

HOME

LIVING IN THE HEART OF FLORIDA

HOME

Living In the Heart of Florida

August/September 2013

DUG JONES:
Inspirational Leader,
Educator and Mentor

The
Education
ISSUE

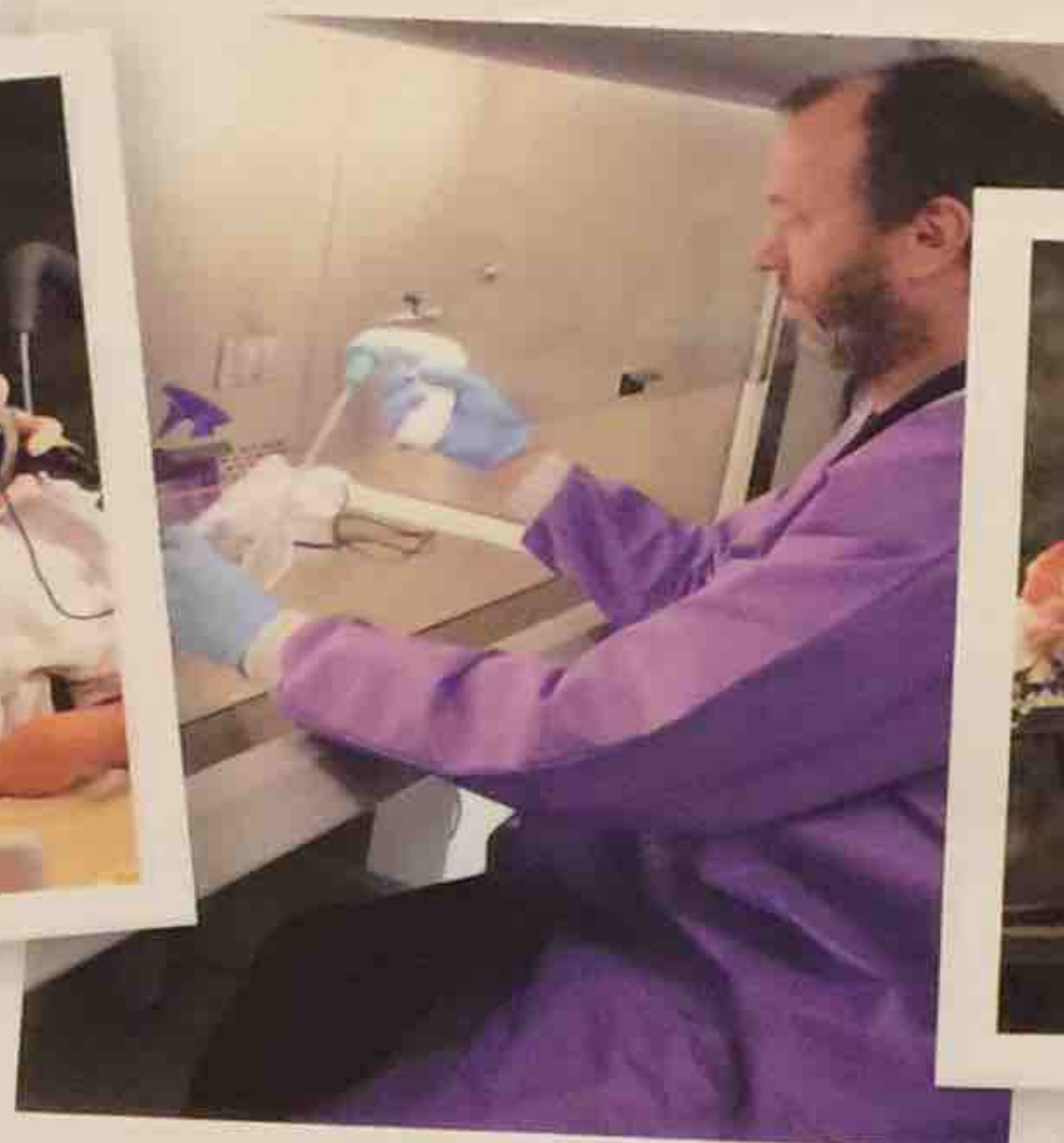


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saving you
time
time is
precious

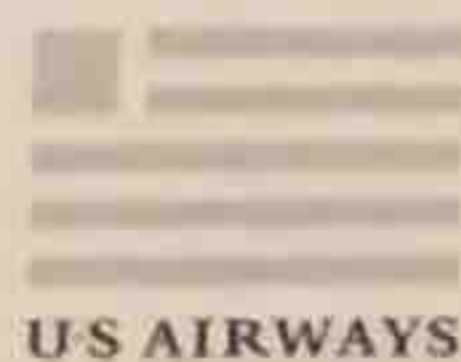


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• History at HOME •

The Birth of Gainesville

By Brian Hunt

Welcome to Lewisville, home of the Gators.

