267# Dunbar Hotel (Script by Joanna Grey Talbot and Peggy Macdonald)

Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington and other famous musicians used to stay at the Dunbar Hotel when they came to Gainesville to perform. It was the only hotel in Alachua County that welcomed black patrons. For 40 years, the Dunbar Hotel was a haven for traveling African Americans who were not allowed to stay in white hotels. It was built in 1936 as a one-story home, but after Jackson and Sophronia Dunbar purchased it they added a second story and turned it into a rooming house.

One of the Dunbars’ two daughters, Effie, graduated from college and taught in Alachua County. She also sang professionally in a trio called “Three Shades of Brown.” Local musicians and national acts like Fitzgerald and Ellington were welcomed at the Dunbar Hotel when they performed at the nearby Wabash Hall on Northwest Fifth Avenue.

Unfortunately, after segregation ended the hotel went out of business and fell into disrepair. In 1998, the building was saved and renovated into the home of Pleasant Place, an organization for pregnant and parenting teens and that offered them education and career counseling.