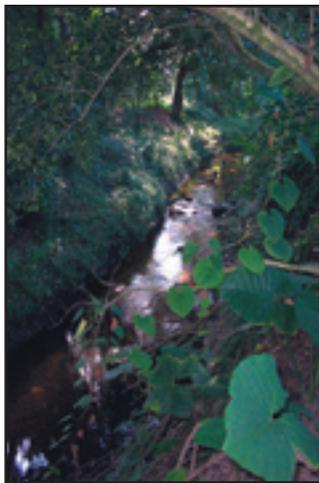


Buckhorn Creek



Buckhorn Creek in 2003 (USF)



View of creek and vegetation (USF)

The following narrative comes from an interview that took place with Buckhorn Creek resident Rob Davis on October 7, 2003. Rob and his family have lived near Buckhorn Creek for over thirty years and have seen how the changes to the surrounding area have affected the creek.

Personal History

Rob Davis moved to Buckhorn Creek in 1971. Their house was the second house being constructed in this neighborhood. The creek was a major motivating factor in the decision to move to this location. Rob remembers:

“We liked the creek. It was an isolated area. As you know, Bloomingdale was a two-lane road. You’d wake up in the morning and hear roosters and cows, not sirens and people honking horns and trucks.”

The area was far from the bustle of the city and the creek was a regular distraction. Even as more people moved into the area, the open atmosphere of the neighborhood encouraged picnickers and canoeists to enjoy the creek. Recently, the creek has undergone many changes, including a lower water level and the restriction of access to its banks, which has significantly reduced the number of visitors to the area. When the creek banks were accessible, the creek had provided a community atmosphere to the neighborhood that has been lost in recent years. Rob’s next door neighbor comments:

“We used to be able to walk all the way down behind the fire department, there were picnic tables set up, and the whole neighborhood would have picnics and barbeques. It was beautiful here, it really was. It was a good community thing.”

History/Information

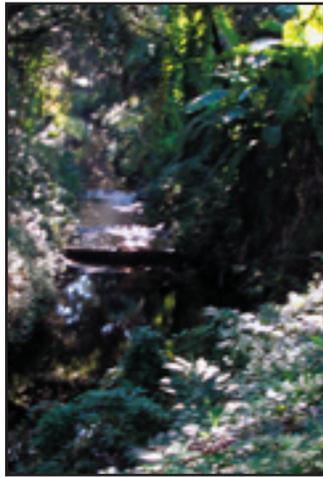
Buckhorn Creek is located in Brandon. The creek is part of the Alafia River Watershed and is 20,297 feet in length with two segments. Its headwaters are east of Bell Grande Drive in Bloomingdale and it empties out into the Alafia River (www.hillsborough.wateratlas.org).

Before neighborhoods began sprouting up around Buckhorn Creek it was mostly wilderness, and possibly a lumber mill. Rob explains:

“I’ve heard there was a lumber mill. I believe it because when we get a good soaking we still have what looks like diesel fuel bleed out of the soil.”



The banks of Buckhorn Creek (USF)



Trees and plants on banks of Buckhorn Creek (USF)

The city of Brandon was named after John Brandon, a landowner who had taken a special interest in his community by donating land for a church. His family would continue this tradition helping to make Brandon a functioning community. What cemented Brandon as a growing community was the inclusion of the railroad in 1890. With easier transportation to Tampa, the railroad made businesses and homes possible outside of the city, but still provided easy access to the conveniences of Tampa. In 1920 Brandon boasted a population of 492 people. With a change from trains to automobiles, Brandon's population grew to 5,000 in 1957 and mushroomed to 45,000 by 1975 and swallowed many of smaller surrounding communities in the process including Bloomingdale, Dover, Durant, Lithia, Limona, Mango, and Valrico.¹

The area surrounding Buckhorn creek has changed significantly since Rob moved to the creek. It is now a bustling suburban area with many neighborhoods along the length of the creek. One of the changes affecting the creek is the change in water level. Rob believes it was about four or five years ago that the water level dropped. Rob notes:

"It was always at least two feet deep... you never used to be able to see the clay down in the bottom, and it used to be crystal clear spring water. There were fish in it. I could go down over here in a canoe and canoe all the way to the Alafia River. You could fish in it, you could swim in it. It was gorgeous."

Rob believes that something was done to divert the water upstream, which has lead to the changes in water level and quality in the last few years. Rob explains:

"It was like all of a sudden it was diverted. On a rainy day it would get up to six feet high. I've seen it to the bottom of those trees and higher. During all the rain we've had lately, it hasn't even come up any higher than where it is now."

Rob and his neighbors have also been combating erosion along the steep banks of the creek by planting trees and maintaining the conditions around the creek. Rob and his neighbor believe that the change in the water quality has caused a chain-reaction that has resulted in fewer animals inhabiting the area due to the lack of food and clean water, and the loss of trees. Rob's neighbor comments:

"It's a shame they're letting it go, not taking care of what they had. We're losing trees. We're all trying to plant things to help hold the banks."

Rob has noticed a significant change in the number and diversity of animals that visit the creek or live in the general area. Rob explains the current conditions around the creek:

"The other day I saw a baby bald eagle. Now we have some snakes. We used to have fruit bats. At night the sky would fill with them. We used to have huge owls and woodpeckers. We used to have sandhill cranes walking through here. Fish hawks would come through here. You don't even see as many squirrels as you used to. I think it's because they can't drink the water, I mean there's nothing in there for them to eat."

Development



A tree planted to stop erosion (USF)



View of Buckhorn Creek (USF)

Buckhorn Creek is currently located in a suburban area. Many different neighborhoods are located along its path, but it also runs beneath many increasingly busy roads. Parts of this area are already beginning to evolve from neighborhoods to commercial properties.

This is a significant change from the area Rob moved into in 1971. Rob believes the changes to the area began in the eighties. Rob notes:

“It was in the ‘80s when things started developing, but it started to really, majorly develop in the ‘90s.”

With more people moving through the area on a regular basis, the creek began to suffer from littering, runoff, and neglect. Rob adds:

“On a rainy day we get McDonald’s wrappers and plastic bags in the creek.”

But the biggest concern Rob has for the current state of the creek is its maintenance. At the moment, residents are left with the responsibility of keeping the area surrounding the creek clean and maintaining the surrounding vegetation. In the past this was the responsibility of the county. Rob comments:

“The county used to maintain it, keep it clean and pretty. There are bananas and stuff growing. Now, it’s getting run over by the wild potato vines.”

The Future

Rob is concerned about the future of Buckhorn Creek. As development continues to increase in the area, Buckhorn Creek may see increased problems, or it may see increased interest. Right now, Rob believes the best thing that can be done for the creek is to see the water flow restored because the lack of water has left the creek stagnant in parts which has led to degradation of the surrounding wildlife. Rob explains:

“I’d like to see the water flow through here again, it would solve so many problems- we’re unbalanced now... fortunately there’s only about 12 or 15 of us who live on the creek between Bloomingdale and Kings Avenue.”

(Endnotes)

¹ *Hillsborough County Historic Resources Survey Report*. 1998. Prepared by Hillsborough County Planning & Growth Management.

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