

SO, WHAT IS

LUCERNE PARK?



JEAN KAAS

PREFACE

All I wanted to do was tell you a little bit about the abandoned building on Old Lucerne Park Road. It seemed to me it would make an interesting column in our monthly newsletter at Swiss Golf and Tennis.

But. the more I read and the more people I talked with, the more the story expanded from Hernando DeSoto's men spitting out orange seeds in 1539, to a little train called Peggy in the early 1900's, to a lovely lady named Marion who today owns and oversees the beautiful cattle ranch we pass on our way to town.

My resources were many and are listed in the back of the narrative. I am grateful to all those who shared their memories, and to the late Josephine Burr who recorded the History of Winter Haven, from which many bits of information were gathered.

I do not think I would have completed this look at local history without the patience. helpful suggestions and encouragement of Grace Gunn. "Computer lady" has my deep appreciation.

November, 1993

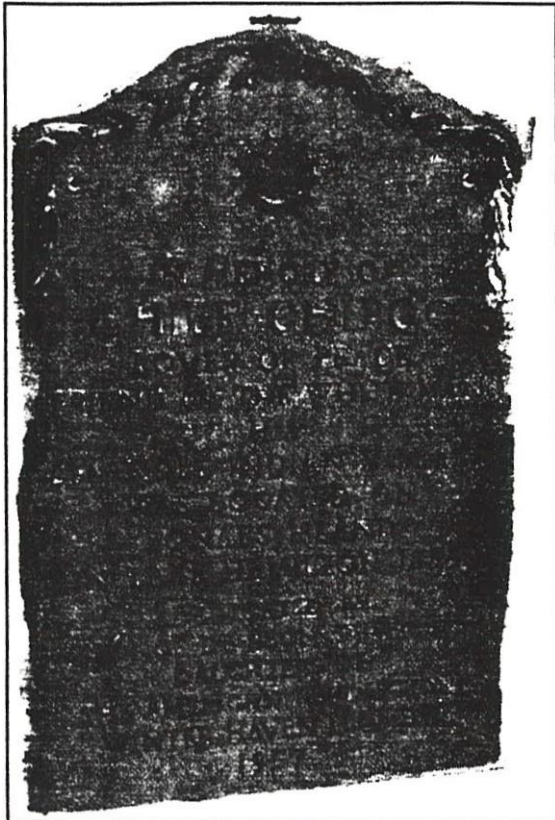
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IN THE BEGINNING

What if Hernando DeSoto hadn't brought Spanish oranges with him when he and his men explored Florida in 1539? What if they had pocketed the seeds rather than spitting them on the ground?

The Indians, already here, mostly Caribs, Tomokans, Maskakis and Seminoles, would not have enjoyed the resultant crop in central Florida. The white settlers in the early 1800's would not have taken the time to cultivate groves of the citrus fruit.



In the mid-1800's, one of the Indians, a Seminole chief named Chipco, and his tribe of 75 men refused to go to war against the settlers. They parted from other Seminoles and made their home on Bonar's Island in the middle of Lake Hamilton. (You bowlers see that large lake on your left when you take the short cut over to Cypress Lanes). There they befriended the whites.

The Winter Haven chapter of the D.A.R. dedicated a bronze highway marker on November 20, 1957 to honor Chipco. It is in the town of Lake Hamilton in a county park on the west side of Route 27, 1.4 miles north of Route 542. "In memory of Chief Chipco, Lover of Peace. Friend of the White Man. His Seminole Indian Village was located on Bonar's Island in Lake Hamilton, 1855."

(I think Chief Chipco told the settlers that. if they hung in there long enough. his tribe would build them a BINGO parlor in Tampa. I just can't

substantiate this!)

The first land-owners with deeds in the Winter Haven area were several men from England. They formed a company known as the Florida Land and Colonization Company, Ltd., incorporated under the Companies Acts. The company's home office was in England. Agents were based in Jacksonville.

England, which had won the territory of Florida from the Spanish in 1763. gave generous land grants. In 1850, the Blount family settled in Bartow and one member was later responsible for setting out the streets of Winter Haven.

At that time there were only about a dozen families in Polk County.

Thus, the white settlers began to develop this area of central Florida.

DR. FREDERICK INMAN

One man, riding into Florida from Ohio in the late 1800 's. became one of the most important events that led to what is known as Lucerne Park and Florence Villa.



Dr. Frederick W. Inman

He was Dr. Frederick Inman. who left his practice as a physician in Ohio. at age 45. to try his lot at producing food. He traveled the whole state before settling in an area now known as Florence Villa. His first crop was lemons. a 100 acre grove. which he replanted with oranges after the big freeze of 1895. In between the rows of trees. he planted rows of tomatoes.

Because of the size of the groves. he had to use a lot of fertilizer. 1.200 pounds per acre. It was a mixture of blood. bone and potash. issuing a foul smell for miles around.

In a disastrous experiment, growers once used untreated phosphate as a fertilizer. Slowly. the trees began to die. It was finally discovered that. when it rained. the phosphate was turning into cement-like blocks around the roots!

In 1909. the area growers wanted to organize for better shipping and selling of their citrus. They sent a party of 50 growers to California to study methods being used there. Dr. and Mrs. Inman were included.

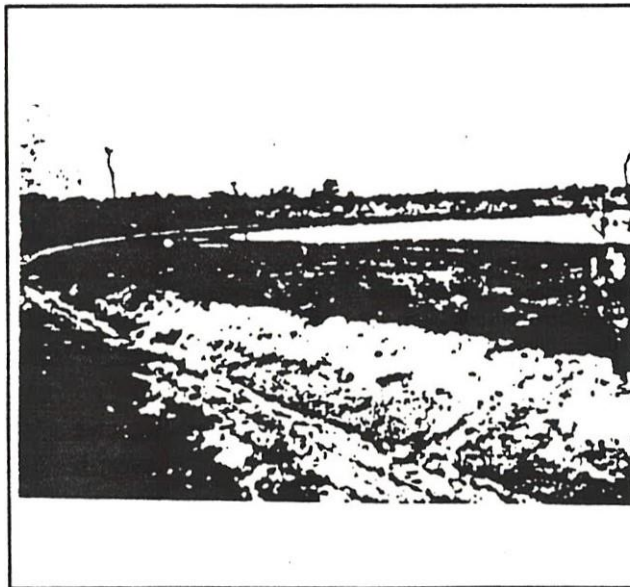
On June 1 , 1909 there was a statewide meeting of growers in Tampa to receive a report of the California trip. At that time. Dr. Inman was one of those chosen to help organize the Florida Citrus Exchange and shortly thereafter became its first president.

The formation of the Exchange was considered a great step forward in the citrus industry.

THE RAILROAD

The railroad was most important to the development of the communities. Where the company decided to put a depot, that area flourished.

In Historical Highlights of Polk County. it states that the South Florida Railway pushed through Polk County in 1883.



THIS CLAY CUT of the South Florida Railroad designated the site of Haines City, prior to platting on October 3, 1885. The thirty feet of deep and solid clay presented an engineering challenge for workers with mules and earth scoops. To induce the railroads of the 1880's to penetrate interior Florida, the state promised to give alternate sections of land along their routes, if tracks were completed by certain dates. This clay obstruction so slowed the connection between Haines City and Carter's Corner, near Lakeland, that the South Florida laid only every other cross-tie and ran a dummy engine over the track to meet the deadline

The line continued from Sanford to Tampa. going through Davenport and Haines City, then called Clay Cut. (The train had to travel through a deep clay pit making it seem to disappear!)



