Lutz
Hannah Lake
Lutz Lake
Lake Brooker
Commiston Lake
Cool Kell Lake
Hobbs Lake
Little Deer Lake
Sapphire Lake
Lake Stemper

4 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.
Lutz (Stemper)

Throughout most of the 19th century, northern Hillsborough County was settled with just a handful of homesteaders scattered across the landscape. In 1855 the state sold land around present day Lutz for one-dollar an acre. Despite such a giveaway, this section of the county still had few settlers. A colony of German Catholics established a community known as Stemper on the northwest shore of Lake Hanna in Township 27 South, Range 18 East, Section 13 during the 1890s. Led by Father Xavier A. Stemper, the immigrants created a school for area children and established a post office on November 17, 1893, with Father Stemper serving as postmaster. A stagecoach route went through the community, connecting Tampa to Brooksville. The turpentine industry dominated the area, and established a still in the heart of Stemper. By 1910, the community had workmen’s houses, a school, a grocery store, and the voting place for the district.¹

At the turn of the century, W.P. Lutz, a West Virginia engineer, built a sawmill producing shingles, several miles north of present-day Lutz, which became known as Shingleton. Mr. Lutz sold his mill in 1907 and opened Gulf Pine Lumber Company in Odessa. Because of the importance of the timber industry throughout the region, railroads were an economic necessity to get the lumber to the mills. In 1907, the Tampa Northern Railroad was completed, connecting Tampa to Brooksville. Mr. Lutz engineered the Tampa Gulf Coast Railway (a.k.a., the Peavine) which connected Odessa to the Tampa Northern Railroad in 1909. Where these two lines met in Township 27 South, Range 18 East, Section 12 was called Lutz Junction. ii

A timber company owned approximately 200 acres of land in and around Stemper by 1910, but it had yet tapped the trees and cut them down for lumber. Consequently, the North Tampa Land Company passed over Stemper when they planned on developing the region. Clinton Eugene “Gene” Thomas, D.P. Robertson, and F. Ben Davis -- all Chicago, Illinois, residents -- incorporated the North Tampa Land Company on September 9, 1911, with its main office in Tampa. They purchased approximately 32,000 acres around Lutz Junction, advertising farm property and residential lots for sale through fliers and magazine adds. The residential lots were platted along the Tampa Northern Railway tracks and State Road 5, approximately four miles north of Stemper, calling the town-to-be North Tampa. Those properties to the west of SR 5 were known as West North Tampa and to the east as East North Tampa. A two-story hotel became the town’s first building, constructed by the North Tampa Land Company to house prospective buyers. Mike Riegler, a 30-year-old German immigrant from New York City, became North Tampa’s first colonist in January 1911, growing citrus on his newly purchased property. Others from as faraway as Chicago, Il; Battle Creek, Mi; Pittsburgh, Pa; and Louisville, Ky; followed in Riegler’s footsteps, and by 1912 enough people lived in North Tampa to demand a post office. However, postal officials refused to accept the name North Tampa because of the possible confusion that might have arisen with Tampa’s post office. Settlers and postal officials compromised on the name Lutz, and moved Stemper’s post office to Lutz on March 27, 1912. They named the settlement after W.P. Lutz and his brother C.E. Lutz. As with the post office, Stemper also lost its school and voting place to Lutz. Consequently, Lutz grew at the expense of its neighbor.
Lutz had a large enough population in 1918 to support a United Brethren Church, four general stores and George Fensinger’s canning factory. Much of Lutz’s success is owed to C.E. Thomas, whose association with Lutz did not stop with the selling of property. He built Lutz’s new post office, provided the burgeoning community with a wood frame school and the half-acre of land it sat on, donated the property for the town’s first cemetery and church. By 1912, Miss Callie Berry taught 37 students in grades one through eight at Lutz’s school. The C.E. Thomas Nursery, west of the community, provided an income to many of Lutz’s residents. The nursery leased any cleared land in the vicinity, planting nursery stock, and in the process became the state’s second largest nursery. Residents also sold their farm produce in Tampa, cut cross ties for the railroads, worked in area groves, or worked at the sawmills to supplement their incomes. With the economic success, by 1920, 489 people called the greater Lutz/Stemper area home. In 1921, Lutz received its first paved road, State Road 5 (later to be renamed U.S. 41), connecting the community with Tampa. By the height of the land boom, Lutz had two churches, and E. Harvey Drake served as postmaster, notary, and lawyer. Only three general stores operated in Lutz, but the community gained a barber, a garage, a restaurant, and an express and telegraph agent. Further proof of the area’s growth was the construction of Lutz’s first brick school house which was completed in 1927.

The community’s population continued to flourish, increasing to 685 in 1930, 671 of whom were White and 14 of whom were Black. Lutz’s Black population remained quite small for many years because an African-American man was convicted of killing Mr. Chambers, a general store owner, with an ax in 1917. Lutz’s White population refused to allow any Blacks to live in the community with the exception of a few railroad section hands who lived in section houses located where the railroad crossed State Road 5. The genders were fairly evenly divided with 356 men and 329 women. Lutz had become a trading center for many of northwest Hillsborough County farmers. During the winter months, Lutz shipped via rail citrus gift boxes and baskets. During the summer, Lutz primarily transported watermelons. By 1939, residents founded Lutz’s First Baptist Church. The addition of churches is a good indication of population expansion. By 1945, Lutz grew to 1,492 people, 1,475 of whom were White and 17 of whom were Black. Churches continued to be founded with Tims Memorial Presbyterian Church established in 1947 and the Church of Christ in 1951.

Throughout the 1980s, citrus production still dominated much of the region around Lutz and Odessa. However, Tampanians, many of whom were associated with the University of South Florida, began moving to Lutz during this era, transforming many sections of Lutz into bedroom communities of Tampa. Not surprisingly, by 1990, 10,552 people called Lutz home.

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