



ONE OF FLORIDA'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITY OF ROYAL – THE PEOPLE KEPT THEIR LAND





You've been asking & waiting...It's Here! Only \$7 per view

Royal is one of Florida's oldest African American communities; 5 miles west of Wildwood. Our '40 Acres & A Mule Tour' will ensure that one of Florida's oldest African American Communities, founded by former slaves from the Old Green Plantation located near the Withlacoochee River, when slavery was abolished in 1865, is not engulfed, nor enslaved by present new development or its rich heritage vanished from the State of Florida historic landscape. One uniqueness is that Royal is made up of 40 Acres & 80 Acres parcels held from General Sherman's 40 Acres & A Mule rule # 15.

Virtual Tours are available of this beautiful community's rich history and heritage.

Check out our BLOG, as a Thank You, we've provided additional stories to demonstrate the strong characteristics of how the people were able to preserve, keep then pass down the land through their generations.

[Link to purchase a virtual tour](#)

STATE ISSUED HISTORIC MARKER





Royal School Site

Sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Arts and Culture, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

ROYAL COMMUNITY HISTORY





Reprinted from our United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
Community of Royal Rural Historic District Sumter County, FL

The Community of Royal is a nationally unique example of an increasingly rare aspect of African American history; rural, agricultural heritage. The community's existence for approximately 150 years means it directly intersects several important historical themes in both Florida and the nation.

Royal's earliest African American settlers were granted land patents in the 1870s (with some likely present prior to this). Over the following century, the town developed into a substantial agricultural community. Today, many of the descendants of these earlier Black agriculturalists continue to occupy the buildings and properties developed by their ancestors.

Oral histories with elderly informants in recent decades suggest the potential that many of these early residents interacted with free African Americans who arrived in previous decades.

Historical documents and archaeological evidence already note the existence of free Blacks in the area during the 1830s. Although the period of significance for the Community of Royal Rural Historical District begins with the 1870s, it is clear the African American history of the area starts much earlier.

Royal's uniqueness stems in large part from its survival. Throughout the 20th century it became increasingly difficult for African Americans to live in rural locations. The perseverance of Royal's

community is the primary reason it survives in the 21st century. Efforts to commemorate this history, by organizations like Young Performing Artists (YPAs) Inc. also play a significant role.

Royal is a strong, vibrant community that values its history.

Royal's location may have offered the community a measure of protection in the past. Other locations that did not survive as African American communities, places like Rosewood and Santos – unlike Royal – were both located along railroads. While a lack of rail travel was likely inconvenient for Royal's residents, it may have also served to insulate their community.

Although the area around Royal is good agricultural land, its relative geographical isolation played a role in protecting the community from destruction and development. Today, Royal is no longer isolated, and development represents the primary threat to the community's historical integrity.

In closing, the community of Royal offers a unique and fascinating example of African American life in Florida. It is representative of agricultural trends beginning during the frontier times of the state's history and its development into the mid-20th century. Royal, as one of the only remaining rural African American towns in the state can offer insight into and highlight important historical trends in African American history.

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