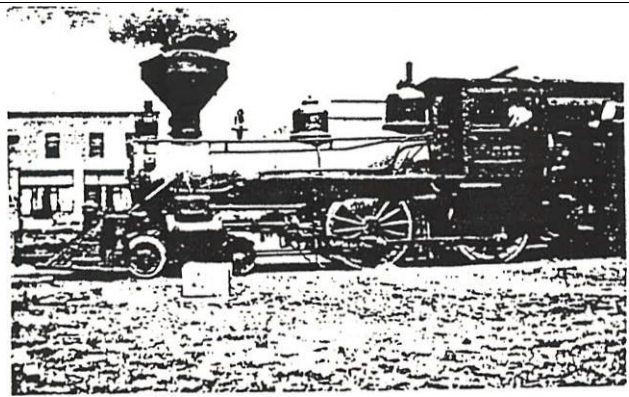
The construction engineer for the South Florida Railroad was Colonel Henry Haines. The people were so happy that a depot was planned for Clay Cut, they renamed the town Haines City. In 1890, the city was comprised of 23 adults, 2 children and 9 houses.

It is said that Lake Henry and Lake Haines were named for him.

The main line continued through Haines City to Lake Alfred Col. Henry Haines where the next depot was placed. The line continued to Winter Haven in 1884. (In that year, Winter Haven became the new name of a community called Harris Corners. F.A.K. Harris had built the first store at the corner of Central Avenue NW and 5th Street. Winter Haven's roads were laid out in 1885).

Lake Alfred became a junction, with a trunk line running to Florence Villa and Bartow.

On this trunk line ran a train whose engine was called Peggie.



"Peggie"

Peggie ran from Bartow to Florence Villa to Lake Alfred and back to Bartow. She picked up the citrus products from the groves and put her loaded cars on sidings for the main line trains to pick up. A spur from this trunk line ran to Lucerne Park where it dead-ended. The tracks were laid on land that is now known as State Road 544. Robert Thornhill told me that a small cafe existed where the spur ended.

The unique thing about Peggie is that at Bartow and Lake Alfred, she had to be turned on a revolving table. This was done manually by the crew, passengers and by-standers. (This brought to mind our adventure in San Francisco when we helped turn the trolleys around). In Louise K. Frisbie's book, Yesterday's Polk County, Lawrence Johnson was quoted as saying that he remembered that he was too young to help turn Peggie when the engineer blew the whistle, but he always came to watch. He said that it was the only thing happening in town.

THE ROAD



The only road in the early 1900's, Old Lucerne Park Road, threaded its way from Eagle Lake, through Winter Haven and Florence Villa to



Lucerne Park and then to Haines City.

THE ROAD

In the booklet, *Lucerne Park in the Making*, it states, "The automobile road from Jacksonville to Tampa runs through the very heart of the property and skirts Lake Lucerne. This highway will someday become one of the most popular roads in the United States."

One more mobile home park on Old Lucerne Park Road and this prediction will come true. I believe.

M. M. (Dad) Lee, who had started the newspaper, *Florida Chief*, in Winter Haven, issued a call on July 3, 1913 to have this road macadamized. In December of the same year, he took a trip through Lucerne Park to Haines City and back. Of Lucerne Park, he said that it was progressively beautifying and no one could believe its growth.

Harrison Thornhill told me that part of the original "macadamized" road still exists off State Road 544 beyond the Christian Radio tower, WLVF, just east of Route 27.

FLORENCE VILLA

When Dr. Inman arrived, he named the settlement in honor of his wife, Florence.

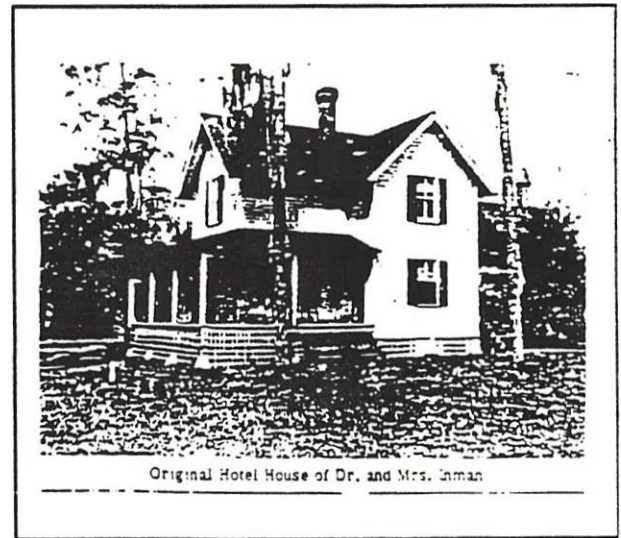
He was so enthusiastic about the area that he sent invitations to multitudes of people to come visit. At first, he invited them to stay at his home, but the numbers who were accepting quickly made this impossible. His home was on Lake Spring, which at the time was within the boundaries of Florence Villa.

He built a hotel to accommodate the winter visitors and advertised it as Plantation Home, the Hotel at Florence Villa Station. It became known later as the Florence Villa Hotel and was located in back of where Albertson's is now. on Lake Spring. It became so popular that more and more rooms were added in a short period of time. By boat, one can see what's left of the pilings which held the dock in front of the hotel. The guests boarded the doctor's boat here for sightseeing on the lakes. Many of its visitors stayed on to make their homes in Polk

•County.

ICs interesting to note that. when the hotel guests arrived by train. the engineer would blow the whistle three times for Dr. Inman to come down to the depot to meet them.

In April, 1906. Dr. Inman sold the hotel and its 695 acres to the Florence Villa Hotel Company. It was eventually torn down in 1930.



It was an exciting day when Andy Kinsey loaned me not only the pamphlet Lucerne Park in the Making but also a booklet that Dr. Inman had sent out shortly after 1900.

Called "Winter Haven Florida The Land of Sunshine," it was mailed to friends and acquaintances of his throughout the country. I found it so interesting. I have included the text in total. The Bhotos in the booklet were taken in 1900 and have reproduced quite well.



story of WINTER HAVEN and FLORENCE VILLA think, e
can be best told by answering a few questions most
frequently asked.

Question No. Where is Florence Villa

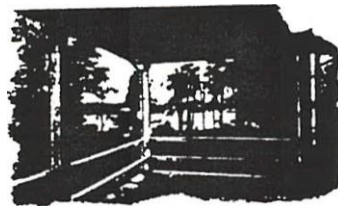
Answer. It is at Winter Haven, Polk
County, Florida, 200 miles south of Jacksonville, and forty miles east of Tampa, on the
Bartow Branch of the Savannah, Florida & Western Railway. It is the finest and most
extensive plantation house in the State.

Ques. No. 2. How can we best reach there

Answer. Take the morning train from Jacksonville, ticket direct to Florence Station
by way of Sanford and Bartow Junction. The connections are always sure. Florence
Station is one and one-half miles north of Winter Haven, and one-fourth mile from
Florence Villa.

No. 3. What of the country about
Winter haven

Answer. It is most beautiful. Winter Haven is
the center of the famous lake region, which
comprises about two townships. It is a high
plateau, two hundred feet above the Gulf and
Ocean, upon the summit of which there are lakes
without number ; there being miles of Florence Villa. The waters from about one
hundred within a radius of five this plateau run to the north, south, east, and west. It is
the highest body of land the State. (See the map)



Ques. No. 4. How about the water in your lakes, or do you call swamps and ponds
lakes ?

Answer. No! We mean deep, pure fresh-water lakes, with high banks and wooded hills. The water in our lakes and wells is absolutely pure and soft, and as clear as crystal.