Doesn't sound quite right? How about Hog Town, home of the ... hogs?

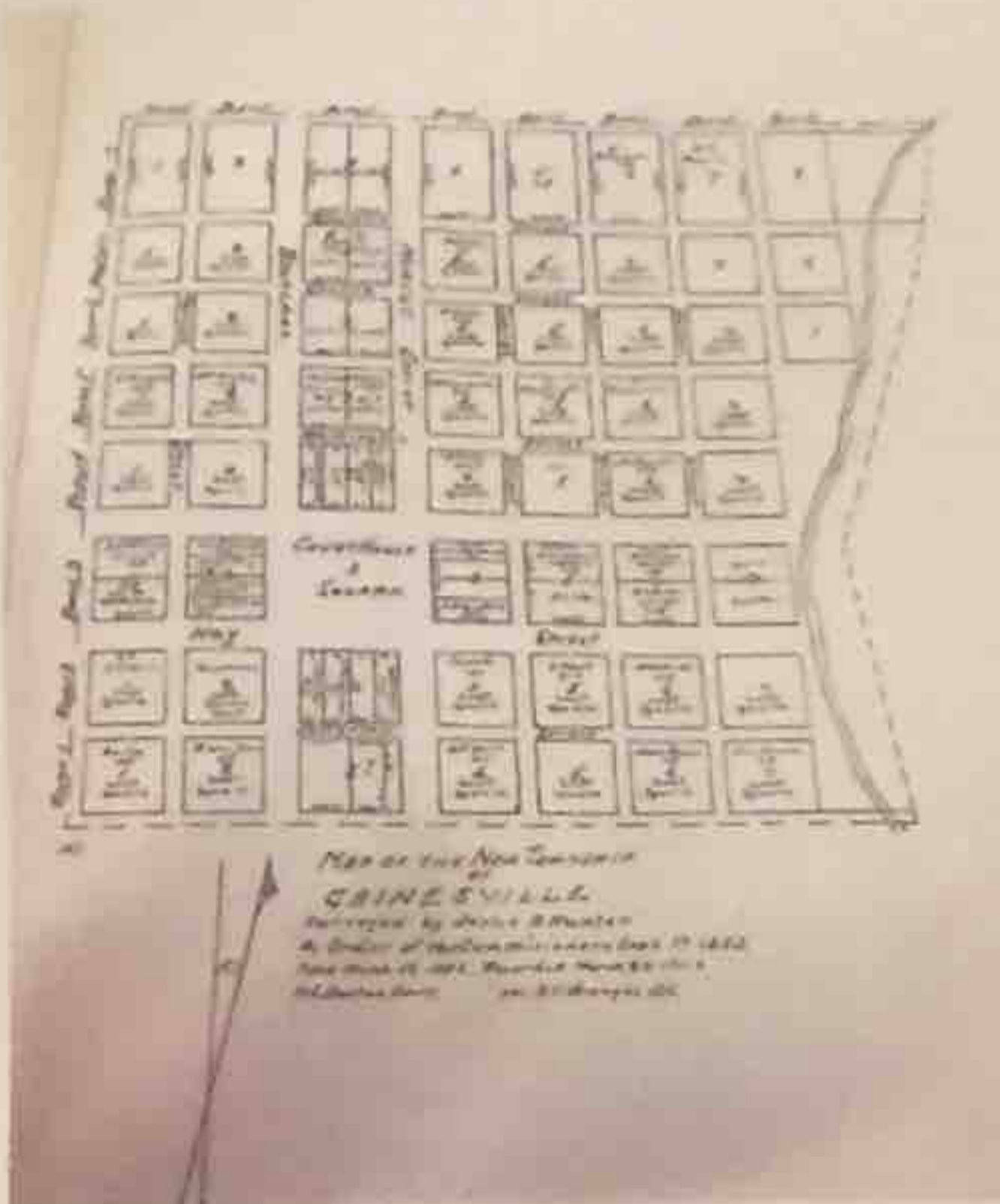
Gainesville's fortunes could have worked out differently had it been called Lewisville or Hog Town. And it almost was. But thanks to the arrival of the railroad in the mid-19th century, followed by a political gamble taken — and lost — today we call our unique spot on the map, Gainesville.

