260# Alachua County Public Schools District Office (Script by Joanna Grey Talbot and Peggy Macdonald)

In 1885, the Alachua County School Board built the first public school building on the southeast corner of East University Avenue and Fourth Street. Previously, public school classes were held in abandoned, dilapidated houses or in rented rooms without proper classroom furniture or accessories. Soon the School Board realized that a larger building was needed to serve the growing number of students enrolled in public school.

In 1900, the modern two-story Gainesville Graded and High School opened with 12 classrooms, a principal’s office, a large auditorium and 313 enrolled students. The building has undergone several name changes, including Eastside Elementary School and Kirby Smith Elementary School. It is currently the west wing of the Alachua County Public Schools District headquarters at 620 East University Ave.

For 80 years, the sounds of school children filled the halls and yard of this building. It 1939 it was expanded, renovated, painted white, and renamed for the Confederate General Edmund Kirby Smith. The new configuration of the building was designed by local architect Sanford Goin, who also designed the Matheson History Museum building and many others throughout Gainesville.

In 2017, after Gov. Rick Scott signed a bill into law to remove the statue of Kirby Smith from the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C., the name of the Alachua County Public Schools administrative offices changed from the Kirby Smith Center to the Alachua County Public Schools District Office.