Ques. NO. 5. How is the fishing in your lakes



Answer. This is the famous fresh-water fishing grounds of which you have heard so much. If you could only listen to the tales of our fishermen ; they fairly rival

the exploits of Don Quixote or Robinson Crusoe, and the worst of it is, they are often only too true. Just think of catching black bass weighing to to 16 pounds, and measuring 28 to 30 inches long. Come and try it.

Ques. No. 6. Have you any boats to accommodate your guests

Answer. Yes ! And good ones, too. which are free to ail, unless you should wish control your boat and lock up. Then a charge of twenty-five cents per day ; gives you that privilege, and you can take it to whichever lake you choose.

Ques. No. 7. How about the steam yacht Florence

Answer. It is a very fine boat and is free to every one. It is kept continually busy, and affords amusement for the ladies and children, and men who do not care to paddle their own canoe.

Ques. No. 8. Have you any hunting there ?

Answer. Yes, lots of it ! We have the best bird shooting in the State. and deer, turkey and bear are near by. Good shots often bag one hundred quail in a single day.

Ques. No. 9. Can we procure good guide for a deer hunt ? Answer.

Yes : We have good ones who know the grounds.

Ques. NO. 10. What about orange groves ? We want to gather oranges and see Florida at its best, and as we have fancied it.

er. When I would advise you to come to Winter Haven and Florence, for we have the finest and most extensive orange and grape-fruit groves in the State, there being fully five hundred acres within two miles of Florence Villa.

Ques. No. 11. Have your groves plenty of fruit upon the trees now

Answer. Yes ! They are loaded down, and a sight worth coming to see.

Ques. No. 12. Then we can see orange trees with fruit upon them, and gather for ourselves by coming to Florence Villa ? will not be disappointed either. We

Answer. To be sure you can, and you

don't tell any fiction.

Ques. No. 13. Do you allow your guests to go through the orange groves and help themselves

Answer. Why, certainly ! Why not ? What good would the oranges do you if you could not use them ? We have no " dead lines."

Ques. No. 14. Don't you mean that you send a guide with us, who watches and charges us for every orange that we pick ? We are told of this custom.

Answer. NO, not by a long ways ! You are perfectly welcome to go to the grove and gather and eat as many oranges as you please, and as often. We only request that our friends will not damage the trees.

Ques. No. t 5. What can you say for Florence Villa ? Can you make us comfortable ? Have you any home comforts ? Will we like it

Answer. We cannot positively say :hat you will like it here, but we can assure you of a hearty welcome to all that we have or can obtain. We want you to have a good time while you are with us.

Ques. No. 16. How about the table

Answer. We have as gccd cooks as there are the State. so, :he fare is poor, we are to blame. We have the fines: dairy of Jersey cows to be found. Good gardens, fruits, etc., and use nothing Eu: the :hoicest northern meats , of fish and oysters we have the best.

Ques, No. 1 7. Can you keep us warm in the event of cold spe!! ?

Answer. Yes The Villa is weil prepares: for cold weather—large, open fireplaces and stoves in the rooms. The butid:ngs are well made.

Ques. No. t 8. How about baths. toilet rooms, and lights

Answer. Bath and to:let convenient to all rooms, and pienty of them, with hot and coid water, and the sewerage and sanitation is perfect. We have our own gas and water plants.

Ques. No. 19. Are the. views shown in this book true to life. or did you borrow them

Answer. They are all from photographs taken September t 2, 1900, and poorly represent the subjects, or do not convey a flattering impression.

Ques No. 20. Have you lawns. parks, and verandas ?

Answer. We have as fine lawns, parks, and gardens as there are in Florida. The verandas are Wide and over five hundred feet in length. Ques.

NO. 21 . DO you keep your place clean .

Answer. We try to—come and see.

Ques. No. 22. What are your rates for room and board

Answer. We emphatically assert that moneymaking is not the sole Object of our home, but that it is secondary to making our friends happy and contented. We d) not expect it to pay, nor care If it don't. By comparing our rates of \$2.00 to S} 00 per day, and \$12.00 to St 7.50 per week, you will see that they are much lower :han other resorts affording similar accommodations and attracuons—if there are any.

Ques. No. 23. Do you send a carriage to the station to bring and carry away your guests ?

Answer. Yes ! We meet Ill trains, and there are 'to bus nor baragt charges. Florence Villa has telephone connection with telegraph, express, and railroad offices

Ques. No. 24. Is it healthy at Florence

Answer. Yes ! It cannot be otherwise. We have no fevers ; malaria is un• known , no fogs or damp chilly mornings, which is the case along the coasts. These are facts.

Ques. No. 25. Would you advise us to come to Florence Villa ?

Answer. To be sure would. I would come and try it at least. It is an easy place to reach, and, as we have no jail, you can readily get away.

F. W. INMAN,
WINTER HAVEN, FLORIDA.



Dr. Inman built and operated the Florence Villa Packing Plant. The village grew because of so many grove and plant workers and hotel staff.

The post office in Florence Villa was established in 1917 when the village was incorporated. The village was later absorbed by Winter Haven.

Dr. Inman's properties were extensive. To locate them would have involved hiring a professional title searcher. It is known that many of his land holdings were in Lucerne Park. The Inman family donated the land on the southeast corner of U.S. 17 and Avenue T Northeast for use as a park according to an October 15, 1993 Ledger article written by Joy Murphy.

Dr. Inman's grave marker marks his burial in 1910 in what is today known as Inman Park.

LUCERNE PARK

In 1910. photos were taken of 1,000 acres in Lucerne Park. This was the property bought from Dr. Inman by Lucerne Park Fruit Association. The original purchase was 1700 acres, 1,000 of which were cleared. There was a lumber mill on the property for this

purpose. The first tree was felled in January, 1911. Dr. Inman had owned the undeveloped land for years and, because of advancing age, had never cleared for groves as was his original intent.

According to the booklet, Dr. Inman "too long in years to undertake the task and about 12 months prior to his death he turned it over to his life-time friend, Mr. M. E. Gillett. but with the understanding that the citrus groves would be planted.'