Many believe Hog Town was the original name for the city, but Hog Town existed years before Gainesville was conceived. In the early 19th century, a village of Seminoles lived on a creek near Glen Springs. The European settlers who traded with them saw their passel of hogs and gave the place its' name.

A historical marker near Westside Park, at NW 34th Street and NW 8th Avenue, marks the vicinity of this vanished settlement. Several families lived at or had plantations in the area: the Ingrams, Bevilles, Stringfellows, Baileys, Lewises and Chesnuts.

Conflicts between Floridian settlers and Seminoles culminated in the Second Seminole War, which occurred between 1835 and 1842. After the Dade Massacre, Gen. Edmund Pendleton Gaines disobeyed orders (which would have taken him to the Alamo Mission in Texas) and arrived in Florida with 1,100 soldiers. Gaines was no stranger to the





area — he had served under Gen. Andrew Jackson in the First Seminole War. After a skirmish at the Withlacoochee River, where Gaines was wounded, he was relieved of duty and returned to New Orleans.

The seat of Alachua County was then located at Newnansville, northwest of today's Alachua. When the Florida Railroad Company proposed its route from Fernandina to Cedar Key, Newnansville found itself miles away from the planned track. The county commissioners platted a site for a new town, centered in the county and along the railroad line. With the help of a state senator, they secured an election to decide the location of the county seat and its name.

So in the summer of 1853, the citizens of Alachua County walked or rode their horses to Boulware Springs. Described as a daylong barbecue, a picnic-like atmosphere initially prevailed. Maj. J.B. Bailey — who owned the land where the new city was planned — presided over the events and was in favor of the move. Other families, like the Pyles, Dells, Bostons and Motts, were against it. Several rounds of political speeches were made as sentiments began to strengthen.

William Lewis addressed the crowd. A wealthy Hog Town landowner, Lewis was prepared. He had already called on men in the eastern part of the county and secured twenty votes. In return, he wanted the new city to be called Lewisville. Commissioner William Turner, an Indian War veteran who'd served under Gaines, wanted the



place named after his war hero. And George Chamberlain, a commissioner from the Micanopy district, spoke against the move. One historian described "near fist-fights" breaking out, with tempers rising in the afternoon heat.

Dinner served as an interlude to the debate. As they ate, men worked the crowd to curry last-minute favors and secure votes. Lewis was dismayed to hear that few citizens wanted the expense of building another courthouse.

Major Bailey had a solution to bring together Lewis and Turner. He pulled Lewis aside and said:

"We have the railroad, and will make a town whether we gain the courthouse or not. I shall make you this proposition. You give us your 20 votes from the east part of the county in favor of the courthouse and I will guarantee that if we lose the courthouse, we'll call the town Lewisville, but if we gain the courthouse, we'll call it Gainesville."

Lewis thought there weren't enough votes to move the county seat and agreed to Bailey's compromise.

But Bailey had an ace up his sleeve. After dinner, Bailey announced that he would donate the land for the courthouse. Further, Tilman Ingram agreed to use the lumber from his Hog Town sawmill and build the new courthouse at a reasonable expense. Lewis must have listened in shock.

Votes were cast and counted. The majority was in favor of moving the county seat. And because of the deal, the town



would be called Gainesville. Disgusted western residents began the long journey home, saying that they would refer to the city instead as "Hog Wallow."

The courthouse was completed in 1856, the first train came through in 1859, and the city was incorporated after the Civil War in 1866. Almost a century later, in 1961, the City of Gainesville annexed the former Hog Town land, forever linking the two areas together. **H**

Brian Hunt has worked in the insurance industry for 14 years. He also is an amateur historian and writer. In 2012 he self-published an account about the 1935 FBI manhunt for Ma and Fred Barker in Florida, titled "G-Men, Gangsters, and Gators."

Editor's Note: Congratulations to Brian and Jodi Hunt on the birth of their son, Bennett David Hunt!

(Top Left) 1853 map of the New Township of Gainesville
Photo Credit: Municipal Archives

(Center) Edmund Pendleton Gaines
Photo Credit: State Archives of Florida

(Right) Historical marker near Westside Park marks the location of Hog Town
Photo Credit: Brian Hunt