

# Alachua County Florida

## A Proclamation

### **Declaring December 18th, 2025, as “Matthew Lewey Day” in Alachua County, Florida**

- Whereas,* Matthew Lewey was born during Slavery, December 18th, 1848, in Baltimore Maryland; and
- Whereas,* in 1863 during the Civil War, he enlisted in the Union Army, joining the 55<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment and later became a Militia Officer; and
- Whereas,* he graduated with distinction from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and went on to attend Howard University Law School; and
- Whereas,* Matthew Lewey represented Alachua County in the Florida House of Representatives in 1882 serving on the Finance, Judiciary and Education Committees; and
- Whereas,* he married Bessie K. Chestnut in 1883, and earlier served as Postmaster of Newnansville (present-day Alachua) from February 19, 1874, to February 6, 1875; and
- Whereas,* he served as Mayor of Newnansville from 1875 to 1877 and, with fellow activists, helped establish Florida’s first biracial Independent Party; and
- Whereas,* in 1887 he launched The Gainesville Sentinel, later moving to Pensacola in 1894, where the newspaper became The Florida Sentinel and was recognized among the top ten Black-owned newspapers in the United States; and
- Whereas,* Matthew Lewey was named President of National Negro Press, served as Principal of Union Academy in 1881, and served as Justice of the Peace from 1875 to 1876 in Newnansville; and
- Whereas,* he established a law practice in Gainesville in 1881 and later led the successful Pensacola Streetcar Boycott of 1905; and
- Whereas,* he later moved to Jacksonville, Florida, and his final resting place is at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Gainesville, Florida.

*Now, therefore,* through the authority vested in me by the Board of County Commissioners of Alachua County, Florida, I do hereby proclaim December 18th, 2025, as “Matthew Lewey Day” in Alachua County, Florida.

Duly proclaimed this 9th day of December, A.D., 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF ALACHUA COUNTY FLORIDA

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ken Cornell, Chair

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
J.K. “Jess” Irby, Esq., Clerk