

Welcome to Historic Downtown Sebring!

We are very proud of the City on the Circle's unique collection of 22 commercial buildings built between 1913 and 1923. Designed for the pleasures of strolling and shopping in a simpler time, the Sebring Downtown Historic District today houses a vibrant mix of shops, restaurants, art galleries, and apartments, all surrounding the shaded walkways of beautiful Circle Park. Other historic buildings are easily reached by a short walk just off the Circle. The Allen C. Altvater Cultural Complex borders Lake Jackson and is also just a short walk away. Ongoing events are listed on the Downtown Sebring website www.DowntownSebring.org, and free parking is available in nearby city lots. On behalf of the City of Sebring, I invite visitors, residents and potential residents to experience the unique quality of life in Sebring through a walking tour of our Downtown Historic District.

George Hensley
Mayor,
City of Sebring



THE DOWNTOWN SEBRING HISTORIC DISTRICT



1. Buckeye Building:

108 Circle Park Dr. (1913).

The Buckeye Building now stands on the original site of the Buckeye Club, a place for social and religious gatherings. George Sebring repurchased the property in 1921 to build a new home for his real estate company. When completed,

the Buckeye featured a 22-room inn on the second floor and a series of shops on the ground level, including a drug store, insurance office, barber shop, meat market, and men's wear shop. After George Sebring's death in 1927, his holdings were transferred to the family-owned Highlands Security Corporation and the Buckeye Building sold at auction in 1938 for \$25,000. Today, various small businesses still operate in the Buckeye, among them an art and frame shop, ladies' boutique, art gallery, sushi and fish market, and hair salon.

Did You Know?

Did you know you could have bought the Buckeye Building in 1938 for just \$25,000?



2. Zackary Building: 104 Circle Park Dr. (1913).

Walter and Mamie Zackary constructed their building on a lot purchased from the Sebring Real Estate Company. They operated a women's clothing and dry goods store on the ground floor of their building and lived upstairs.

Walter devoted much of his time to civic service, holding the posts of Fire Chief, Marshal, Tax Collector, and City Clerk. In 1925, the Zackarys sold the property back to the Sebring Real Estate Company for the tidy sum of \$35,000. The property has continued to house retail operations ever since and currently is home to a pottery shop and a large apartment upstairs.



3. Whitehouse Building: 313 Circle Park Dr. (1915).

Thomas Whitehouse, a native of Wednesburg-Stratfordshire, England, established a grocery here with his wife Emma shortly after Sebring's founding. During the Florida Land Boom, the White-

houses converted the second floor to a hotel. Thomas served

as town clerk and later was elected to the town council for seven terms. He was also a founding member of the Sebring Board of Trade and Volunteer Fire Department. His building currently houses a gift shop and apartments.



4. Board of Trade Building: 309 Circle Park

(1916). Organized in 1914 by H. Orvel Sebring, the Board of Trade operated much like today's Chamber of Commerce, promoting business and development in the young city.

George Sebring donated the land for this building, which served at times as City Council Chambers, the City Auditorium, and headquarters for the Red Cross during World War I. Today the City of Sebring leases the building to the Sebring Chamber of Commerce as a satellite Chamber office, helping to promote the redevelopment of the Historic Downtown District.

Did You Know?

Did you know that the Board of Trade Building was built entirely with donated labor and materials?



5. Roanoke Hotel: 213 Circle Park Dr.

(1917). The Roanoke is one of only two surviving structures on the Circle that employs a "concave façade." The Sebring Development Company named the hotel, which catered to winter visitors,

for a group of settlers from Roanoke, Virginia. In 1920, one of these Virginians, Louis Catogni, purchased the building, and expanded the operations of the hotel to include Saturday evening dancing. A band would play music from the balcony and the dances were held on the street below. In 1923, Mayor James Carlton attempted to put a stop these dances, but was forced to resign his office instead. In the 1970s a popular restaurant named the "Cat House" opened in the ground floor, collecting hundreds of feline figurines from adoring patrons. Today the Roanoke has been renovated to house offices and a hair salon.



