

Coronet
English Creek
Howell 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.

Coronet

Located approximately five miles southeast of Plant City, along County Road 574A (Coronet Road), Coronet began as a company town. C.A. Cowles and George Galbraith incorporated Coronet Phosphate Company in 1906, one of several small companies with plans to mine the rich phosphate deposits of eastern Hillsborough County. Acquiring large tracts of land in Hillsborough, the company began mining phosphate in 1908, the same year the Ford Model T went into production. This same year, the company began constructing plant facilities in the area that would become Coronet, laying the cornerstones for the plant powerhouse, machine and carpenter's shop, employee's club house, and the company's laboratory. Coronet company carpenters erected the buildings and constructed a total of 96 worker cottages, 24 for its Black employees and 72 for its White employees, between 1908 and 1911. Despite the employee housing, the majority of workers commuted from Plant City and surrounding areas.ⁱ

While the general perception of company towns is one of poverty and uncleanness, Coronet, like its Ybor City cousin, was neither of these. Coronet cottages were large in comparison to Ybor City's shotgun cigarworker houses, many having three bedrooms, rectangular in plan with porches and hardwood floors. Workers paid a monthly rent for their homes, and like apartment complexes of today, the company kept the grounds, maintained the roads, and fixed any problems the houses developed. The company also constructed tennis courts and a swimming pool, located behind the director's bungalow which was built in 1912. Through the efforts of E.C. Stuart, a Coronet director, the company built a Presbyterian church. Reverend W.D.F. Snipes served as its first minister. By 1930, however, the church was torn down after most of its members had moved to other communities in East Hillsborough. As with other company towns, Coronet also operated a general store between 1909 and 1973, supplying most employees' food and dry good needs. Employees received a portion of their pay in company script which was utilized in the general store. Known as "The Spotless Town," Coronet 500 feet deep artesian wells, was free of Typhoid Fever, and had a sanitary operation.ⁱⁱ

During the mid-1920s, the Coronet company depleted the phosphate supply around Coronet and moved its mining operations four to five miles south around Hopewell and an area just outside of Mulberry in Polk County. The Coronet facilities were still used by the company, despite the new mines. As Germany waged war across the face of Europe during the late 1930s and 1940s, American supplies of phosphorous feed supplements were cut off. At the urging of the United States Department of Agriculture, Coronet began developing alternative feed supplement sources. Developing alternatives during the war, in 1945, Coronet Phosphate Company built a defluorinating plant at its Coronet facilities. Hereinafter, the Coronet plant focused on supplying the nation and much of the world with the feed supplement "Coronet Defluorinated Phosphate." By the early 1950s all of Coronet's mines existed in Polk County. In 1952, the Smith-Douglass Company, a fertilizer manufacturer, bought out Coronet Phosphate Company. Twelve years later, Borden, Inc., took control of Smith-Douglass, with Coronet falling under the Chemical Division's Agricultural Chemical section. Because of improved transportation, workers no longer needed to reside close to the Coronet facilities. Consequently, in 1958, Smith-

Douglass sold the company houses to its workers with prices ranging from \$200 to \$500, not including the cost of moving the structures. By 1964, all the worker houses had been sold and moved, most of which were scattered across eastern Hillsborough and western Polk Counties.ⁱⁱⁱ

i. "Coronet, A Phosphate Company Town, Historical Background of Site," (copy courtesy of Coronet Industries, Inc., files); A.A. Cowles to The Shareholders of the Coronet Phosphate Company, February 2, 1912 (Phosphate Mining Historical File, QGBA); Raymond Driver, *Bone Valley "Comes to Life"* (Tampa, FL:n.p., 1992), 63; HTHCPB, *The Cultural Resources of the Unincorporated Portions of Hillsborough County*, 20; Robert M. Wilbur, "A Brief History of The Coronet Phosphate Company," (Phosphate Mining Historical File, QGBA, 1974), 1.

ii. Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City*, 183-184; "Coronet, A Phosphate Company Town, Historical Background of Site," (copy courtesy of Coronet Industries, Inc., files); Federal Writers' Project, *Seeing Tampa*, 135-136; Mark Fisher, "Coronet," *East Hillsborough Tribune* September 12, 1974, 4-F; HTHCPB, *The Cultural Resources of the Unincorporated Portions of Hillsborough County*, 20,23; Morris, *Florida Place Names*, 57; Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County, Florida*, 77-78.

iii. Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City*, 181-185; "Coronet, A Phosphate Company Town, Historical Background of Site;" HTHCPB, *The Cultural Resources of the Unincorporated Portions of Hillsborough County*, 24; Wilbur, "A Brief History of The Coronet Phosphate Company," 2-5.