

Indian Fords and Trails

The Indians had fording places at different points along the river. It is not known what they originally called these fords, but with the introduction of cattle into the country the name "Wacca Pilatka" was applied, signifying a ford or place where the cows crossed over. The first English name for the vicinity of Jacksonville was "Cow Ford," and it was often referred to by that name even long after Jacksonville was founded.

One of the most popular fords along the St. Johns was at this point—from the foot of our present Liberty Street to a point on the south side of the river directly opposite. A Timuqua trail led up from the lower east coast through the New Smyrna district, on to St. Augustine and thence to the Cow Ford (South Jacksonville and Jacksonville). On this side of the river it took a northwesterly course through a black-jack ridge where Hemming Park is now and there branched, one trail leading northwesterly and the other on toward the west.^b

The westerly trail crossed the sand hills (for a long time called Trail Ridge) that divide the waters of Black Creek from those of the St. Marys River; leading around the head branches of the San-ta-fee; joined the old De Soto trail near where the railroad crosses the Olustee, which led to the Suwanee; near the upper mineral springs, and westward to Alapaha, Aucilla, Micasuki, and Tallahassee, towns of the Apalachees. The Jacksonville-Lake City highway follows closely the route of this trail.^b

The northwesterly branch led to the St. Marys River to a point opposite where Colerain, Ga., afterward stood.^b

In the course of time these Indian trails grew into a beaten track through the forest. The pack-ponies of the traders followed them; then came the ox-carts of a later day, following the course of least resistance. Thus a kind of highway evolved as a natural consequence of the matchless judgment of the Indian in picking the easiest route.

Great Britain Acquires Florida

The English captured Havana from Spain in 1762. By the treaty in 1763 England acquired Florida in exchange for Havana. The English took actual possession in 1764, when practically the entire Spanish population departed.