

Mango
Lake Mango

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The following is an excerpt from:
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY
HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY REPORT

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Mango

Along with Plant City and Tampa, other communities profited from the building of Henry Plant's South Florida Railroad in 1883, including Mango, Seffner, and Dover.

Homesteaders, however, began settling in the area several decades before Plant even dreamed of his railroad. James Goff filed for a homestead of 160 acres in Township 29 South, Range 20 East, Section 3 on October 9, 1849. Exactly one year to the day, the 1850 census listed Mr. Goff as a 47-year-old politician from Virginia. Eleven other people resided with him including Elizabeth Goff, his 37-year-old Georgia native wife, his seven children, and three unrelated individuals. The Goff family eventually had neighbors as others moved into the area, including Adaline Holder, Jesse Deshang, and Robert Booley, all of whom filed for homesteads in Section 4 between 1852 and 1860. In 1850, Adaline Holder was listed as a 24-year-old Georgian, married to Samuel Holder, a 47-year-old Georgian born farmer, and they had two children.ⁱ

People slowly trickled into the region, and by March 25, 1880, enough settlers lived in the area for W.M. Groves to establish a post office in Mango. Several legends exist as to the origin of Mango's name. One that persists even though it is easily disproved is that a Native American riding Henry Plant's train wanted to get off in Mango. Supposedly at that time it had no name or train depot. The conductor slowed the train down and yelled "Man go!" Thus, the two words were eventually combined to form the name Mango. The factual problem with this tale is that the name Mango existed before the train tracks were ever laid out. Another story states that Mango received its name from a mango grove located on a hill in the area. The grove disappeared in 1895, reportedly destroyed by a freeze.ⁱⁱ

Most Mango residents farmed for a livelihood. They raised cattle and grew a wide variety of produce, including corn, oranges, sugar cane, cotton, rice, potatoes, tomatoes, strawberries, a variety of melons, turnips. As with every other community in Hillsborough County, Mango farmers were concerned about their children's education. They petitioned the school board and received a school named Wilson Academy on September 6, 1882. Three years later the school was renamed Mango School. On the eve of the construction of the South Florida Railroad, 34 farmers tilled 3282 acres of Mango soil. The average farm totaled 97 acres, but ranged from J.M Weinpeigler's 15 acres to E. Stefferd's 300-acre plantation. With Henry Plant's railroad built through the community in 1883, area farmers prospered by being able to get their produce to Tampa, Plant City, and other markets throughout the country quicker. However, not all people were pleased with the way Plant obtained the land for his train. Reportedly all "odd sections" throughout Mango were given to the railroad without owner consent. Foreshadowing the Joad family's experience in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, one Mango resident threatened to shoot any man or railroad that came to take his land. However, as with the Joad family's inability to stop the bank from repossessing the family farm, the Mango resident, despite such threats, was unable to stop the railroad.ⁱⁱⁱ

Prior to the railroad, Mango was 11 miles from Tampa and described as situated on the backroad to Bartow. After the railroad, Mango residents could reach Tampa in 25

minutes, but the community remained small. E.A. Hewitt, Moses Hewitt, and H.M. Bryan were the community's prominent men in 1885. Mr. E.A. Hewitt was responsible for the platting of Mango in 1884, Mr. Bryan owned a 200-acre farm where he grew oranges, and Moses Hewitt operated a grocery and hardware store. In 1886, Mango became a bustling little community where property sold from \$25 to \$50 an acre. William Groves served as postmaster and M.E. Moody worked as assistant postmaster. Mr. O. Mansfield was constable and J.A. Kelly, when not making residents' shoes, was justice of the peace. Mango touted several stores, a hotel, a steam powered saw mill, and two churches (a Baptist and a Methodist). The school, train, platting, and businesses notwithstanding, Mango only had a population of around 30 in 1888 and 45 in 1893.^{iv}

Mango continued to grow and shrink at a slow pace during the early days of the twentieth century. The post office was discontinued on August 30, 1902, with mail delivered from Seffner, Mango's bigger neighbor to the east. Less than three years later, the post office was reopened on January 11, 1905. For many people, their closest neighbor might be a mile away. In 1912, when Kansas native Hugh M. Sampson Sr., settled on 60 acres of land off Falkenburg Road near U.S. 92, there were no more than 12 houses in a two-mile radius. By 1918, the two prominent businesses in Mango were M.W. Bryan's general store and J.V. Suggs blacksmith shop. However, as Florida grew and blossomed during the 1920s, so did Mango. In 1925, the majority of people raised poultry and dairy cows and were fruit and truck growers. There were even two beekeepers in Mango. Area residents supported two general stores, two notaries, two carpenters, a barber, and a baker.^v

