Lake Fern
Calm Lake
Lake Faye
Lake Fern
Lake Wood
Crescent Lake
Lake Elizabeth
Island Ford Lake
Lake Loney
Mound Lake

3 pgs

The following is an excerpt from:
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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.
Lake Fern

Lake Fern is the northernmost community in northwest Hillsborough County, right across the border from Odessa. According to the book *Florida Place Names*, both the community and the nearby lake received the name Lake Fern because of the “luxuriant growth of wild ferns” that grew around the lake. One or two early settlers lived in the area in 1882. Like its neighbors, Lake Fern did not develop until the early part of the 20th century when turpentine stills and sawmills began operation in the area. During the first decade of the 20th century the Dowling Lumber Company and the Lyon Pine Mill, both based in Odessa, began buying large tracts of land throughout the region. Because of these developments, Lake Fern became a stop on the railroad.

People like William and Berth Saylor began moving into the Lake Fern area in the early teens. The Saylors were Pennsylvania natives who bought property in Lake Fern for $25 an acre in 1913. After building their house from lumber milled at local sawmills, they worked in the area’s citrus groves, packing plants, and sawmills. To further supplement their income, the Saylors grew their own vegetables and citrus trees, selling the produce in Tarpon Springs.

The Saylors were not alone in Lake Fern. Enough families with children existed for the two-story frame vernacular school to be built in 1913. It has been rumored that the building plans for Brandon and Lake Fern were switched and the wrong buildings were constructed in both places. Through the early 1940s, Lake Fern operated as a one-teacher school, supposedly the last in Hillsborough County. A local church and Sunday school utilized one of the building’s two downstairs classrooms for services. Additionally, a local chapter of the Masonic lodge and Eastern Star utilized the upstairs auditorium as a meeting place.

By the early 1920s, much of the region’s timber had been cut and citrus groves filled the deforested landscape. In 1925, two separate fires burned down both of Odessa’s sawmills. Those that could survived off their farms, while others moved on looking for other work. By the 1930s Lake Fern continued operating as a flag stop on the Seaboard Air Line Railroad and most people grew oranges. The area east of Lake Fern was described as “some of the most desolate land in the County. Isolated cypress swamps, and vast plains of struggling marsh grass is all that meets the eye. These lands are not even good hunting ground, as there is insufficient vegetation to sustain animal or bird life.”

Lake Fern survived the sawmill closures. Ms. Leila Turner Clark taught at Lake Fern school from 1937 to 1941, during which time she boarded at the home of Norman B. and Margaret Shewfelt. Falling in love with their son, Ray, they married, and the new Mrs. Clark became a permanent member of the Lake Fern community. She attended a local church, participated in civic activities, fish fries, and the ladies club. In 1950, the elementary age children no longer attended Lake Fern, instead they were sent to Lutz. The Masons continued to utilize the building until it burned down on October 26, 1963.
Since the 1960s, Lake Fern has experienced developmental pressure as Tampa commuters expanded north, Tarpon Springs commuters expanded east, and Odessa commuters spread south. While Keystone and Citrus Park has experienced the brunt of the expansion, Lake Fern cannot be far behind.\textsuperscript{vi}


\textsuperscript{iv}Federal Writers’ Project, \textit{Seeing Tampa}, 149.


\textsuperscript{vi}Andrew Gross, “Odessa: Living on the Edge,” \textit{Tampa Tribune} November 26, 1987, 1NW, 3NW.