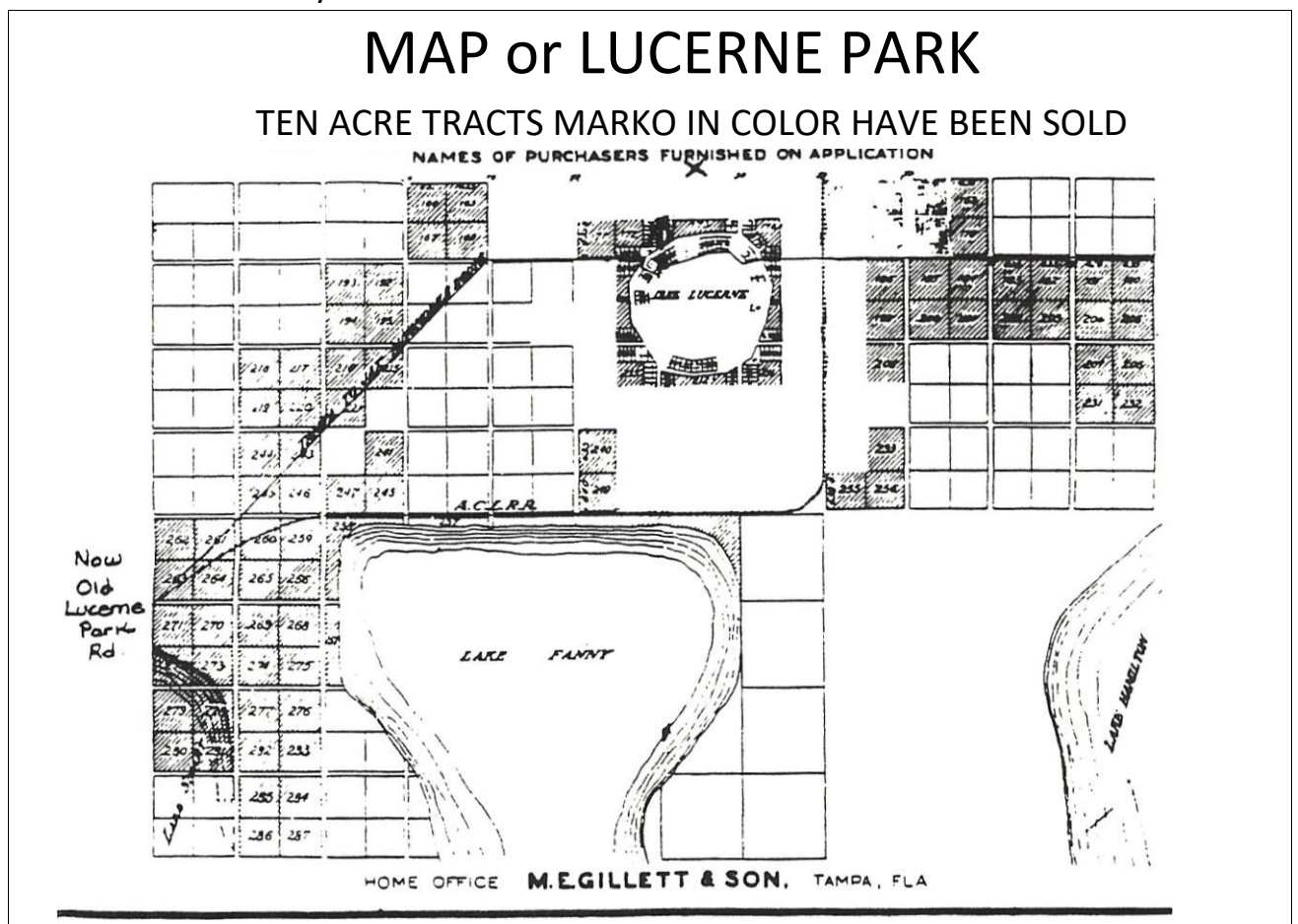
M. E. Gillett and his brother became the founders of the Lucerne Park Fruit Association with home offices in Tampa. M. E. Gillett, an ex-mayor of Tampa, was President and General Manager of the company. He had been in the citrus business for 32 years and was owner of Buckeye Nurseries at Winter Haven, the largest citrus nursery in the world.

D. C. Gillett, secretary and treasurer of the company was manager of the Gillett Lumber and Transport Company, but devoted much time to Lucerne Park Fruit Association.

It was called the choicest land in Florida. (I assume this meant for citrus planting). It was 210 feet above sea level and was surrounded by five big lakes. Henry. Haines. Fannie. Hamilton and Rochelle which, with the elevation, afforded immunity from the cold. Little Lake Lucerne (1/4 mile in diameter) was right in the middle.

In 1911, 90 men were clearing the property. Erected were an administration building, housing for workers, superintendent's home, barns and wagon sheds.

The land was divided into 100 ten acre grove sites. The desire was to sell them to men of good social and financial standing. A 20 page pamphlet called Lucerne Park in the Making, with photos, was widely circulated. The goal was to make Lucerne Park an exclusive winter colony.



I qll

(In October, 1911. the Florida Chief had an article that stated that someone from Florida was circulating "flaming handbills in the North and West" which showed scenes around Winter Haven. They were advertising land which was miles from the city.)

The cost of each 10 acre plot was \$6,500. The seller (Lucerne Park Fruit Association) agreed to clear the land and plant 625 citrus fruit trees on each plot. For 5 years, the Association would provide all labor and fertilizer to make a "first class grove."

The fruit would be the property of the buyer. The Association would market same. deducting from the gross receipts the cost of picking. packing and shipping. The net returns were given to the buyer.

TERMS OF, PAYMENT

The purchase price is \$6,500. \$500 is payable upon signing of contract ; \$2,000 at the time the trees are planted. Then, beginning twelve months after the date trees are planted, quarterly payments of \$250 commence and run for four years, until \$6,500 shall have been paid.

THE INCOME TO BE EXPECTED

The following is a conservative estimate of the income to be expected from ten acres of citrus fruit at Lucerne Park.

	Returns			Nothing
Second Year—	Investment	1,000		
	Returns			Nothing
Third Year—	Investment	1,000		
	Returns—One-half box per tree, 315 boxes at \$2		\$630	
Fourth Year—	Investment	1,000		
	Returns—Two boxes per tree, 1,250 boxes at \$2		2,500	
Fifth Year—	Investment	1,000		
	Returns—three boxes per tree, 1,875 boxes at \$2		3,750	
	Total investment—5 years	\$6,500		
	Expected returns—same period		\$6,880	
	First Year—investment			\$2,500

I found, on microfiche, a copy of one of the original agreements in the land records office in Bartow. Dated March 13, 1912, it spells out all the applicable conditions agreed to by buyer and seller. I would like to have included the whole text in this report, but it is too lengthy (you know contracts!) and the type too small. I would be glad to share the contents with anyone who is interested.

The parties were the seller, the Lucerne Park Fruit Association, the buyer, Charles R. Erwin and the bank, Citizens Bank and Trust Company.

Erwin was with a large advertising agency in Chicago. He and his wife, Rachel, invested heavily in citrus. Their son, Roswell, was the first president, in 1922, of the National Bank of Winter Haven. When his father died at age 68, his mother presented tower chimes to the First Presbyterian Church in Winter Haven in his memory.

The only two names that I have found representing the Lucerne Park Fruit Association were M. E. and D. C. Gillett.

It was understood that, after all the lots were sold, the Lucerne Park Fruit Association would be a permanent organization.

The text of Lucerne Park in the Making stated it was a conservative estimate that, by the end of the 5th year when the contract expired (or, at the outside, at the end of the 6th year), the entire investment of \$6,500 would be returned to the investor from proceeds of fruit sold and after that, the investor should net \$5,000 per annum.

The booklet had many excerpts from letters received from prospective buyers, one from Alabama.

"I think your plans for developing this property have been well worked-out and, if executed, you will have rendered a great service to your state and afford to the winter tourists an ideal winter home & investment...

Included in the sales pamphlet were quotes from some financiers and business executives.

"I consider Lucerne and Florence Villa the most beautiful places in the entire state of Florida...

"I predict this will be the most beautiful place. taking everything into consideration. in the state of Florida.'

In the sales pamphlet. this quote was also included:

••Undoubtedly there will be a fruit-exchange packing house at Lucerne Park. It is the hope of the Lucerne Park Fruit Association that every purchaser at Lucerne will join the Exchange marketing all fruits under one brand which can be made famous by judicious advertising.'

Another paragraph in the pamphlet I will save to the end of this report.

Ed Shores, our neighbor, tells me that the Snively family was responsible for planting most of the groves closest to Swiss Golf and Tennis.

I learned that the Swann Grove owned by Colonel Alfred Reuben Swann was located in Lucerne Park in 1910.

In that year, Alfred M. Tilden worked for the Colonel. He then later bought his own grove and in 1916 brought his bride to a small house on part of the land. More about the Snivelys, Swanns and Tildens to follow.

