



Norman Silent Film Studios

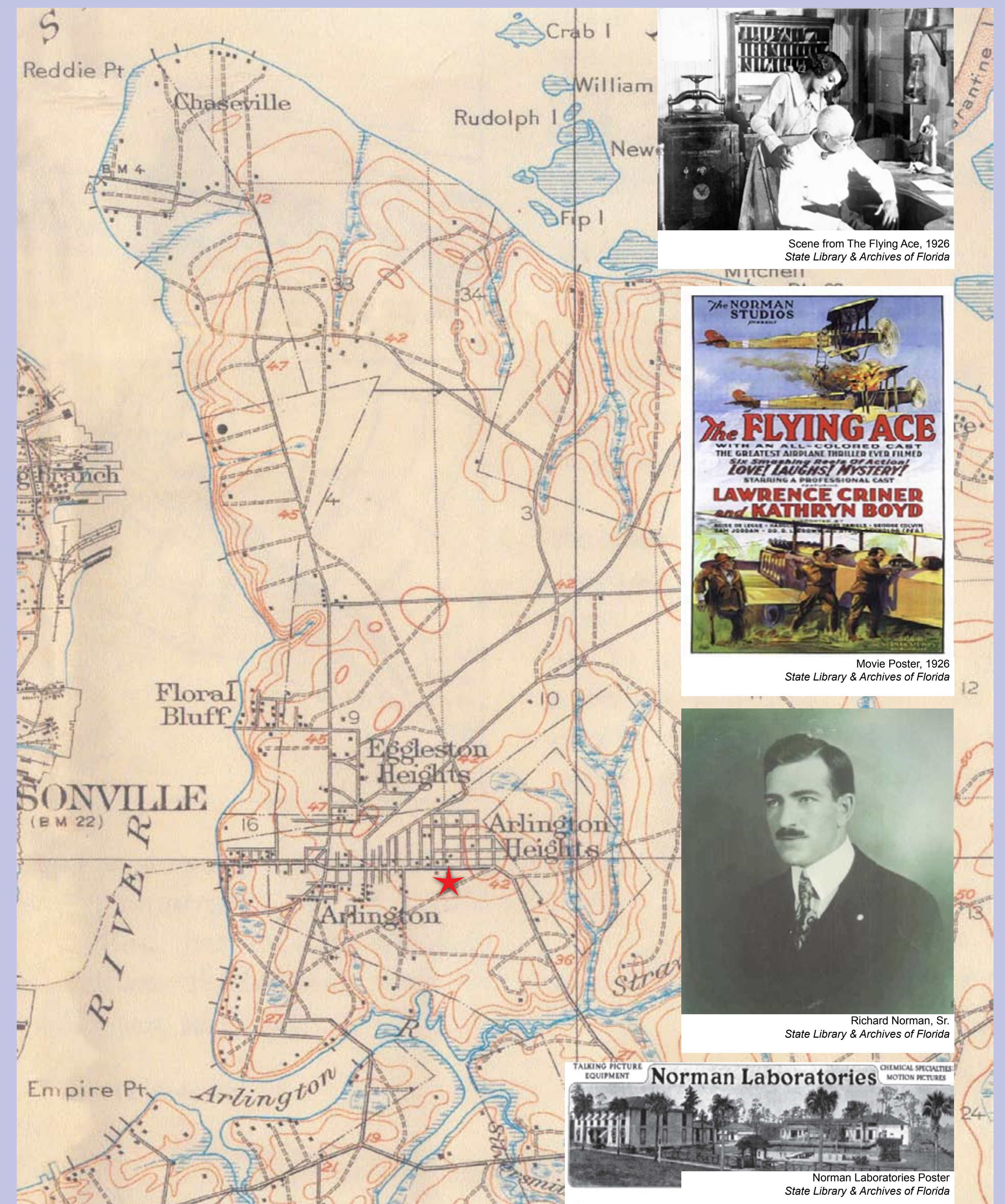
While Jacksonville bustled with the activity of motion picture filming during the years 1908 through 1916, by the early 1920s little of the industry remained in town. However, over on Laura Street in the Springfield section of Jacksonville, brothers Richard, Bruce and Earl Norman continued to produce silent films. After the untimely death of Earl in 1919, Bruce went on to other enterprises, but Richard Norman was to ultimately establish a permanent place in movie history.

Norman purchased the former Eagle Film City property in Arlington, Florida, in 1922. Recognizing the need and market for non-derogatory films for African-American audiences, Norman Film Manufacturing Company produced full-length adventure films featuring all-black casts using professionally-trained actors. At a time when blacks were stereotyped and demeaned in mainstream movies, in Norman's films, black characters were heroes and heroines, leaders and lovers.

Several of Norman's films were shot at his Arlington location, including *Regeneration* and *The Flying Ace*. The only known surviving Norman film, *The Flying Ace* starred Lawrence Criner and Kathryn Boyd, two of the leading black actors of their day, and was touted as "the greatest airplane thriller ever filmed," though all airplane scenes were shot on the ground using a prop plane. *The Bulldogger*, one of the most famous Norman films, was filmed in the all-black town of Boley, Oklahoma, and starred Bill Pickett, the famed black rodeo performer credited with inventing the sport of bulldogging.

Norman continued to make feature films through 1928, ultimately inventing a system that synchronized sound with moving images. He had sold fewer than 20 units when a competitor introduced a sound-on-film system that made Norman's invention obsolete. Norman continued his film career, however, producing industrial films and distributing other producers' works until his death in 1960.

1918 Arlington Map



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