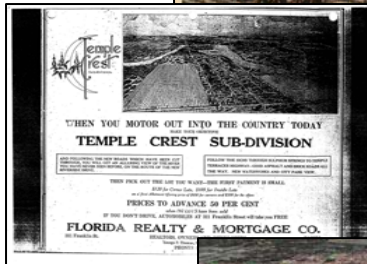


Times gone by...

Geologists believe that the Hillsborough River has been flowing for nearly 27,000 years; however the ecosystem you will see today is much different than the one that existed when humans are believed to have arrived in the area 15,000 years ago.

It is believed that the high bluffs on the north side of the Hillsborough River were home to a thriving Native American culture. After the Indians were driven out of Florida starting in the 1860's, the federal government began giving homesteads to anyone who would settle the wild Florida territory. By 1900, the area was owned by settlers. Between 1912-14 Bertha Potter-Palmer of Chicago and Sarasota's Spanish Point quietly bought 19,000 acres, or 26 square miles north of the river as a retreat she called "Riverhills Ranch."



Second Life

When Mrs. Palmer died in 1918 her two sons inherited the ranch. Briefly, for this history, the land was divided into two parts, Temple Terrace Estates, (present day Temple Terrace) and Temple Terraces, which included Temple Crest. Before residential development D.C. Gillette created the world's largest orange grove, 5,000 acres, planting the premium Temple orange. Although a freeze quickly destroyed the groves the name Temple became the term used in many of the areas new suburbs.

Modern Times

The entire southern boundary of the Temple Crest neighborhood borders the middle Hillsborough River. Although it is surrounded by a vast urban area there are a surprising number of ecological gems that have survived the developer's shovels. Today's tour highlights some of those endangered jewels.

The 5th Annual River Round Table State of the River Tour



Sponsored by

The River Round Table Friends of the River Temple Crest Civic Association

Very special thanks to John Knight and Gary Cothron for volunteering their boats and time for this tour. Also, thanks to Grant Rimbey for historical information.

Starting the tour we head south then west around the southern tip of the Temple Crest peninsula. Here we encounter the neighborhood's newest pride and joy, the 40th Street Bridge, part of the 40th Street Corridor Enhancement Project.

The New 40th Street Bridge



As featured in the spring 2009 issue of **ASPIRE Magazine**, "...The 40th Street Bridge in Tampa, Fla., features a single post-tensioned concrete span with special aesthetic treatments created by local high-school art students. They learned the basics of conceptual design, and contest winners had their designs' ideas, colors, and shapes incorporated into the formal aesthetic plan.

We feature the bridge on the tour because it represents the best of public and private partnerships, particular how great achievements can occur when government involves citizens in the designs of their neighborhood.

Greenwood Tract

Round the bend on your right is the Greenwood Tract, a 47-acre site that is still in a very good, natural state, with little evidence of human impact. The site is flat land which supports a flat woods forest with dense palmetto growth as well as many other native and invasive species. It is a rare wilderness within the city limits varied enough to support a varied animal population. According to an ELAPP assessment in 1987 there is evidence of opossums, raccoons, squirrels, snakes, woodpeckers, hawks, owls and waterfowl.



Today the Greenwood Tract remains untouched. However it is a wonderful piece of land within the dense urban area. We need to ensure it remains pristine and possibly, as part of several areas along this section of the river as a living laboratory to teach how ecosystems function. The land is owned by the City of Tampa.

Orange Lake

Just north and directly connected to the Greenwood Tract is Orange Lake. This 7-acre tract is an oxbow wetland marsh sitting between the Greenwood Tract and the Temple Crest Park. Again, according to a 1987 ELAPP assessment, "...Orange Lake is an outstanding geological and hydrological area that contains native, relatively unaltered flora and fauna, representing a natural habitat scarce within the City limits that could provide a significant habitat to support or protection of endangered or threatened plants or animals. Orange Lake provides valuable buffer zones to existing environmentally sensitive lands and is essential to the protection and management of those sensitive areas."



Orange Lake is in trouble. The onslaught of storm water pouring directly into its' waters, the cutting down of marsh grasses, invasive species and a general neglect is cutting into the nesting bird and other wildlife populations as well as native flora and fauna. The area is owned by the City of Tampa.

Blackwater Hammock

Directly across the river from Orange Lake is Blackwater Hammock, a 9-acre flat woods forest bordered on the east by the river, on the south by several residential lots, and on the west and north by a public golf course. The City of Tampa has completed the purchase of this site for \$200,000, with 40% of the acquisition costs being funded by Florida Communities Trust and the balance provided by ELAPP. This site will be managed by the City of Tampa in accordance with a management plan approved by the County's Parks, Recreation and Conservation Department and Florida Communities Trust.

This site causes one to wonder why Orange Lake and the Greenwood Tract do not have a management plan.



Lopez-Diez Land

Retracing our steps we head east towards Temple Terrace, a mile upstream. As we round a large bend in the river, to the south (on the right) is the Lopez-Diez property. This 16 acre property, a vestige of old Florida, is yet another large, undeveloped area hugging the Hillsborough River in the urban core. Home to many native species, including the threatened Gopher Tortoise, the property has a densely wooded WETLANDS area along the river banks which includes many large Live Oaks. Occupied by one single-family home while the other parcels are owned by several owners, developers have continued to try and develop the property. Most recently an attempt to build 200+ apartments was defeated by neighborhood efforts after a 3 year battle with the developer.

Understandably, the Lopez-Diez Property is another jewel in the chain of gems along this stretch of the Hillsborough River. Together with Orange Lake, Temple Crest Park, Greenwood Tract and Blackwater Hammock it is quite possible one of the largest collections, in an urban core, of environmentally sensitive lands in Hillsborough County

This land, along with the others must be kept from development as this ribbon of lands is linked for the enjoyment of river and land wanderers.



This land was recently nominated for ELAPP acquisition.

River Hills Drive Storm Water Sediment Trap

On the northern banks of the river, a six-foot diameter sediment trap was installed by the City of Tampa at the corner of 46th and River Hills Drive in 2006 at a cost of over \$300,000. Now, instead of storm water flowing freely into the Hillsborough River, the sediment trap removes oil and sediment from storm water during wet weather events. The sediment trap is capable of removing 80 percent of the total suspended sediment load as well as and 90 percent of the floatable free oil.

1897 Consumers Electric Dam

Consumers Electric built a dam to supply electricity for the city of Tampa's growing streetcar line. The farmers in the area were not as excited (their grazing lands were flooded) and on December 13th, 1898 they dynamited the dam. In 1898 the new Tampa Electric Company purchased the bankrupt Consumers Electric and abandoned plans to rebuild at the location moving to the site of the current 22nd City of Tampa dam.

When the water is low, remnants of the exploded dam can be seen. **This is a historically important site and should be nominated for the Historic Register.**



Batson House

The Batson House at 4817 E River Hills Drive in Tampa was built from stones of the exploded dam.