that film. The exterior style is Italian Renaissance. Note the Palladian window over the marquee and the rosettes. The interior is designed like a Mediterranean village and twinkling stars adorn the ceiling, creating a total atmosphere for entertaining. The theatre was purchased in 1984 by Polk County Landmarks, now Polk Theatres, Inc., which has renovated it. This building is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

30. South Historic District Marker (one of six)

NE corner of Florida Avenue and Lemon Street

These historic markers are placed along the boundaries of the Munn Park Historic District which was created in 1980, certified in 1983 and listed in the National Register in 1997.

31. The SunTrust Plaza

210 South Florida Avenue

1999

This is an example of compatible new construction in downtown Lakeland.

32. The Oates Building

230 South Florida Avenue

circa 1903

The Italianate style building, designed by local architect E. C. Hosford, was built in 1925 to accommodate the rapidly expanding Oates Furniture Company. Due to rapid growth, this was the third location for the furniture company in a short period of time. Therefore, the Oates brothers decided to construct a foundation that would support a six story building, should they need more space. To allow for the addition of another floor, they built the third floor with a thirty foot ceiling so that an additional floor could be added between the third and fourth floors. A service addition was constructed on the north side of the building to meet the building code requirements. Outside the Munn Park Historic District, it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

33. Florida National Bank Building

113 South Tennessee Avenue

circa 1942

This is Lakeland's only true Art Deco building. The hard, vertical edges are emphasized by the synthetic stone veneer and marble finish. The interior is splendid with a high wood coffered ceiling and ornate gilded iron teller windows. Interior rehabilitation was completed in 1987.

34. Vanity Fair Arcade

114 South Tennessee Avenue **circa 1924**

This is a 1920s boom building. It was a true arcade with entrances from both the alley and the street. Its central corridor was lined with retail shops. It was altered in the Art Deco style during the 1940's. It was renovated in 2001.



35. Federal Building

124 South Tennessee Avenue **1917**

This was Lakeland's first separate post office building. It is of Roman architectural elements; all scaled to the size of the building. A plan entablature runs the length of the building, as does a penetrated parapet. (Addition to north circa 1931)



36. Marble Arcade

129 South Kentucky Avenue **1926**

Best viewed from across Kentucky Avenue, this was Lakeland's first high rise office building and the most prestigious office location for more than 40 years. It is of the Sullivanesque style. Its ground floor entrance and arcade are clearly distinguished from its upper floor office levels, which are finished in a frieze with swags and a balustrade parapet. The original gold veined, black Italian marble that lined the ground floor was removed and given away during a 1958 remodeling project. Renovation was completed in 1988.



37. Lakeland City Hall

228 South Massachusetts Avenue **1926**

This grand Mediterranean Revival public building is well detailed, including an exterior cornice scraffito frieze, bracketed eaves, ornate plastered pediment and the tower. The interior boasts a wood coffered ceiling, tile floors, and wood wainscoting. The northern half of the building is a fine sympathetic addition completed in 1991.

38. All Saints' Episcopal Church

128 South Massachusetts Avenue **1923**

The building is a fine example of the Spanish Mission style. This parish originated in nearby Acton in 1883 and moved to this location in 1892. The later additions are sympathetic to the original building, including the Parish Hall built in 1949, the Youth Hall built in 1961 and the Education and Administration addition in 1992.



39. New Florida Hotel (Lake Mirror Tower)

128 South Massachusetts Avenue **1926-1935**

Construction began on this building during the height of the Florida Boom, but suffered when the Boom went bust and was not completed until 1935. It was designed as a resort and tourist hotel. This nine-story building is finished with textured stucco and has arched ground floor windows and entrances originally used for retail stores. Note the bell tower, medallions, balconettes, and mission tile roof. Renovation was completed in 2004.

40. Hotel Lakeland Terrace

329 East Main Street **1924**

Like the New Florida Hotel, this hotel was a resort and tourist high-rise. It was the City's first "grand" hotel. As part of the original opening festivities, Henry D. Roland, the "human fly" climbed the Hotel with his toes, fingertips and eyebrows. The Terrace combines the Mediterranean influence with more classical design elements. The ground floor and mezzanine employ many oversized arched windows, creating an arcade appearance. The main entrance is distinguished by four iconic columns, swags, relief sculpture, cornice, and a large swan's neck pediment. A large cornice and a massive curvilinear gable parapet with large urn-like sculptures set off the upper two floors. This hotel is a great example of the Florida boom and its unbridled optimism. Sympathetic renovation of the entire hotel was completed in 1998.



41. Lake Mirror Promenade and Park

Bounded by Orange Street and Lake Mirror Drive

1928

As you descend Lemon Street, you will see Florida's most significant example of the City Beautiful Movement. It was designed by the noted landscape architect, Charles Wellford Leavitt. There is no doubt that the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition's Court of Honor was the model for the Promenade. Land and water are formalized using an ornate balustrade and seawall with classical ornamentation. The Promenade was part of the Civic Center which included a gazebo-like band stand, shuffleboard courts, and lawn bowling. The Promenade was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, noting both architectural and engineering significance. Its restoration has been the chief project of Historic Lakeland, Inc., with the Promenade itself completed in 1987.

42. The Hollis Garden

702 East Orange Street

2000

Through Mark and Lynn Hollis, whose vision and benevolence initiated this "centerpiece" for Lake Mirror Park, this ornamental garden was constructed in 2000 and is set in a new-classical environment. The Garden is a living monument to the botanical history of Florida where fresh spring waters sustain the trees and plants. Within the Garden is a Tuscan Gazebo, a spring water Grotto, a vine-covered trellis, and large garden Rooms. Patterned flowerbeds, sculptures, ornamental fountains, a lily pond, and elaborate entries open up this gift to Lakeland.

43. The Magnolia Building

706 East Orange Street 1938

Built in 1938 as a WPA project, this brick and stucco English manor style building was a departure from the typical Mediterranean and Spanish architecture. Known as the Lakeland Community Center, but referred to as the Tourist Club, it served as a recreation center and tourist headquarters. The Tourist Club was founded in 1923 and was a major attraction for winter



visitors in the 1930s and 1940s. Its membership reached close to 1,000 at that time. The Tourist Club moved into the Lakeland Community Center when it opened in February 1938. Activities at the community center included card games of all sorts, "Chatsew" groups, dances, picnics, teas, and assembly singing on Friday nights. The membership fee in 1938 was \$1.50 plus a "season" charge of an additional one-dollar for each person who attended the dances.

44. The Coca Cola Building

730 East Main Street

1937

Built in 1937, this two-story building is in the masonry vernacular style. The building's brick variations range from yellow to dark red and are contrasted by the use of natural finish cast stone for the entrance and recessed signs on the front and south façades. The sign has the scripted logo of Coca Cola with the trademark in the center flanked by singular bottles on each side with a deco motif. When constructed by the Coal Cola Company, it contained their most modern equipment which could bottle up to 90 bottles a minute. The building was renovated in 1997 and now houses the Lakeland Fire Department Administrative offices.

45. Lakeland Cash Feed

502 Lake Mirror Drive

circa 1924

The Lakeland Citrus Growers Association built this building after the Lakeland Feed and Supply building was demolished. The Association used this building to process and ship citrus via rail to northern markets. In 1930 the Lakeland Cash Feed Company moved to this location and manufactured animal feed in 1962. They continue to provide agricultural supplies to local industries. This two-story hollow clay tile building features exposed steel trusses with a six foot raised monitor roof. The trusses allow for an expansive second floor that is now used as a warehouse.