

Delaney Creek



View of Delaney Creek (Julia Moseley)



Delaney Creek (Julia Moseley)



Vegetation along Delaney Creek (Julia Moseley)

The following narrative is based on an interview with Tampa Bay natives Bill and Jean Westbrook in their home on July 21, 2004. In it they recall the changes to both Delaney Creek and to the Brandon area over more than 50 years.

Personal History

Bill and Jean have lived in their Brandon home for over 50 years, but both have memories of the area from their childhoods as well. Delaney Creek meanders through the greater Brandon area to Tampa Bay, weaving through private land, developments, and pastures. Jean recalls her introduction to Delaney Creek:

"Well, my experience began with what used to be called South Parsons Avenue. It used to get under water every time we had a bad rain; we just couldn't go down there. My parents had some friends who lived down there that we used to visit quite often. There was a dairy down there where we got milk, raw milk, but of course that's what we used then, and I think we got eggs also."

Bill echoes knowing the creek through his relationships with others who lived in the area:

"I knew about the creek from when I was young because of all the kids that lived around the creek, and we all went to school together. I have been in Delaney Creek and seined for bait to go fishing with. Delaney Creek was a source of bait fish and went through Florida Dairy."

Bill also recalls when Delaney Creek finally came to the attention of the greater Brandon area:

"They wanted to drain it, that's when it really came to the attention of the people. They wanted to put a well down there and drain it. Well, the first part of the story is that they blacktopped the road through there, and raised the road up, and the water couldn't run across and it flooded. They built a hospital down there. Anyway, that's when it came to our attention it was part of the upper end of Delaney Creek."

History/Information

Delaney Creek stretches over 11 miles from its headwaters in Brandon out to Hillsborough Bay. It is part of the natural drainage pattern of the area that channels water from the higher areas inland out to the bay. The lakes, creeks, and rivers form a chain of water drainage that moves the water in an east to west direction. Bill recalls the stories he heard of how you could ride from Brandon to the bay using Delaney Creek:

"The old timers used to say that in rainy weather you could put a row boat in at Parsons Avenue and go to Tampa Bay using Delaney Creek. That was the old timers, back then I was just a young man, 25 or 26 years old. And they were old timers then; in their 70's or 80's. So that's my knowledge, that's what the old timers used to tell me."

Bill recalls that the creek wasn't used for fishing or boating, but it was used to seine for fish. Bill explains:

"The creek was just there, as far as we were concerned it was a source of water for the cattle. The cows were in and out of it all the time. I don't think we ever drank out of it. There were hyacinths in it and no bridge crossed Delaney Creek."

The association of Delaney Creek and Parsons Avenue has historical significance. Bill explains:

"They used to drive cattle from the ridge to Tampa. And the last stop between there and Tampa was over here on Parsons. It was the last overnight stop before Tampa."

Aside from human intervention, Delaney Creek has flooded very few times. Bill recalls:

"I've only seen it up, in my lifetime, maybe a couple of times where it got so much rain, or during a hurricane, to where it was connected from the pond on West Parsons going west, and going how far I have no idea because it is a natural drainage, but it goes toward Limona. Limona goes to Lake Kathy, which used to be known as 10-Mile pond. Lake Kathy turns south and goes towards Delaney Creek and eventually leads into it... and the drainage will eventually work itself that way and into the bay... We just took it for granted that everybody knew about that. Well, when you start adding roads, and they always want to make the roadbed higher, you're creating dams; especially when it's north to south roads because the natural drainage is east to west. That's when the problems came in with the creek. Over the last 10 years they must have gotten it resolved."

Development

The greater Brandon area has boomed with development, but some areas of Delaney Creek have not been directly built on because some of the land is still privately owned and used as pasture land. Most of Delaney Creek, however, has been directly impacted by the construction of the Brandon Town Center, Interstate 75, the Crosstown Expressway, and Highway 301, among many other neighborhood developments and shopping centers and highways. While Delaney Creek has an increasing amount of impact from humans and automobiles, it has also had several problems from drainage changes. Bill explains:

"They have dammed up the access to the water [of Delaney Creek] from Parsons Avenue to Tampa Bay, in the name of progress. Well, when you do that, you are going to get in trouble. The first problem was with the pond behind the hospital, flooded out everything in the neighborhood. Then, they wanted to do away with the pond. Well, that's natural drainage. Delaney Creek was one source of outlet to Tampa Bay, where everything goes. Well, when they began to mess with Delaney Creek they messed up the natural flow of water and that created problems for everybody. They decided they wanted to drain this pond up here behind the hospital. The water used to run from one side of Parsons Avenue to the other, into Delaney Creek, and into the Bay. They were going to put a well in there, a big well. Back then there was only one well driller capable of doing it and he refused because it would mess up the aquifer. I think they settled on putting a big pipe into Delaney Creek for a certain distance. Whatever it was, it corrected the problem and everybody was happy. By then, the dairy had sold and been subdivided. That was when we really became aware of Delaney Creek."

The Future

Bill and Jean have seen many changes to the creek and the Brandon area. Delaney Creek has remained a quiet presence in their lives, and they believe that there is little else that can be done to Delaney Creek. Bill explains:

"I don't think anything will happen to the creek because it is a natural drainage. I think they have gone as far as they can possible go, as far as restricting the water... But I don't really think the creek itself has changed significantly, I think it's pretty much the same, from what we can see."

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