

Antioch

Lake Thonotosassa

3 pgs

The following is an excerpt from:
**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT**

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* These excerpts have been taken from the Historic Resources Survey Report with permission given by the Hillsborough County Historic Resources Review Board on December 15, 2003. The intention is to help provide targeted historical information on the water bodies in Hillsborough County.

Antioch

Located just east of Lake Thonotosassa, Antioch's roots extend back to the second half of the 19th century. Selby Franklin homesteaded 40 acres in Township 28, Range 21, Section 7 on February 25, 1857. However, not until the 1880s did others follow in Franklin's footsteps. John Kersey settled 160 acres of Township 28, Range 21, Section 6 on August 13, 1883. Within a year, Joseph Rodgers homesteaded 160 acres in the same area October 4, 1884. Finally George Franklin acquired 80 acres on February 25, 1885, in Township 28, Range 21, Section 6. Growth in the area continued with approximately 25 families, consisting of 250 people, residing around Antioch in the 1890s. The community supported two churches, a Baptist and a Church of Christ. Jerry Simpson, an early pioneer of Antioch, donated the land upon which both churches and a cemetery were built. Tradition has it that the settlement was named after the Antioch Church of Christ (Antioch was the capital of Syria where the apostle Paul first began his missionary journey). Community members attended both churches, with the Baptist holding services on the second and fourth Sundays of the month, and the Church of Christ meeting on the first and third Sundays. Also, on October 6, 1892, Daniel M. Breaker established a post office, which remained in operation until December 31, 1923, whereupon mail came from Plant City. The post office was shut down when Elijah W. Graves, the last postmaster, retired due to old age.ⁱ

Most of Antioch's residents farmed, growing corn, oranges, peas, strawberries, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes. On October 27, 1893, the *Tampa Weekly Tribune* reported, "The trees are so full of fruit that the limbs are fairly breaking from the heavy load." Because of its rural setting, the residents of Antioch had to be self supporting. Maggie Gallagher, born on February 22, 1886, related that the family utilized nearly everything her father, Patrick Stanley, grew or raised on their 67-acre farm. They slaughtered their own pigs, salted or smoked the meat, canned their vegetables, made orange preserves, and ground sugar cane, turning it into syrup, sugar, and candy for the children.ⁱⁱ

Probably one of the most significant events for Antioch occurred when Elijah Graves opened a general store in 1918 on the southeast corner of McIntosh and Knights-Griffin roads. Along with the churches, this store, still in operation today, stands as an important landmark for the Antioch community. By 1931, Edna Simmons, Graves' daughter, opened a general store and filling station across the street. Simmons store, at one time or another, operated as a grocery store, a recreation hall, a service station, a feed store, and a restaurant before it burned down in 1981.ⁱⁱⁱ

Enough families with children lived in the Antioch area to begin a school by October 1877. It was a one-room building across from the cemetery, located three-tenths of a mile north of the McIntosh Road/Thonotosassa Road intersection. In 1932 a two-room frame vernacular school was built nearby. Bessie Anderson taught the first through the third grades in the smaller of the two rooms, while Will Young taught grades fourth through eighth in the larger class room. The school operated on a strawberry schedule, allowing children out during winter months to pick the berry crop. Closed in the 1950s, Mrs. Bessie Cooper converted the school into a nursing home in 1958. As the nursing

home expanded during the late 1960s, the school was torn down in 1971.^{iv}

By 1930, Antioch boasted a population of 689, but electricity did not reach the community until the late 1930s, and some homes still did not have it well into the 1950s. Many people fended off the encroaching night with carbide lights and kerosene lanterns. Coupled with this, the community had only two phones in the early 1930s. The telephone company demanded a year's phone bill paid in advance before they would provide telephone service to a house.^v

Up through the present, Antioch continues to be a rural community. Beginning in the 1970s, newcomers have slowly moved into the area. While the agricultural lands have slowly been pushed back, the area is still predominately rural.^{vi}

i."Antioch Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* October 20, 1893, 6; "Antioch Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* October 27, 1893, 5; Bailey, "A Study of Hillsborough County's History, Legend, and Folk Lore, with Implications for the Curriculum," 261; Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 3; J.O.D. Clarke, compiler, *The Gate-To-The-Gulf (Tampa) City Directory, and Hillsboro County Guide* (Tampa, Fl:J.O.D. Clarke, 1893), 206; Chris Jennewein, "Antioch," *East Hillsborough Tribune* July 18, 1974, 3F; Michelle Jones, "Antioch Holds Steady as Time Moves On," *Tampa Tribune* August 1, 1981, 2D; Morris, *Florida Place Names*, 9; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States, "General Land Office, Automated Records Project, Pre-1908 Homestead and Cash Entry Patents," (Florida C.D. Rom, December 1993).

ii.*Atlas of Hillsborough County, Florida*, 47; Sarah Chapman, "Antioch's Most Senior Citizen, 90, Is Still Active," *Plant City Courier* December 29, 1976, 12. Quote from "Antioch Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* October 27, 1893, 5.

iii.*Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory* (Jacksonville, Fl: R.L. Polk & Co., Publishers, 1918), 62; Jennewein, "Antioch," 3F; Michelle Jones, "Antioch Holds Steady as Time Moves On," *Tampa Tribune* August 1, 1981, 2D; Ellen Knight, "Restaurant Offers Food for Sale and Hospitality for the Asking," *East Hillsborough Tribune* October 17, 1977, 5E.

iv.Sara Chapman, "She Recalls Days of Yesteryear," *Plant City Courier* August 5, 1976; Jennewein, "Antioch," 3F; *When History was in the Making, The Neighborhood Origins of Public Schools in Hillsborough County, 1871-1900*, 1.

v.Jennewein, "Antioch," 3F; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population Bulletin, Second Series, Florida Composition and Characteristics of the Population* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), 51;.

vi.Jones, "Antioch Holds Steady as Times Moves On," 1D; Michelle Jones, "Antioch, The Only Changes are Cars and Bigger Homes," *East Hillsborough Tribune* March 31, 1983, 57-EHP