



Historic Strawberry Mills

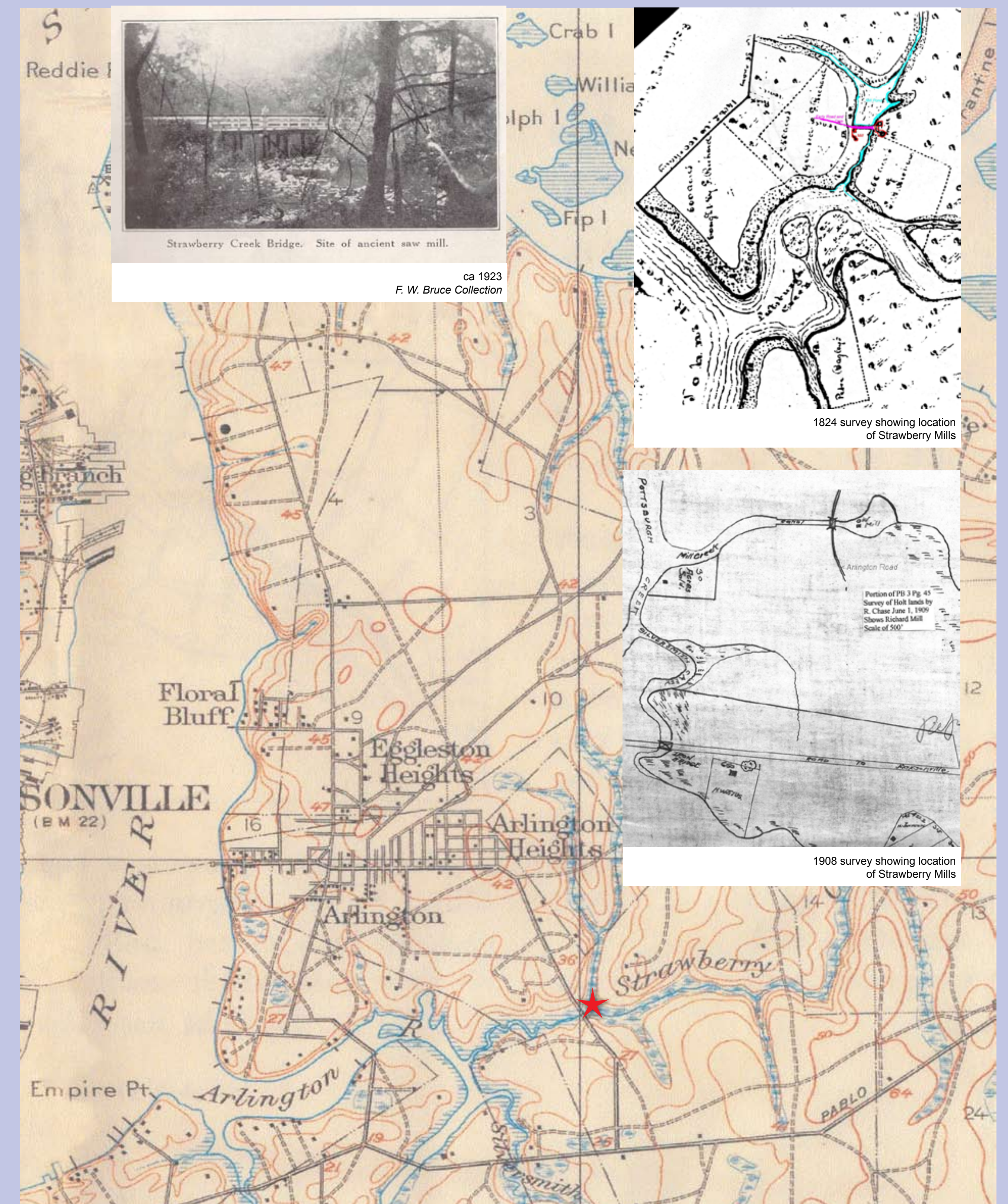
Arlington Road at the Strawberry Creek wetlands is built on the remainder of a dam created to impound the creek to power what is believed to be one of the first water-powered mills built in Florida.

Fleeing the Caribbean island of Hispaniola prior to the 1791 slave revolt, plantation owner Francis Richard arrived with his family and slaves in East Florida in 1797 and petitioned the Spanish Crown for roughly 1,000 acres in the area now known as Old Arlington. In 1817 Richard received a special grant to dam Strawberry and Red Bay Branch Creeks, creating a 150 acre mill pond with water 12.5 feet deep at the dam. The mill grant was only 250 acres, but Richard and his son, Francis, Jr., also received two large land grants to provide timber for the mill – Cedar Swamp, a 1,600 tract in the vicinity of what is now Craig Airport and 14,400 acres for almost all the river and tributaries of Pottsburg Creek.

Operational by 1820, the dam provided power to run a combination saw, grist and sugar mill, cotton gin and brick yard. Logs were floated in, milled and stacked in the two-acre lumber yard on the south bank of the creek, ready to be shipped, along with ground corn, cane, and cotton, out the St. Johns River.

In 1837 Francis, Jr. hired John Sammis, a native of New York, to manage Strawberry Mills. In a letter to Sammis regarding the operation of the mill, Richard stated he was paid \$1 to grind a bushel of corn, \$3 to \$5 to gin a hundred pounds of cotton and that first-quality timber sold for \$20 per thousand feet. Sammis purchased the mill in 1840 after the death of Francis, Jr. and later boasted that bricks from his brickyard were used to build many of the buildings of Jacksonville. Sammis sold the mill in 1866. The mill continued to operate until about 1880 when the dam washed out during a storm. Parts of the mill wheel could be seen in Strawberry Creek into the middle of the twentieth century.

1918 Arlington Map



For more historic marker locations, visit www.OldArlington.org

This marker erected in 2009 with a grant from **Comcast** through Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.