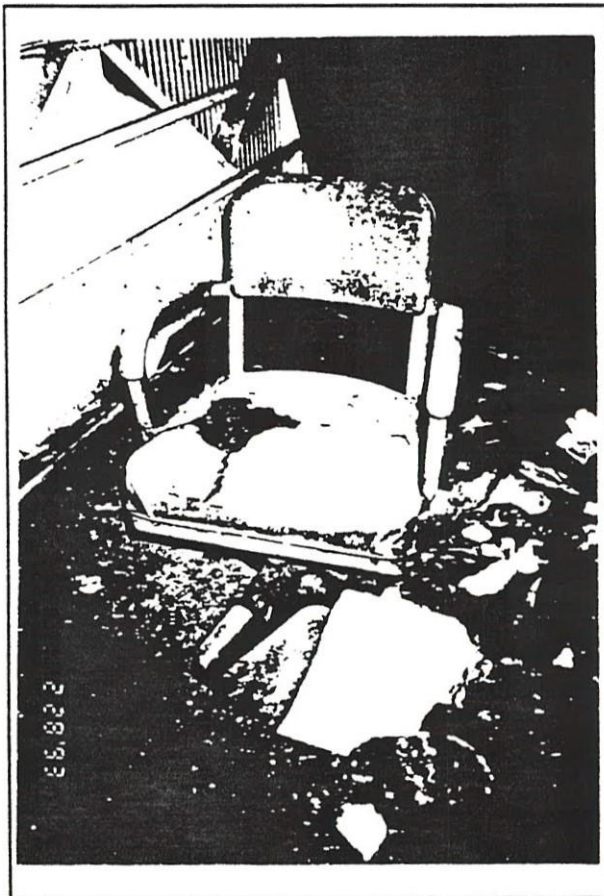
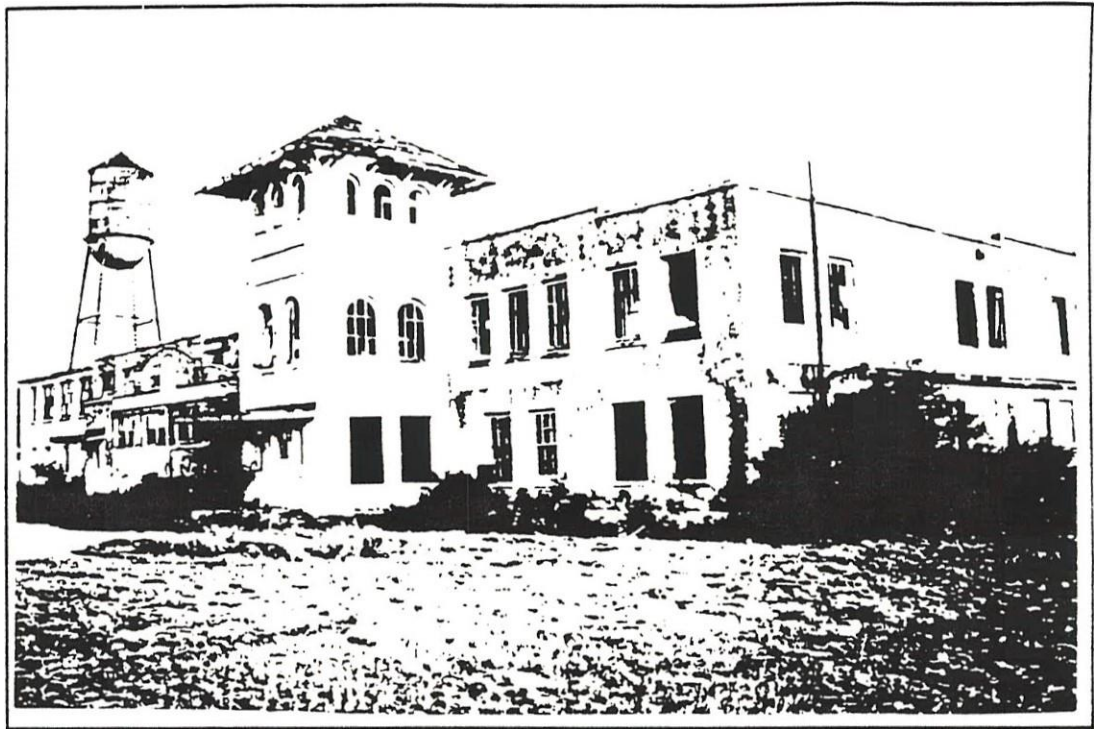
As you see, there were many names connected with early grove development. They, with the Gilletts, were probably the members of the Lucerne Park Fruit Association.

In 1912, the Lucerne Park Post Office was established, but it was discontinued in 1930. It was located right where our entrance to Swiss Golf meets Old Lucerne Park Road, on the Northeast corner.

One great frustration in researching this project was that I could not find an old map which defined the boundaries of what was known as Lucerne Park. Joe Spann, librarian at the Polk County Historical Library, said that is because Lucerne Park was never incorporated.

Best guess - Perry's Par 3 golf course, through land which is now Willowbrook Golf Course, east to where Route 544 meets Old Lucerne Park Road, then west on that road through the cattle ranch to Lake Rochelle then south back to Perry's.

The Lucerne Park Packing House (YES. the old grey stone building which occasioned this labor of curiosity) was completed in 1921. It was a \$100,000 investment by the fruit packing association and the corporation expected to pack 100,000 boxes of fruit there the first season.



In the same year, the association was reorganized. It became the Lucerne Park Citrus Association. A. S. Bey'mer was named president. D. C. Gillett was vice-president. Snell Bank served as treasurer. Charles Walker, secretary and D. C. Gillett and F. S. Stoner were directors.

The railroad branch line ran right behind the building. its accessibility vital to shipping the fruit. It had its own freight station.

Over the years, the building was expanded and several out-buildings were added to the property.

In a 1990 article. the Ledger called the historic building at 5500 Old Lucerne Park Road "once a centerpiece among the rolling citrus groves of Lucerne Park...

Some of the wooden homes you see to your right as you drive towards the old grey building were occupied by packing house personnel.



As you leave our park and reach Old Lucerne Park Road. the grey and white wooden house on the northwest corner lot was once occupied by the packing house superintendent. Earl Moore, Sr.

I have always liked the lines of the structure and am happy to see that the young couple now occupying it care about its upkeep.



The original fruit-packing company was sold to Joseph DiGiorgio. who began as a young man in Italy to make an impact on the citrus industry.

When he was 21. he made a consignment of lemons from his groves in Sicily to Baltimore. This resulted in his moving to the United States and by 1920 he had founded the Baltimore Fruit Exchange.

His first Florida citrus plantings were in Fort Pierce in 1920. He had a few hundred acres, whose produce was handled by the Baltimore Exchange. His packing house was in Fort Pierce and he later bought one at Lynchburg and the one here in Lucerne Park.

An ambitious man. by age 46 he owned about 40 companies - citrus production. vegetable farming and marketing organizations. At age 46. he consolidated them all under the name F. DiGiorgio Fruit Company.

In 1948, DiGiorgio decided to sell off his interior groves because they had become infested with nematodes. parasitic worms. He held on to the packing house. His plan was to buy back the groves when they were cheaper but. because of the new concentrates. prices of groves stayed up.

DiGiorgio also owned 72 lots around Lake Lucerne where he experimented with different varieties of Valencias. grapefruit and tangerines.

The name of DiGiordio Fruit appeared on the two stone pillars on Old Lucerne Park Road but time has worn the paint away.

There was a hotel located near the Lucerne Park packing house where the company furnished living quarters for its help. It was torn down in the late 50's.

The Lucerne Park Fruit Association was reorganized around 1950 with Charles W. Smith as manager. Mr. H. Hemenway was sales manager for many years. Mrs. E. R. McKenney had been Secretary of the Corporation from the time it became DiGiorgio property.

