

Picnic

**Alafia River
Hurrah Creek
Hurrah Lake
Chito Branch**

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.

Picnic (Hurrah)

The intersections of State Road 39 and Carter Road, just north of County Road 672, constitutes the heart of Picnic. Originally known as Hurrah, early settlers included the Colding, Carter, Lewis, Lyons, Lastinger, West, and Freeman families, some of whom arrived shortly after the Civil War. Farming predominated throughout the entire region with families growing a variety of vegetables, sweet potatoes, and sugarcane, as well as raising hogs and cattle. Farmers shot deer and wild turkeys to supplement what they grew. Reminiscent of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings novel *The Yearling*, Hurrah families adopted fawns, but unlike the book, many of the animals made good pets for farm children. The area was sparsely settled, and in many cases the closest neighbor would be several miles away. Because of this, children grew up and married people who lived close to their homes. Through time this created a closely knit group of families bound to one another through marriage.ⁱ

The years between 1870 and 1890 witnessed several important events for Hurrah. By 1870, 446 people called Hurrah home. Of these people, only one person was foreign born and twenty were African American, with the majority being native Whites. Hurrah Baptist Church served the religious needs of the settlement in 1870, where the pastor baptized members in Hurrah Creek. With such a large population, Hurrah school was established in October 1875, and George W. Colding founded a post office on November 2, 1880. Mr. Colding called this post office Picnic, not Hurrah, indicating the possible existence of two separate communities in 1880. The post office was closed on February 2, 1883, with mail delivered from Keysville, but it was reopened on January 15, 1887. On September 18, 1885, the county school board appointed a G.W. Mitchell as trustee of Picnic School, an institution existing at the same time Hurrah School operated. These two schools were consolidated on August 4, 1889.ⁱⁱ

Apparently, Hurrah and Picnic existed as two separate communities for several years. Picnic reportedly obtained its name because political parties and rallies were held on the land of a local church. Additionally, people used to come from miles around for picnics and fish fries that took place on a flat piece of land located at the convergence of the Alafia River and Hurrah Creek. Hurrah's population dropped to 210 in 1890 but rose to 372 ten years later and then dipped to 334 in 1910. Sometime during the ups and downs of Hurrah's population in the early 20th century residents adopted the name of Picnic for the entire area, and Hurrah slowly faded from memory.ⁱⁱⁱ

At the dawn of the new century, F.M. Carter immigrated from Lowndess County, Georgia, to Picnic, establishing a turpentine still in the community, tapping the area's extensive tracts of long leaf yellow pine. Formerly a turpentine operator for West and Malloy Investment Company, he joined forces with his employer and formed the F.M. Carter Company. Turpentine came to dominate Picnic for the next twenty years, employing approximately three hundred men to extract pine tree gum, which in turn became the source for turpentine and rosin. Much of this material was shipped across the country, utilized in hundreds of products ranging from paint to medicines. To feed his workers, F.M. Carter Company opened a general store. By 1916, the company owned large tracts of land around Picnic, property essential to the turpentine industry. Farmers planted crops or raised cattle on those areas not used for turpentine. With the closure of the Picnic Post office on September 30, 1916, Picnic's boom period came to an end. Four years later, the turpentine prosperity waned as much of the area's resources were over exploited. In response Mr. Carter turned much of Picnic's forest into cross-ties. As he cleared the land, Mr. Carter planted approximately 400 acres in citrus for a S.E. Thatcher, a Miami resident.^{iv}

As the turpentine business busted and land values plummeted in the later half of the 1920s, Picnic landowners began selling their property to phosphate companies. Coronet Phosphate Company made inroads into the community by 1916, but the pace of land acquisition accelerated with the downward spiral of the economy. While many of the phosphate workers were bussed in from Polk County, residents of Picnic and surrounding communities also worked in the industry. By 1930, most of Picnic's 243 residents either farmed or mined. The population was fairly evenly divided along the gender line with 123 males and 120 females. However, like much of the rest of Hillsborough County communities, Whites far outnumbered Blacks, 225 to 18. By the mid-1930s, Picnic was described as "another crossroad town of a few stores and a filling station." Today, agriculture and phosphate mining continue to dominate Picnic.^v

i. Bailey, "A Study of Hillsborough County's History, Legend, and Folk Lore, with Implications for the Curriculum," 142; Terry Redding, "Way of Life in Picnic Suffering from Changes," *Tampa Tribune* August 21, 1985; Nixon Smiley, "Cookouts Once were Popular, so They Named Town Picnic" *Miami Herald* December 12, 1971, p.6G; U.S. Department of the Interior, "General Land Office, Automated Records Project, Pre-1908 Homestead and Cash Entry Patents."

ii. Bailey, "A Study of Hillsborough County's History, Legend, and Folk Lore, with Implications for the Curriculum," 128, 264; Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 66; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *A Compendium of the Ninth Census (June 1, 1870)* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), 136; *When History was in the Making*, 4, 7.

iii. Carol Neef, "Picnic," *Tampa Tribune* (undated newspaper clipping in Picnic Community History File, QGBAC); Smiley, "Cookouts Once were Popular, so They Named Town Picnic," 6G; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census, 1890, Part I - Population*, 88; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census Reports, Volume I, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Population, Part I*, 93; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Abstract of the Census*, 575.

iv. *Atlas of Hillsborough County*, 63; Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 66; Bruton and Bailey, *Plant City*, 116-117; Bryant, *Early History of Lithia, Hillsborough County*, 6; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1911-1912*, 358; Neef, "Picnic."

v. Federal Writers' Project, *Seeing Tampa*, 127; Patrice Flinchbaugh, "Picnic Miner Recalls Colorful Past," *Tampa Tribune* June 17, 1982, 4B; 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.