Dover (Cork, Sydney)
Moore Lake

5 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.
Dover (Cork, Sydney)

Situated between I-4 to the north and Sydney Road to the south, McIntosh Road to the west and Sydney-Dover Road to the east, Dover has had several names throughout its existence. John Gallagher and family became one of the earliest settlers in Dover when they homesteaded in the 1840s near the present day intersection of U.S. Highway 92 (Hillsborough Ave) and Gallagher Road. The 1850 census listed Gallagher as a 29 year old Ireland born farmer living with his 28 year old wife, Ann, and their three children. Gallagher owned a $1000 worth of property in the Simmons Hammock settlement, which eventually became Seffner and Dover. A contemporary of the Gallaghers, Jesse F. DeShong and his family moved to the Dover area in 1854 from Guinett County, Georgia. Homesteading 80 acres, the DeShongs built a log house near the present day intersection of Gallagher Road and State Road 574 (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd).

Enough early settlers existed in the area for community members to establish a Methodist Church in 1845, the same year Florida became a state. Similar to the DeShong home, the church was a 30-by-50-foot, pine log structure with mud chinking. Because services were only held one weekend a month, Byrd Sparkman used to ride his horse throughout the Dover community on the preceding Friday reminding everyone to attend church. Built on what is today Bethlehem Road near Bethlehem Cemetery, the structure eventually burned down. Parishioners relocated the church on the shores of Church Pond. Around 1885, this church also burned to the ground and it was rebuilt. During the 1920s, this structure was relocated to Methodist Church Road. In addition to the Methodists, 34 Dover residents organized the First Baptist Church of Dover in 1904, with Rev. T.H. Jaudon serving as its first pastor. Rev. Jaudon had helped organize or preached at several churches in rural Hillsborough County, including Providence Baptist Church, Hopewell Baptist Church, and Turkey Creek Baptist Church. Five years after forming, the congregation contracted with a Mr. Wethrington to build a church for $285 on property donated by the DeShong family.

Shortly after the end of the Civil War, residents formed a school where children of the Brandon, DeShong, Gallagher, Sparkman and other families learned their ABCs. Byrd Sparkman, Lacy J. Simmons, Jerry Simpson, and Alphens Baker were all involved in the construction of the building. The school eventually was moved and became known as the Lavilla School. This school was moved in 1904 or 1905 to the Mott's homestead. Dover became a consolidated school in 1912, with children coming from nearby communities. Mrs. Clyde Anna Gibson attended Dover's consolidated school during its first year of operation:

With the closing of 1910-1911 school term plans were being made to build a consolidated school at Dover. I did not think much of attending but when I learned of others my own age going I began to give consideration to attending. Wesley [Mrs. Gibson's brother] began the first day and brought home glowing accounts of Mr. Walden and the other teachers having everything so well organized, then I was anxious to attend. For a
while we were able to drive Prince and the buggy then as September passed the walking was not too bad. It was indeed a socialized public school and it was not long before we felt that this should have taken place a long time before. We had a new History which was very interesting, "Ritchie's Sanitation", Civics and other studies which I thoroughly enjoyed. Scot's "Lady of the Lake" was our reading and "Progressive Arithmetic" was taught and did not seem near so hard as the "Milnes Standard". iv

The school operated on a strawberry schedule, open six months of the year from July to December. This allowed farmers' children to help pick strawberries, while still receiving an education. v

Interestingly, Dover received a post office on October 30, 1882, but it was named Sydney. On May 15, 1884, the postmaster changed the name to Cork, and on September 18, 1890, the name was finally changed to Dover. vi Cork existed as a community in several locations throughout Hillsborough County at different times during the 19th century. While Dover was named Cork in 1885, W.S. Webb described the community as:

a small agricultural village located in the midst of a fertile tract on the line of the South Florida Railway. It is 5 ½ miles west of Plant City, 18 to 20 miles from Tampa, and about 11 miles in a direct line from the sea. The first settlement was made by Mr. W.O. Pass under the Homestead Act in the latter part of December, 1883. There are 3 churches, the Salem Primitive Baptist, Rev. T.S. Evers, pastor; the Turkey Creek Missionary Baptist, Rev. T.H. Jaudon, pastor; and Bethlehem Methodist, Rev.-- Philips, pastor. vii

Oranges constituted a major crop for farmers in the area in 1885. Mr. Pass, the founder of this Cork, homesteaded 120 acres around the intersection of present day Downing Street and Sydney-Dover Road. Shortly after the railroad passed through the area, W.K. Wingate and eventually Mr. Pass operated stores where Sydney-Dover road crossed the South Florida Rail Road line, the original location of the train station. Mr. Pass also served as postmaster and railroad agent. Due to unfavorable road conditions, the railroad company moved Cork's train station a ½ a mile east. Elga Register opened a store at the new rail station site and renamed the area Dover for recent settlers from Dover, Delaware. In 1889, Mr. Pass managed Oscar Strickland's mercantile store in Dover. Within a year, however, Oscar Strickland moved the store to Sydney, and Mr. Pass followed suit. This did not preclude Dover from being surveyed on January 30, 1891, and filed for a plat on April 13, 1891. Several lots were platted on the north and south sides of the South Florida Rail Road lines paralleling State Road 574. viii

Because of its closeness to the railroad tracks, Dover became a shipping and trading
center for area farms. Consequently, Dover shipped Hillsborough County's first train carload of strawberries out of the state to J.H. Schneider and Company of New York in 1897. Within twenty years 100 people resided in Dover. By that time the settlement had a telephone connection, Thomas R. Williams served as postmaster, Don Walden ran a general store, and Wingate and Williams ran the other general store. Residents could obtain lumber to construct their homes and businesses at A. Johnson’s saw mill. J.L. DeShong, Hugh and J.W. Gallagher, W.E. Lee, W.C. Moore, J.L Stokes, and J.E. Williamson were all prosperous orange growers.

Dover ranked second only to Plant City in shipments of strawberries, due, in large part, to the formation of the Dover Growers Corporation in 1919. Formed by Dover residents J.W. Forbes, J.E. Williamson (orange grower), Hugh Gallagher (orange grower), C.E. Williamson (orange grower), J.W. Forbes, Jr., J.W. Gallagher, Jr. (orange grower), G.B. Rouse, J.C. English (truck grower and wholesale fruits), and J.P. Claville, the corporation operated until 1937, when it folded during the height of the Great Depression.

By 1925 Dover's population reached 250, and Thomas Williams still served as postmaster. Two general stores operated in Dover, as well as a garage and a restaurant. Truck farmers and orange growers prospered with the formation of the Dover Growers Corporation. The greater Dover area population grew to 1495 in 1930, consisting of 818 males and 677 females. A mere 86 African Americans lived in the vicinity, and of the 1409 Whites, 1392 were native born.

Since the 1930s, farms were being consolidated in fewer but larger holdings. While prior to World War II a five acre strawberry farm was considered large, today a fifty acre farm would be considered small.

v. Darrie Hatcher Walden, "Rural Teaching was Creative," *Florida Schools* 38(3)(January 1976), 12.


viii. Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City*, 68; Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States, “General Land Office, Automated Records Project, Pre-1908 Homestead and Cash Entry Patents;” “Place Names in Hillsborough County,” (Hillsborough County File, Pizzo Collection, USF Special Collections); Plat Book 1, page 44, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Hillsborough County; Rishel, "Pioneer Settlers of Dover had Many Thrilling Experiences in Early Days, What with Indians and Numerous Varieties of Wild Animals throughout Section Now Rich Farming Area".