On July 1. 1958. the DiGiorgio organization sold all of its Lucerne Park operations and planned to operate only in the Fort Pierce area under the name of Treesweet Products.

The plant and properties were sold to Andy Kinsey. who had been with the operation for over 30 years. The plant was renamed - Lucerne Machinery and Equipment Incorporated.

Mr. Kinsey had a product which he wanted to manufacture in the plant. Before orange juice concentrate became a factor in the industry, the quality of the fruit could be determined by box. Mr. Kinsey invented a device and system by which oranges could be tested by pound silage to figure how much sugar there was in the different varieties.

In 1964, he demonstrated this to the fruit industry and it became subjected to hundreds of tests by the Experimental Station.

Without going into more detail (Mr. Kinsey plans to write a book), the Experimental Station hired a machine company to draw up blueprints. No mention of Mr. Kinsey was made then or when regulations were passed that all processing plants were required to use his invention.

The machine is worth hundreds of millions to the industry and all Mr. Kinsev has seen from it are two lawsuits against him when workers using the machine were injured. He won those cases. but he is still fighting the Citrus Commission for recognition.

Mr. and Mrs. Kinsey had several residences on Old Lucerne Park Road before moving into their beautiful new grey stucco home you see directly across from the Swiss Golf and Tennis entrance.

In the mid-1980's, the old packing house was sold to Gordon Douglas and other investors. For a while, it was used by people repairing automobiles. Mr. Douglas said that he was fascinated with the property and hoped that it would attract light industry. No such luck. It is up for sale again.

I walked through the old building. It lies broken and desolate, a sorry monument to what once was "the centerpiece" of the glorious Lucerne Park groves.

THE SNIVELY STORY

Frank and Laura Snively of Pennsylvania had eleven children.

One son, John Andrew, married Dorothy DeHaven, who was a niece of Mrs. Frederick Inman. When Dr. Inman passed away, his widow encouraged the young couple to come to Florence Villa from Pennsylvania. John and Dorothy did come to Florida to spend their honeymoon and decided to make their home here. This was in 1911. John was followed to this area by his brother, Harvey Bowden Snively in 1919.

The story of what the two brothers accomplished in the citrus industry and in the development of the Winter Haven area could only be told in a book of its own.

There is not enough time, paper, ink or superlatives to describe what the name Snively means to our area today. Because my focus is Lucerne Park, I reluctantly must leave out most of what I learned.

Permit a few notes, though.

John Andrew Snively first worked for Mrs. Inman when he arrived in Florida, learning as much as he could about the citrus business. He went on to make it his life's work. He became one of the foremost developers and citrus growers in Polk County. Snively Groves and Farms, first known as Polk Packing Company, was among the leading producers of both citrus and produce in the state. (In 1963, the company was purchased by the Eloise Groves Association and the name was changed to the Cypress Gardens Products, Inc.)

John and Dorothy had three children, John Andrew, Jr., Evelyn and Avis.

He was president of Haven-Villa Company which was responsible for much of Winter Haven's development, including Inwood and Eloise Woods, each of which had over 2,000 lots.

John Andrew's list of community and business involvements is endless. He died suddenly in 1958.

John Snively, Jr. has continued in his father's footsteps as an executive in Snively Groves and as president of the Eloise Association. He has continued his father's responsibilities to those organizations which were concerned with the betterment of the citrus industry.

After distinguished service in the Marine Corps during World War I. Harvey Bowden Snively, (known as Pete), came to Winter Haven in 1919. He worked as a laborer for the Florence Citrus Growers Association. Four years later. he went into the fruit hauling business.

At the same time. he and W. W. Giddings formed the Snively-Giddings Construction Company. In 1926, Giddings joined the family in the citrus business.

In 1943. their fresh fruit packing house was established in Lake Hamilton and in 1948-49 the plant packed more fruit than any individual plant in Florida.

Like John. Harvey endowed this area with his participation in citrus. community and human relations organizations.

Harvey. or Pete as he was known, was married twice. He and his first wife. Sarah McKibben. had five children, Frank Burns, Mary Jane. Harvey B. Jr., Robert Edward and Dorothy.

By his second marriage to Virginia C. Childs, his children are Russell Hartman and Laura Sue.

Pete passed away on July 16, 1968.

The Lake Hamilton Corporation has thrived under the careful care of Pete •s children.

SWANN, TILDEN AND AMBROSE

These were very important names to Lucerne Park in the early 1900 •s.

Colonel Alfred Reuben Swann helped develop Tampa and then bought groves in the Winter Haven area. The main one was on Old Lucerne Park Road. Colonel Swann was a director of the Florida Citrus Growers Association.

Alfred M. Tilden. better known as A. M.. came to Winter Haven as a bachelor around 1913 and first lived in the area of Polk Community College. He went to work for Colonel Swann and later invested in the groves.

In 1916. he married and brought his bride to a small house. After acquiring his own groves. A. M. built a large brick homestead on the land, far enough back from Old Lucerne Park Road not to be seen. This is the large home that was just razed to make room for Century Realty Funds' new community.

A.M.'s wife was the daughter of Harrison T. and Elmira Ambrose of Cincinnati. Like so many other well-to-do northerners. they vacationed in Winter Haven and fell in love with the area.

A. M. Tilden was a remarkable man. exhibited by his considerable achievements in the development of this area. He was a president of the Florence Villa Citrus Growers Association. a director of the Winter Haven Farm Loan Association, a partner in the Haven-Villa Corporation, a director of the Exchange National Bank. a founding member of the Winter Haven Rotary Club and treasurer of the Winter Haven Yacht Club. He was inducted into the Citrus Hall of Fame of Florida in 1963.

A. M. Tilden's wife's family first bought a grove belonging to Ferguson and Long in this area. The Ambrose's ultimately owned thousands of acres, including those upon which Willowbrook now stands.

Son Harrison William Ambrose managed the Twiss Grove. He married the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Kinsey of Toledo, Ohio. They were also winter visitors who decided to stay.

ED SHORES

A neighbor of ours. Ed Shores. lives on Marina Drive. Until I began to research this project. I did not know Ed has lived in this area for most of his life.

He was plant manager at Growers Fertilizer in Lake Alfred for 17 years.

Ed then went to the Lake Hamilton Corporation with Harvey Snively. For 22 years. he was vice-president in charge of the fresh fruit division of the packing house.

It was Ed who gave me many of the names of individuals who were kind enough to add information to this report.

THE THORNHILLS

When we leave our park to travel to Winter Haven. we must pass by what to me is a chunk of serenity - the Thornhill cattle ranch.

Marion Thornhill told me that when she and her husband L. H. (for Lucius Harrison) moved to Lucerne Park in 1935, their house was completely surrounded by dense woods, scrub and lots of snakes. Having four children playing outside gave her some moments of anticipation. L. H. worked for Tampa Electric Company but spent all his spare time clearing the property. bulldozing little by little. Son Robert told me that the Thornhills had bought some acreage from Harrison T. Ambrose and some from Henry Smith.

The Thornhill house stands on land that was once known as Big Island. surrounded as it was by considerable marshland.

Owning most of the acreage we see as a cattle ranch for about 150 heads. the Thornhills also lease some of the land from the Mackays of Lake Alfred.

Robert Thornhill says that the Mackay estate runs all the way from Lake Haines to Lake Rochelle in back of the present Thornhill homestead. The Mackay granddaughter. Susanna. now occupies the large home there in the winter months, but returns to England in the summer.

At one time, the Thornhills leased land that is now occupied by Perry's Par 3 Golf.

