

1875 – 1877 ▶

Ex-slaves from Florida, Georgia, and Alabama migrate to this frontier region, find work in citrus groves. In the unincorporated village of Lake Maitland, J.E. Clark and two other men attempt “to purchase land for the purpose of establishing a colony for colored people,” but — as Clark later recalled — “so great was the prejudice then existing against the Negro that no one would sell them land for such a purpose.”



Engd by H.H. Wall's Son, New York.

Lewis Lawrence

A Negro Colony in Florida.
Tallahassee Floridian.

A negro settlement has been established at Maitland by Mr. Lewis Lawrence, of Utica, N. Y., which is divided into forty-eight lots, 50x50 feet, to be sold to negroes, at from \$19 to \$30 per lot. Mr. Lawrence has erected on this land a framed church 30x20 feet, a bell for which has been presented by the Congregational Sabbath-school of Chelsea, Conn. No liquor is ever to be sold or given away on the ground; no gambling or disreputable house of any kind will ever be allowed, under a forfeiture of the purchase.

◀ 1881

Lewis Lawrence, a “whole-souled philanthropist” from Utica, New York, comes “to the rescue,” agrees to help Clark establish a village “for colored people” on the outskirts of Maitland. Lawrence prevails upon his friend and neighbor, Capt. Josiah Eaton of Maine, to sell him 22 acres of land. Lawrence subdivides the Eaton property into 48 small lots, outfits them with “model but cheap cottages,” and sells them (through an agent) to Clark and others on “easy terms.” Lawrence donates a small frame church with a steeple and bell to the village as well. Clark later invests in his own subdivision, known as Clark’s Addition.

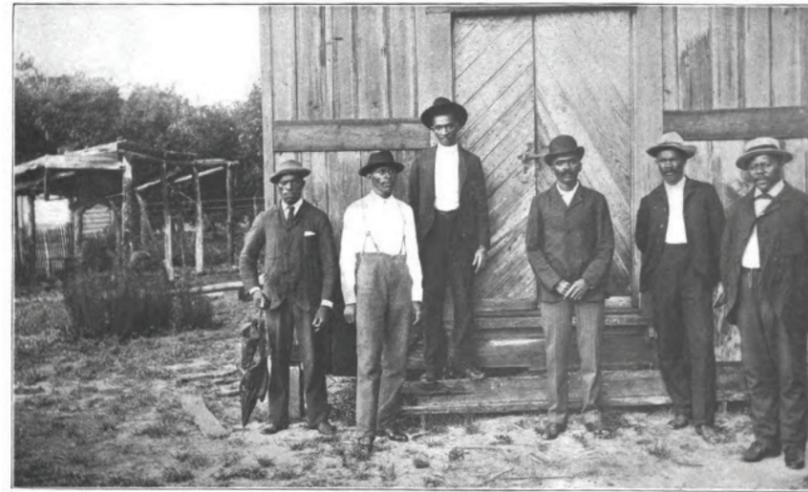
1884

A correspondent for the Orange County Reporter refers to the “colored village at Maitland, sometimes known as Lawrence, the name of its worthy founder.” Lawrence, for his part, asks that the village be called Eatonville, in honor of his friend and neighbor, Josiah Eaton.

1885 – 1886 ▶

Town of Maitland is incorporated, with African-American votes. One or more future founders of Eatonville are elected to Maitland town offices, serve without major incident. During that year, as Zora Neale Hurston later wrote, “a yeast was brewing.” It seems likely — given prevailing racial attitudes described by Clark — that the participation of African-American voters in Maitland’s municipal elections unnerved white residents and led to discussions of separation as a peaceful, progressive-minded, mutually beneficial solution to the so-called “race problem.”

Timeline prepared by Scot French, Ph.D.,
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CITY COUNCIL AND JAIL, EATONVILLE, FLA.

◀ 1887

Twenty-seven African-American men meet at the St. Lawrence Odd Fellows Hall and sign a charter of incorporation, thus officially transforming the “colored village at Maitland” into the self-governed “black township” of Eatonville. They elect town officers – Mayor, Clerk, Marshall, Tax Assessor, Tax Collector, and Treasurer – and a five-member Board of Aldermen.

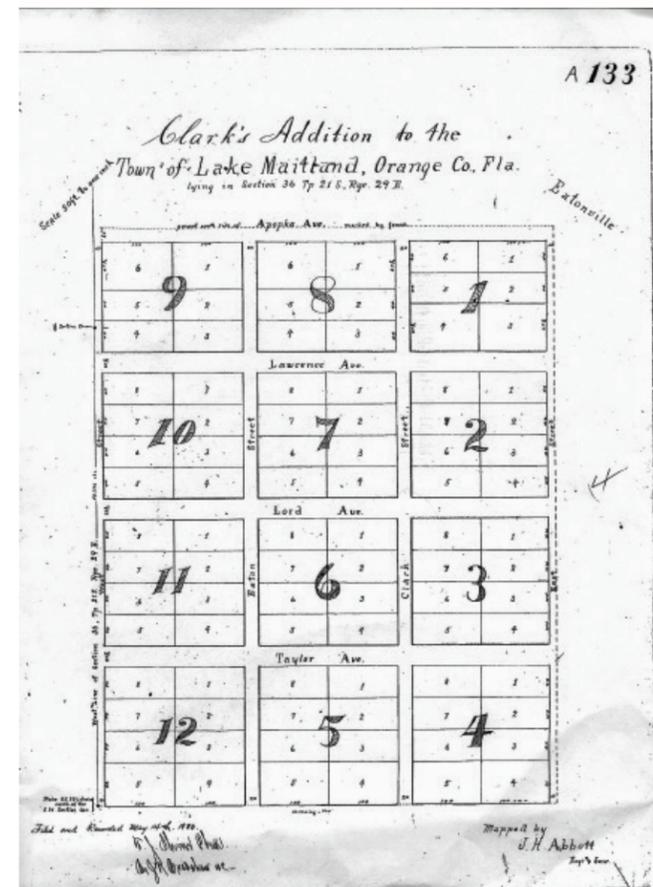
1889 ▶

The Eatonville Speaker issues a call to those seeking refuge from Jim Crow Era racial discrimination and violence: “Colored People of the United States! Solve the Great Race Problem by Securing a Home in Eatonville, Florida, a Negro City Governed by Negroes.” The article advertises for “actual settlers (colored)” to purchase 44 X 110 square foot lots for \$35 (or \$50 on time) in a thriving community of 200-300 people — “all colored, and NOT A WHITE FAMILY in the whole city.” In the same issue appears a lengthy first-hand account of a near-lynching in nearby Sanford. The editors present their hopeful vision of black self-governance against a fearful backdrop of racial violence, discrimination, and systematic exclusion.



1906 ▼

Author, educator, and political power broker Booker T. Washington (“The Wizard of Tuskegee”) pays homage to Eatonville as a successful example of African-American business enterprise and town-building. In his book *The Negro in Business*, Washington recounts the town’s origins, its economic setback and recovery after the Great Freeze of 1896, and the establishment of the Robert Hungerford Industrial School. Full-page black-and-white photographs offer glimpses of a prosperous life in Eatonville some twenty years after the town’s establishment: the stately residences of Mayor S.M. Moseley (“a successful farmer, stock raiser, and liveryman”) and Postmaster J.E. Clark (“the leading merchant of the town”); Clark and the City Council in front of the town’s seldom-used jail; and the enterprising Clark at his pineapple farm. By the turn of the century, it seems, the struggle for township had paid rich dividends in pride and profits.



RESIDENCE OF S. M. MOSELEY, MAYOR OF EATONVILLE, FLA.