6. J.B. Brown Building: 201-207 Circle Park Dr.

(1922). Jesse B. Brown moved to Sebring from Tennessee in 1912, and quickly became one of its most prominent citizens. Elected Mayor in 1915, he also served several terms on the Town Council.

Brown purchased a hardware store, which, by the early 1920s needed more floor space to accommodate

the demands of the booming city. Brown's new building featured 6,000 square feet of ground floor space divided into three storefronts, housing Brown's Hardware Store, S.R. Hart Furniture Company, and Milt Baker's Ideal Grocery. The second floor saw the operation of The Circle Inn, a 22-room tourist-oriented hostelry run by Beulah Woodford. Brown sold the building to the city in 1929, and City Hall was located here until 1933. In the 1980s and 1990s, it housed a popular women's clothing store named The Plum Tree. Today, the ground floor houses an artist emporium, while renovated offices and apartments take the place of The Circle Inn.



7. A.E. Withers Building: 113 Circle Park Dr.

(1913). The second brick block building to be erected on the Circle, the Withers Building, is one of the oldest surviving commercial buildings in town, though it has been radically altered from

its original appearance. Aaron E. Withers was the construction manager for the Sebring Real Estate Company, and served as the town's first fire chief and marshal.



8. J. B. Zeall Building: 107 Circle Park Dr.

(1915). Sebring pioneer John B. Zeall came to the community in 1911. A salesman for the Sebring Real Estate Company, he also served on the town council. It later housed G.V. Hudson's

clothing store, the Circle Trading Company.



9. Tobin Building: 101 Circle Park Dr. (1926).

The last of the buildings to be erected on the Circle during the historic period, Miami developer Samuel Tobin's commercial block, was designed in the Mediterranean Revival style popular during

the Florida Land Boom. Many of Sebring's prominent lawyers and doctors occupied its second-floor offices. The main storefront on the circle housed the Austin Office Supply Company, and Harry Stacey's restaurant was in the rear.

10. Dingus Building: 304 Circle Park Dr. (1920).

Constructed by local developer B. L. Outlaw, this building replaced Milt Baker's two story wood frame grocery store, which was among the first buildings erected on the Circle. Soon after its completion, Outlaw sold the property to



E.B. and Cora Dingus of Hamlin County, Tennessee. The couple opened a restaurant in one half of the ground floor and rented the other storefront and upstairs apartments. In 1924, the Dingus family sold the building to R. N. Durrance, who operated a hardware store there for many years.

Today the building houses a restaurant again.



11. E.E. Skipper Bank Building: 300 Circle

Park (1913). The E.E. Skipper Building is the oldest surviving masonry building in Sebring. It was constructed for Enoch E. Skipper, whose family was among the first settlers of the

area. Skipper's First National Bank was Sebring's first financial institution until it fell into bankruptcy after the crash of 1929. The building was bought by the City and served as City Hall until 1969. The bank vault still remains though the building now houses professional offices.



12. Circle Theatre: 202 Circle Park Dr.

(1923). Paul Vincent, a local plumbing contractor, organized Highlands Amusement Enterprises Inc. to build and promote the Circle Theater. Using imaginative advertising to

attract patrons, the Circle Theater soon became Sebring's premier movie palace, forcing the rival Ohio Theater out of business. The building also contained two small storefronts where a barber and cobbler set up shop. In the 1970s, the theater was converted to a bar and operated under various names through the following years. Recently purchased by the Champions for Children Foundation, Inc., the building now will host children's stage productions and other community gatherings.



13. Highlands Bank & Trust: 200 Circle Park Dr.

(1919). Constructed on the original site of the Sebring Real Estate Office, the Highlands Bank & Trust Building exhibits a Classic Revival style. The heavily colonnaded façade lends an air

of dignity, stability, and security, intended by the architect to promote confidence among depositors. The Sebring

Real Estate Company leased the building to the Highlands Bank and Trust Corporation until it failed in 1929. Western Union leased space here for a time also. Today, the building houses the St.Vincent de Paul Thrift Store.



