Lillibridge
Alafia River
Hurrah Creek
Boggy Branch
Chito Branch
Owens Branch Creek
Pollard Branch

3 pgs

The following is an excerpt from:

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT

Submitted to:
Florida Department of State
Bureau of Historic Preservation

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Prepared by:
Hillsborough County Planning & Growth Management
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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.
Located in east Hillsborough County along Jameson Road approximately three miles east of State Road 39, Morton M. Lillibridge founded the community of Lillibridge in the 1880s. Mr. Lillibridge immigrated from Texas in the early 1880s, homesteading 160 acres in Township 31 South, Range 22 East, Section 10. Mr. Lillibridge bought lumber from Daniel McQueen Blue’s sawmill in Keysville to build his home. Constructing a 16-by-16 foot house with two rooms, interestingly Mr. Lillibridge did not put a ceiling on the main room, leaving it open to the elements. In 1889, Mr. Lillibridge was joined by Roger Sherman Lillibridge, his brother, and Corrine, Roger’s wife, and their son Cliff. Their neighbors in this sparsely settled area included the Jamesons, Owens, Lightseys, Clarks, Trapnells, and Stewarts, to name a few. Most residents farmed, raising strawberries, and oranges. Until the 1890s, Lillibridge remained quite rural and isolated. Lacking a bridge across the Alafia River, it took three days by oxcart to reach Tampa, where Lillibridge farmers sold much of their produce, and come back.i

With the discovery of phosphate by 1890, Lillibridge began to prosper. Newcomers started arriving, moving to the area to work in the phosphate pits. Coupled with phosphate, lumber and turpentine industries set up operations near Lillibridge to exploit the region’s expansive tracts of virgin long leaf pine. F.M. Carter, a Picnic resident, owned and operated the turpentine still with camps located northeast and southeast of Lillibridge. Clarence Bugbee, a Lillibridge resident, operated a sawmill and gristmill. Mr. Bugbee also ran a blacksmith shop with Mr. Carter being his largest customer. Around 1903, the county erected a bridge across the South Prong of the Alafia River, greatly reducing travel times to Plant City, Tampa, and other communities. In 1905, the Seaboard Air Line Railroad laid tracts from Keysville to Bartow, passing through Lillibridge. Because of the region’s prosperity, Roger Lillibridge opened a post office in his home on October 4, 1897. While Mr. Lillibridge was post master, his wife did much of the work when she was not teaching piano lessons. Prior to this, residents trekked to Keysville, the closest post office, to pick up their mail.ii

With the bridge construction and improvement of the area’s road system, truck farming became another economic catalyst in the area. While no farmers struck it rich from truck farming, they were able to sustain their families from the sale of turnips and collard greens, supplemented by fishing and hunting. This development kept residents alive since the community’s boom did not last. In 1911, N. Smith and Company ran a general store and turpentine still in Lillibridge. Five years later, the Prairie Pebble Phosphate Company and the Coronet Phosphate Company acquired huge tracts of land in the area. About this time the area’s timber resources had been exhausted, forcing the turpentine and lumber industry to transplant to other regions. Likewise, the phosphate industry, while owning vast acres around Lillibridge, opted to mine richer ore elsewhere in the region. In 1916 the Seaboard Air Line Railroad abandoned the tracks it had constructed eleven years prior. Consequently, the post office shut its doors forever on September 30, 1916, with mail delivered from Lithia.iii
Lillibridge continued to decline. World War II saw the demise of the community when residents found jobs in Tampa and other towns. By the 1970s only four families resided in Lillibridge. Today, the area is still quite rural.iv


