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# DOWNTOWN OCALA HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

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## OCALA HOUSE HOTEL

120 E SILVER SPRINGS BLVD, OCALA, FL 34470

The Ocala House Hotel was built in 1846 by Josiah Paine. It was opened as a boarding house to serve the increasing numbers of newcomers to Ocala. In 1855, Ebenezer Harris purchased the building and served as the proprietor for the next 26 years. He transformed the modest boarding house into one of Ocala's largest and most glittering assets. In 1881, Monroe Brown purchased the building. In June of 1883, Brown planned to replace the frame section of the hotel with a 3-story brick structure. Each of the 150 rooms would have had a fireplace, water, and gas. The hotel was scheduled to open on Thanksgiving morning 1883. It burned down in the 1883 Thanksgiving Day Fire as it was about to open.

Brown immediately began the process of rebuilding to enlarge the hotel to 200 rooms. The burned section would be replaced with a new 3-story brick hotel that was even grander than before.

Ocala House Hotel was bought by railroad magnate Henry Plant in the 1890s. It was incorporated into Plant's collection of hotels and railroads. At the time of Plant's purchase, the hotel was the center of Ocala's commercial and social activity. Plant planned to make it into a modern showplace. However, Plant's death made the future of Ocala House uncertain. Many of the planned improvements had not yet been completed.

Businessman John Edwards bought Ocala House from Plant Investment Company in 1901. Edwards planned to extend electric lighting throughout the building and install ice-making equipment. He also offered hot baths to anyone willing to pay the fee. This practice quickly became popular with other hotels in Ocala.

By 1950, the Weiss Brothers of Wilkes-Barrer were listed as the new owners. The brothers signed the property over to the City of Ocala in 1966, and the Ocala House Hotel was demolished in 1968. The Hilton Hotel now stands on the same site.



*Ocala House Hotel c.1900*



*Ocala House Hotel c.1920*

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