

Ethel Project aims to bring 19th century ghost town back to life

Work will start shortly on two 19th century homesteaders log cabins as part of a project to recreate Ethel, a long-forgotten ghost town in Central Florida.

LONGWOOD, FL, UNITED STATES, January 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Work will start shortly on two 19th century homesteaders log cabins as part of a project to recreate Ethel, a long-forgotten ghost town in Central Florida.



Cabin built at Ethel around 1888

The ten feet by twelve feet cabins will be replicas of one built by Finley Click in Ethel in 1888 and based on historic photographs taken at the time. Click, his wife and their three children all lived in that small space. When completed, one of the cabins will be used as a small museum and the other will be sparsely furnished as it would have been back then.

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The story of Ethel, which sprang up after the Civil War and disappeared without trace in the 1920s, will be featured at this year's East Lake Heritage Festival at Rock Springs Run State Reserve.”

*Maureen Miller, President,
East Lake Historical Society*

The story of Ethel, which sprang up after the Civil War and disappeared almost without trace in the 1920s, will be featured at this year's East Lake Heritage Festival at Rock Springs Run State Reserve in Sorrento on March 22 from 10am to 4pm.

The Annual Heritage Festival, now in its 11th year, is organized by the East Lake Historical Society. This is the second year the Friends of Ethel and the Wekiva Wilderness Trust have partnered with the Society. Exhibitors, crafters. Exhibitors, arts and crafters and reenactors will demonstrate what life was like back then. Visitors will enjoy live music, entertainment, children's

games and more. Festival food will also be available.

Before the Civil War Rock Springs (now Kelly Park) was the site of the largest plantation in the area. It was owned by William Delk, a Union supporter, who in 1863 freed his slaves and went off to work with the Union army. After the war he returned to reclaim his property. Some of his freed slaves and homesteaders moved into the area and Ethel was born.

After more than 15 years of research, we now know the names of most of the people who lived in Ethel over their years, the location of their homesteads, and much about their daily lives from vintage photos, letters and postcards written at the time. Ethel had a store, post office, a one room school, train station and cemetery. In its heyday, a population of about 250.

Last year the Historic Ethel Trail was opened, a 1.5-mile wheelchair accessible loop through what would have been the center of the township. Twelve interpretive panels along the route describe what life was like back then. There are guided walks every month, and a self-guiding brochure at the trailhead for those who want to explore by themselves.

A professional cultural resources survey conducted last spring located the sites of many cabins, found 594 artifacts and identified promising areas for future investigation

The Ethel Book, based on all the research, is available as a free downloadable eBook from www.wwt-cso.com.

The next step is to create the Ethel Village, a collection of cabins and kitchen gardens as a living history site. The village will feature crops that would have been grown back then, using heirloom seeds. Era-appropriate agricultural tools and methods will be used. The aim is to have crafters use the cabins at weekend and special events to display their crafts such as weaving, spinning, carpentry and more - all the day-to-day activities Ethel residents would have done.

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