Of some interest is L. H. Thornhill's heritage. His grandfather and grandmother. Columbus and Sarah Caroline Glover Thornhill came to Florida from Georgia. In the mid-1800's, they were among the first settlers in Eagle Lake. While Columbus tended the cattle ranch. Mrs. Thornhill had to butcher the cattle and pigs. She then had to carry the meat on horseback to the settlement of Winter Haven. As there was no ice in those days. the meat had to be cured. smoked or eaten at once. So. speed was of the essence. (Sort of like the

tough times we have today traveling all the way to Publix.') The elder Thornhills celebrated their 50th anniversary on December 19, 1915 with 10 of their 11 children on hand.



(If you want to read some really very interesting pages about the early Thornhills. go to the Winter Haven Library. Ask to see Josephine Burr's History of Winter Haven. You cannot take it out and. in order to read it on site. you must leave your driver's license or car keys at the desk!

Columbus Thornhill's son John relates the story. starting on page 3. Fascinating. but too long to include in this report.)

L. H. and Marion celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1987. They have four children. Harrison. Robert. Virginia and Carolyn.

I remember seeing L. H. around the ranch. a big man with a big hat, when we first moved to Swiss Golf. Sadly. he passed away in 1989 at age 80. found dead in his truck on his beloved ranch.

Sons Harrison and Robert tend to the chores now for Marion. I had the opportunity to sit and talk with her and Harrison - you'll recognize him and his magnificent handlebar mustache. An interesting man. I talked with Robert by telephone.

I was told that -the abandoned house that you can see while looking across the meadow from the Thornhills was moved there by Harrison Thornhill from Sixth Street in Winter Haven. It was on Salvation Army property and had to be moved to make way for the new church building. The house had belonged to Cushman Fey. Harrison had the Wadsworth Movers undertake the difficult task - once sinking in the mud. Circumstances have held up the restoration.

Route 544 was built in the mid-60's. according to Harrison. with absolutely no foresight for future growth.

Lastly, we all see the gentleman who walks the length of the ranch each morning picking up bottles. Because of his routine and his friendly wave. I had assumed he was a member of the Thornhill family. Wrong. He's just a "good guy" who lives in a mobile home park on Route 544. Marion says that. if he sees anything amiss, he'll stop in to inform her.

I hope this ranch never changes.

MOST RECENTLY

Larry Maxwell, president of Century Realty Funds in Lakeland was kind enough to respond to my questions about this area.

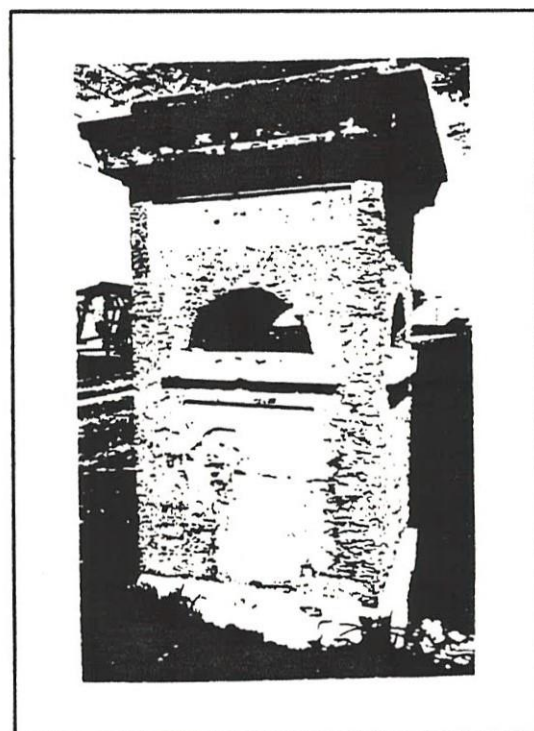
In 1979, CRF purchased the land upon which Swiss Village was developed from Mr. & Mrs. Ted Sager. The Sagers were Swiss and had had plans to build a manufactured home community which would have been named Swiss Village. CRF chose to go along with that name. I reached the Sagers in an attempt to find out what the Swiss influence was at the turn of the century causing our area to be called Lucerne Park. Mrs. Sager went to great lengths to research this but came up with no clue.

(Along the way, someone told me that there was once a story that there had been a Swiss settlement in the area and that they manufactured farm equipment. I just can't find any substantiation for this).

It has been frustrating to not learn why the name Lucerne was used. I called some area residents, among them Jim Hicks, a long-time Lucerne Park resident.

He didn't know the origin but told me an interesting anecdote. It seems that in Lucerne, Switzerland there is a large signpost with a title on top, "Lucernes of the World." Below it, on individual direction boards, are all other Lucernes. Lucerne Park, Florida is on one of the arrows!

Mr. Hicks also told me that there were two more cement columns like those near the cattle ranch, noting entrance into the east end of the settlement of Lucerne Park.



Regarding the name Lucerne Park, I appealed to Hazel L. Bowman of the Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library, she having unlimited knowledge of Polk County's history and folklore.

There were two theories that Ms. Bowman put forth. but no specific information. She thought that perhaps an early resident had heard of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland and. seeing the many lakes here. prompted him to use the "nice" name.

A second theory was the possibility that those dealing in real e -ate back then favored "pretty" names.

In 1983, CRF bought land from Orangeco. Inc. to build Hidden Cove West. Then. Hidden Cove East was built on property bought from Russell Greer in 1986.

The property upon which our park. Swiss Golf and Tennis. is built (except for Phase 3) was bought from the Snively family. Mr. Maxwell believes the land had been the Snively's for many. many years.

The earliest families in Swiss Golf & Tennis in 1985 told of the rest of the park being mostly orange groves, part of which were extensive Snively holdings.

The southern end of our park. which we called Phase 3. was built on land that CRF purchased from Orangeco of Bartow.

Ed Shores said that much of the land between Swiss Golf and Tennis and Routes 17 and 92 was swampland before it was developed.

The groves outside the entrance to Swiss Golf are currently owned by Stoneridge Properties of Orlando.

Between our park and Thornhill's cattle ranch is a road which runs north off Old Lucerne Park Road. On the right of this road is city-owned land. part of which is orange groves and the rest being the new Winter Haven Cemetery.

To the left. and reaching to the shores of Lake Haines will be the new CRF manufactured homes park, which will have approximately 900 lots, an 18 hole regulation length golf course, and will be called Lake Haines Golf Club. Mr. Maxwell said that 600 acres had been purchased from Big T Groves of Clearwater, Fla. That company had acquired the land previously from Mr. Tilden.

The south end of the property, about 40 acres fronting on Old Lucerne Park Road. was acquired from the Steele family. That family had used the land for groves and cattle grazing.

so - over the years the face of Lucerne Park changes, little by little. Once almost completely covered with lush citrus groves, the land now houses a state road, two golf courses. several mobile home parks, a cemetery. acres of dead trees, courtesy of the 1989 freeze. and very few healthy ones still producing fruit.



ODDS 'n ENDS

In 1883. Winter Haven was a forest of pines with about five families in a radius of five miles. This may not seem odd to a Floridian. but to a New Englander like me. settlements like this would be the history of the 1600's.

In 1895, Polk County suffered below freezing temperatures for four consecutive nights. destroying all citrus trees. Like some lesser freezes in later years and the one we experienced in 1989, the "doomsday" people said the citrus industry was dead in this area. Much of the material I have read credited the individual growers for their tenacity.

In 1915, the members of the town of Winter Haven. especially the Chamber of Commerce. were "livid with rage" when they heard the Dixie Highway would bypass Winter Haven. They blamed Lakeland politics but. in fact. the Tampa Tribune had printed the story incorrectly. They should have said that the road would pass through Loughman, Haines City. Lucerne Park. Florence Villa, Winter Haven to Bartow. Today. this road is Route 17.

