

Balm

**Bell Creek
Carlton Branch Creek
Carlton Lake
Lake Grady
Pierce Branch Creek**

3 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.

Balm

Located around the intersection of Balm-Wimauma Road and County Road 672 in the southern part of the county, Balm's history extends back to the latter part of the 19th century. Reportedly, the community received its name when a resident was told that one was needed to open a post office. Upon hearing this, the person supposedly looked outside upon such a beautiful, calm view that he named it Balm. However, when the post office was established on May 14, 1902, it was called Doric. The name was changed on June 7, 1902, to Balm.ⁱ Obviously, the Federal Writers Project members had not heard the story of the naming of Balm when they wrote in the 1930s:

It [Balm] is a flag stop for the Seaboard Air Line Railway. Why this point was named for the aromatic exudations of the balsam is a moot question. Probably because the railroad station was balm to the hearts of the weary hog drovers who used to ship their malodorous charges at the station.ⁱⁱ

Before the post office was created, H.S. Hicks sold the Seaboard Air Line Railway a right-of-way through his property on condition that a station be built in the community. The railroad company built a one room station along with a water tank for the trains. H.D. Sweat established a general store in 1905 across the street from the new station. By 1911, Balm supported a blacksmith, two saw mills, a teacher, and a general store. H.D. Sweat also served as Balm's postmaster from 1907 to 1948. Like other small communities in rural Hillsborough County, the general store in Balm became one of the focal points of the community. Farmers from far and wide would make a weekly trip to the store on Saturdays, sometimes camping out overnight, returning home on Sunday. Many farmers had accounts with the store that had to be paid once a year. This practice of buying on yearly credit continued up through 1952, whereupon the store's owner decided bills had to be paid by week's end.ⁱⁱⁱ

The principal land owners in and around Balm in 1916 consisted of L. McNeill, Mrs. Potter Palmer, H.D. Sweat, and J.D. Sweat. Two hundred people lived in or around Balm in 1918. They attended a Baptist church on Sundays, and continued to support the same number and types of businesses as in 1911. During this era, most farmers owned small plots of land ranging in size from five to fifteen acres, growing mostly vegetables and some citrus. While having small tracts of land, the farmers were able to support Mays Packing Company which shipped from Balm as well as Plant City and Seffner. Bethel James Sweat bought his first forty acres for \$250 in 1910 and within a few years became one of Balm's more successful farmers, growing beans, cabbage, citrus, potatoes, and strawberries, as well as raising cattle. In 1925, the population grew to 250 people, but they only supported a blacksmith, a notary, one general store, and one saw mill.^{iv}

Electricity reached Balm in 1937, and telephone service less than a decade later. The first was installed in the county road barn where everyone in the area utilized it. The need for additional phones arose by 1945 when Balm and its surrounding environs had a population of 1,009.^v

World War Two brought tremendous changes to Balm. Many people left the farms to work in Tampa and other cities' industrial plants. Following the war, the area witnessed an exodus of young people to urban areas. Consequently, the number of farmers has decreased in the community. By the 1960s, citrus came to dominate the farm produce. Additionally, as farmers began moving out, non-farmers bought ten or even twenty acre lots to build their homes. Today, the area is still dominated by agriculture, especially citrus.^{vi}

i. Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 5; Chris Jennewein, "Balm, More and More People are Moving to this Tiny Community in the Southeast Portion of Hillsborough County," *East Hillsborough Tribune* August 1, 1974, 8F; Lindsay Peterson, "Residents Savor Balm's Serenity--at Least for Now," *East Hillsborough Tribune* August 13, 1986, 1EH.

ii. Federal Writers' Project, *Seeing Tampa*, 129.

iii. Julian Efird, "Old Country Store's Still Center of Community Life," *Tampa Times* August 13, 1966, 4; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1911-1912* (Jacksonville, FL: R.L. Polk & Co., Publishers, 1911), 58; Jennewein, "Balm, More and More People are Moving to this Tiny Community in the Southeast Portion of Hillsborough County," 8F.

iv. *Atlas of Hillsborough County, 1916*, 61-62; Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City, Its Origin and History*, 177; Efird, "Old Country Store's Still Center of Community Life," 4; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1918*, 75; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1925*, 88; Jennewein, "Balm, More and More People are Moving to this Tiny Community in the Southeast Portion of Hillsborough County," 8F; "Oldest Active Farming Family Honored," *Plant City Courier* February 27, 1976.

v. Efird, "Old Country Store's Still Center of Community Life," 4; Jennewein, "Balm, More and More People are Moving to this Tiny Community in the Southeast Portion of Hillsborough County," 8F; *The Seventh Census of the State of Florida, 1945* (Tallahassee, FL, Department of Agriculture, 1945), 32.

vi. Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City, Its Origin and History*, 211; Jennewein, "Balm, More and More People are Moving to this Tiny Community in the Southeast Portion of Hillsborough County," 8F; Peterson, "Residents Savor Balm's Serenity--at least for now," 4EH.