As part of this prosperity, Mango's 1930 population reached 821, consisting of 426 males and 395 females. The majority of residents were White with only 86 African Americans. Of the White population, 704 were native born while 31 were foreign born. Important African American leaders included Sam Thomas, Estella Thomas, Emma Wulie and Hugh Wylie. St. Mary's African Methodist Episcopal Church and Israel Bethel Baptist Church were two important institutions for the Black community.^{vi} By the mid-1930s, Mango was described as "a progressive rural community situated in a grove of century-old oaks. The many citrus groves planted on the rolling lands around Mango furnish a picturesque setting for the town."^{vii}

As Americans celebrated victory over Nazi Germany, Mango's population exploded to 1751, consisting of 1655 Whites and 96 blacks. Post-World War II events fueled change throughout Hillsborough County which in turn heavily impacted Mango. As Brandon, Mango's neighbor to the south, has grown both demographically and spatially, it has partially swallowed up the identity of Mango, leaving most newcomers to believe that it is just part of the greater Brandon community. While many older residents resisted selling their property up through the 1970s, many new people have moved into the area. Today, Mango is bounded by Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Williams Road, Columbus Drive and State Road 579. This square area consists of roughly 11,500 people, many of whom commute from Mango to Brandon or Tampa for work. Mango is no longer a rural community, but a mosaic of neighborhoods interspersed among tracts of undeveloped farm lands.^{viii}

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- i. Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City*, 73-77; *Hillsborough County, Florida, 1850 Census*, 4,38; U.S. Department of the Interior, "General Land Office, Automated Records Project, Pre-1908 Homestead and Cash Entry Patents."
- ii. Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 51; Chris Jennewein, "Mango," *East Hillsborough Tribune* June 27, 1974, 4F; Morris, *Florida Place Names*, 155; Jennifer Stevenson, "Mango Trees Don't Grow in Mango," *St. Petersburg Times* October 3, 1989.
- iii. Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City*, 67-68,73-77; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1883-1884*, 360-361; "Mango Items," *The Sunland Tribune* September 2, 1880, 3; "Mango Items," *The Sunland Tribune* September 16, 1880, 1; "Mango Items," *The Sunland Tribune* May 28, 1881, 3; "Mango Items," *The Sunland Tribune* June 18, 1881, 1; "Mango, Fla., June 26, 1881," *The Sunland Tribune* July 9, 1881, 1; "Mango," *The Sunland Tribune* March 23, 1882, 2; "Mango Dots," *The Sunland Tribune* August 17, 1882, 3; "Mango Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* April 18, 1893, 2; "Mango Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* August 10, 1893, 1; "Mango Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* August 17, 1893, 1; "Mango Items," *Tampa Weekly Tribune* October 13, 1893, 5; *When History was in the Making*, 5,12.
- iv. Clarke, *The Gate-to-the-Gulf (Tampa) City Directory, and Hillsboro County Guide, 1893*, 208; Deed Book K, page 500, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Hillsborough County, Tampa, Florida; *Florida Sate Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1886-1887*, 287; Wall, "The Yellow Fever in Tampa, Plant City, Manatee, and Palmetto," 69; Webb, *Webb's Florida, Historical, Industrial, & Biographical*, 58.
- v. Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 51; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1918*, 361; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1925*, 530; Jennewein, "Mango," 4F.
- vi. Gladys Brown, "Mango, Seffner, and Thonotosassa—Seedbed of Black Firsts," *Florida Sentinel-Bulletin* June 15, 1976; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, Population Bulletin, Second Series, Florida Composition and Characteristics of the Population*, 51.
- vii. Federal Writers' Project, *Seeing Tampa*, 132.
- viii. Brown, "Mango, Seffner and Thonotosassa"; Jennewein, "Mango," 1F,4F; Planning Commission, *Central Hillsborough Communities Plan*, 6,36-37; *The Seventh Census of the State of Florida, 1945*, 31.