14. Sebring Real Estate Company Building

113-117 N. Ridgewood Dr.

(1920.) As real estate activity increased after World War I, George Sebring decided to erect a new building to house his company, and, in 1920, purchased

the northern portion of the Highlands Bank & Trust lot for his Beaux Arts style headquarters. Sebring occupied the first floor and leased the remainder of the building to various tenants. Among them was the Highlands Security Abstract & Title Company, operated by two prominent attorneys Fairfax T. Haskins and Chesley A. Skipper. In the mid 1920s, Sebring sold the building to the title company and moved his offices across the street. Today, a popular barber shop and an art gallery lease the ground floor and a large apartment occupies the second floor.

Did You Know?

Did you know that Sebring was known as “Bungalow Town” in the early 20th century, because of its many bungalow-style homes?



15. Nan-ces-o-wee Hotel:

139 N. Ridgewood Dr.

(1923). Largest of Downtown Sebring’s surviving commercial buildings, the three-story Nan-ces-o-wee was built by George Sebring as a “year round” hotel. It boasted 60 sleeping rooms with shared

bathrooms. Reportedly named for Nancy Osceola, wife of the legendary Seminole Chief Osceola, the “Nan” changed hands many times after the end of the Florida Land Boom. Today, the property sits vacant and for sale, awaiting a new lease on life. The ground floor retail space housed Kahn’s Department Store, for decades a staple of commerce in Downtown Sebring. A park just to the north of the Nan-ces-o-wee bears the name of the store’s matron, Sadie Kahn. It features a mural designed in 2012 by noted Miami artist Kenneth Treister, celebrating the life of the Kahns.

16. E. L. Hainz Building:

130-138 N. Ridgewood Dr. (1923). The Hainz Building represents the last major undertaking of the Sebring Real Estate Company prior to the end of the Florida Land Boom. A partnership between George Sebring and Edward L. Hainz, the building featured four large storefronts and over 20



offices upstairs. The first Highlands County Courthouse operated from here until construction on its larger headquarters finished in 1927. Among the City's first settlers in 1912, E. L. Hainz remained an active force in the community until his death in 1961, though he sold his interest in this building

back to George Sebring in 1925 for \$100,000. The business that operated in the Hainz Building over the years included an A&P Grocery, Gilbert Drugs and Soda Fountain, Dr. Koonz's dentist office, and Tony's Pizza. After an extensive renovation in 2002, Dee's Place restaurant, The Mermaid's Castle and the Hainz Professional Center now call the building home.

PUBLIC BUILDINGS ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER OUTSIDE THE HISTORIC DISTRICT:



17. Old Post Office: **307 N. Ridgewood Dr.**

Sebring's first post office was established in February 1912 in a wood frame building on the Circle. As the city's population grew in the subsequent three decades, the post office was moved several times to ever larger facilities. This

building was constructed in 1940 with Federal aid and remained in service as a post office until 1972. It presently serves as headquarters for Sebring's Police Department.



18. Central Fire Station: **301 N. Mango St.** Built in response to a need to upgrade local firefighting facilities, the Central Fire Station was among the most advanced stations of its kind in Florida when completed in 1927. It was designed by William J. Heim,

who was Highlands County's most prolific architect during the historic period the historic period.



19. Kenilworth Lodge: **1610 Lakeview Dr.** Built by George Sebring in 1916, four years after Sebring was founded, and expanded in 1919, this Mediterranean revival resort-style hotel with its 125 guest rooms, expansive sitting porch and 4,000 sq. ft.

lobby has been in continuous operation ever since.

EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE DOWNTOWN SEBRING HISTORIC DISTRICT

MONTHLY:

Destination Downtown Sebring

www.DowntownSebring.org

Pilates in the Park (*Sebring Circle*):

www.DowntownSebring.org

Primal Connection Community Drum Circle (*Sebring Cultural Center*):

www.PrimalConnection.org

Saturday Night Cruise (*Sebring Circle*):

www.SebringCruise.com

Sidewalk Garage Sale (*Sebring Circle*):

www.DowntownSebring.org

Artists' Reception at Highlands Art League's Yellow House

www.HighlandsArtLeague.org

ANNUAL:

JANUARY:

Sebring U.S. Sport Aviation Expo

(*Sebring Regional Airport*):

www.Sport-Aviation-Expo.com

FEBRUARY:

Highlands County Fair

(*Sebring Fairgrounds*): www.HCFCC.net

Roaring '20s Arts & Crafts Festival

(*Sebring Circle*): www.DowntownSebring.org

MARCH:

Circle of Speed (*vintage race cars, Sebring Circle*): www.DowntownSebring.org

Twelve Hours of Sebring

(*Sebring Raceway*): www.SebringRaceway.com

(Continued...)

JUNE:

Heartland Triathlon & USAT Florida Regional Youth Championship

(Sebring): www.HeartlandTri.org

JULY:

Fourth of July Fireworks Festivities

(Sebring Cultural Center):

www.DowntownSebring.org

AUGUST:

Summer of Love Volkswagen Jubilee

(Sebring Circle):

www.SummerOfLoveVW.com

SEPTEMBER:

Sebring Thunder

(classic car event; Sebring Circle):

www.SebringCruise.com

OCTOBER:

Run to the Heartland

(motorcycle event; Sebring Circle):

www.HRA-Sebring.com

NOVEMBER:

CCC Day at Highlands Hammock State Park

www.FriendsOfHighlandsHammock.org/ccm-museum.html

Highlands Art Festival in Sebring Circle

www.HighlandsArtLeague.org

DECEMBER:

Christmas Carousel of Lights in Downtown Sebring

www.DowntownSebring.org

Heartland Cultural Alliance (HCA)

Art & Music Festival @ Lakeshore Mall:

www.HeartlandCulturalAlliance.org

Sebring Christmas Parade

www.DowntownSebring.org

YEAR-ROUND:

Children's Museum of the Highlands

(Downtown Sebring):

www.ChildrensMuseumHighlands.com

Florida Civilian Conservation Corps Museum:

www.FriendsOfHighlandsHammock.org/ccm-museum.html

Heartland Cultural Alliance (HCA) Art & Music Gallery (Kenilworth Lodge, Sebring):

www.VisitHighlandsCounty.com/destinations

Heartland Cultural Alliance (HCA) Gallery of Fine Art

(Sebring Regional Airport):

www.VisitHighlandsCounty.com/destinations

Highlands Art League (Downtown Sebring):

www.HighlandsArtLeague.org

Highlands Hammock State Park:

www.FloridaStateParks.org/highlandshammock

Highlands Little Theatre

(Sebring Cultural Center):

www.HighlandsLittleTheatre.org

Highlands Museum of the Arts

(Sebring Cultural Center):

www.HighlandsArtLeague.org/node/20

Military Sea Services Museum

(Sebring):

www.VisitHighlandsCounty.com/destinations

Sebring Historical Society Archives

www.SebringHistoricalSociety.org

A SPECIAL PROJECT OF THE SEBRING HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

A special thanks to the various organizations and entities that help make Sebring, the City on the Circle, great. Your efforts and teamwork help make our community a wonderful place to work and live and for visitors to return year after year.

Our thanks to:

Sam Corson and Charlotte Pressler (brochure copy)

Casey Wohl (proofing)

The Market Place (design and layout)

Vicki Grimes/Creative Printing (map)

Callie J. Maddox (photography)

George Hensley, Mayor, City of Sebring

City of Sebring Historic Preservation Commission

Charlotte Pressler, Ph.D., Chair

Sebring Community Redevelopment Agency

Robin Hinote, Acting Director

Partial funding was provided by a grant from the

Highlands County Tourist Development Council



www.DowntownSebring.org



Published
8-2012

Walking Tour of

Historic Downtown Sebring