Someone said to me one day that he had heard that the big. old grey building on Old Lucerne Park Road was once used as a Prisoner of War encampment. I found nothing to lend any credibility to this. I did find. in one of Martha Sawyer's Polk's Past columns in the Ledger. that there were about 18 or 19 in the state. One was in Winter Haven. located at 451 3rd St. NW and it did hold some Nazi storm troopers. (I think I met one when I hit his house with an errant golf ball!)

Polk County boundaries were established in 1861. Our county was named for President James Knox Polk.

In 1917, the Agricultural Experiment Station in Lake Alfred was established by the Florida legislature. The main purpose was. and is. to investigate citrus problems. .

Lake Alfred had many other names before settling on its present one. It was once known as Fargo. Chubb. Juanita and Bartow Junction.

A small mention in the early Winter Haven newspaper by editor "Dad" Lee was interesting. He stated that a Mr. Miles from Lucerne Park had just sold several crates of avocados to the New York market at a profit of \$150.

The life of a citrus tree is very long, practically indefinite under proper care. In Sicily, trees can be found that are 200 years old and which appear to be only in their prime. In Florida there are many trees 60 years old showing no signs of old age.

So, this is the story that captured my interest and I'm happy to share it with you.

To conclude. I will go back to the Lucerne Park pamphlet that was sent out to attract people to this "little bit of heaven." It was written in 1909.

"Lucerne Park will become the dreamland of Florida. The character of the people already interested in the proposition is significant. An exclusive residential park of magnitude. inhabited by the highest grade of people. intelligence dominating every undertaking. mutuality of interests calling for the best of everything. such a dream Lucerne Park will materialize...

I'm not sure. but I think it refers to Swiss Golf and Tennis. don't you?

Sources of Information

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Polk County Historical Library

Conversations with:

Marion Thornhill

Hamson Thornhill. Jr.

Rober Thornhill

Andrew Kinsey

Jim Hicks

Ed Shores

Joe Spann. County Historical Library

Permission given by Larry Burr to use photos from History of Winter Haven

Packing House photo by Art Lawrence

Other photos by the author

POSTSCRIPT - JANUARY, 1995

It is still unsettling for me to drive by the remains of the Lucerne Park Packing House. During the night of Thursday, June 24, 1994, the abandoned building was destroyed by a huge fire. After the inferno, what remained of the walls were bulldozed down, leveling all but a narrow section on what was the right side of the building.

The site is still for sale and I am told that the owner hopes that this section might be converted into storage units of some kind. One hopes that the property will soon be improved.

After "So, What is Lucerne Park?" was published, I came across a few interesting facts that should be shared.

Judge Michael E. Raiden read my book and was kind enough to send a letter stating that he, too, was researching the area and plans to write about the Lake Fannie history. This is the large lake just east of the Willowbrook Golf Course.

Judge Raiden spoke about an elderly couple by the name of Weston who live on the western shore of the lake. Just north of their property are the ruins of a ferry terminal which used to transport citrus fruit across Lake Fannie.

I received a telephone call from Dr. Ian K. Ajac after he had read my article in the Polk County Historical Quarterly. He was familiar with the Lake Fannie area, knew of the Westons, and told me about a railroad spur that had run from the old dock to the main line.

If you recall, I wrote about the old homestead which had been moved from the Salvation Army Chapel site on 6th Street to its present location, the Thornhill pasture land between Old Lucerne Park Road and Route 544. After standing vacant for so many years, it is great to see renovations have begun to take place. It will be so interesting to watch the progress for it must have been a very imposing structure in its day.

I found that, many years ago, the property on which Swiss Village was developed, hosted a yearly carnival accompanied by a balloon rally. This was told to me by a gentleman who lives on Lake Lucerne and who attended the events as a boy.

In the book's section titled "Most Recently," it is stated that Century's new mobile home park on Old Lucerne Park Road would be called Lake Haines Golf Club. This turned out to be incorrect for it is now named Four Lakes and promises to be a beautiful community.

Dr. Fred W. Inman, who had the foresight to see this area as a productive citrus environment and who bettered life for Winter Haven as a whole, died in 1910. He is memorialized in Inman Park at the corner of Havendale Boulevard (Avenue T) and 6th Street (Route 17). There he lies beneath a tall granite marker in a plot which is guarded by a metal

fence. I have always wanted to walk in for a close look but I'm afraid I don't know a good vagrant from a dangerous one!

By the way, I talked with Dr. Inman of Bond Clinic. He knows of no close relationship to this Fred Inman.

The old Lucerne Park post office was moved from the corner at Swiss Golf and Tennis' entrance to across the street. Turn left when you leave our park and you will notice a very neat house on the right with a metal roof and a deck at the rear. This was the original post office.

While speaking of this area, I should tell you an anecdote that might bring a chuckle or rile you up, depending on your temperament.

When we moved here in October of 1987, our entrance street was lined with glorious groves as neat as any in the state. It was probably a huge selling point for prospective buyers.

Then came the winter of 1989. If you weren't here for the big freeze, you will never believe the feelings of viewing the horrors of devastation.

Well, when I wrote my book in 1993, nothing had been done to restore the groves to their previous beauty. So, on my white horse, I set out to track down the current owner not an easy task because the land had changed hands many times.

As of the writing, the owner was Stoneridge Properties of Orlando. I wrote and asked if they could possibly clear the dead trees that lined our entrance and maybe plant some "babies."

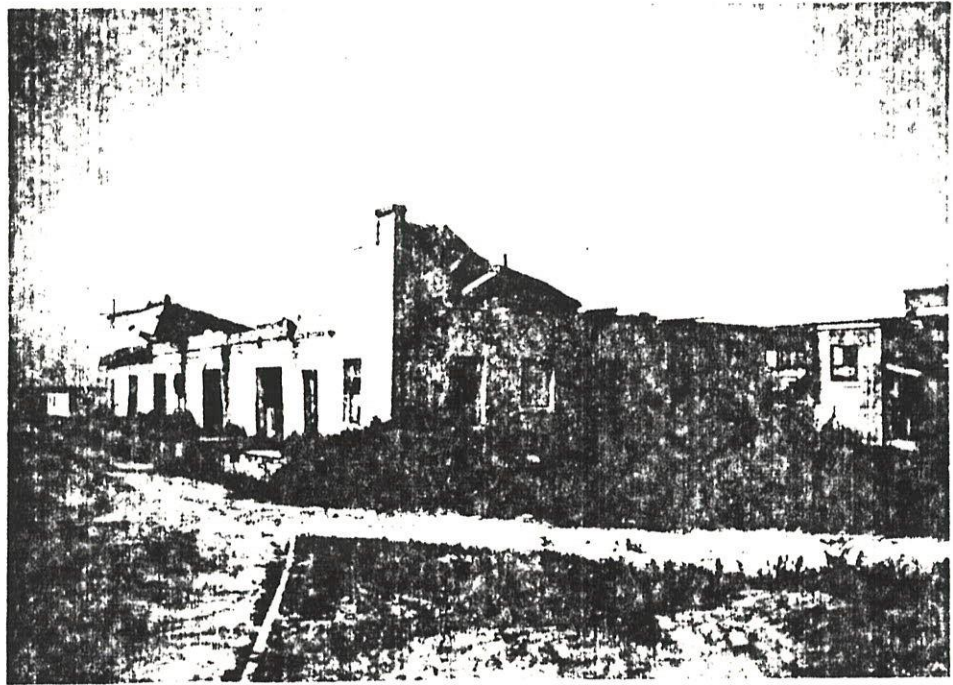
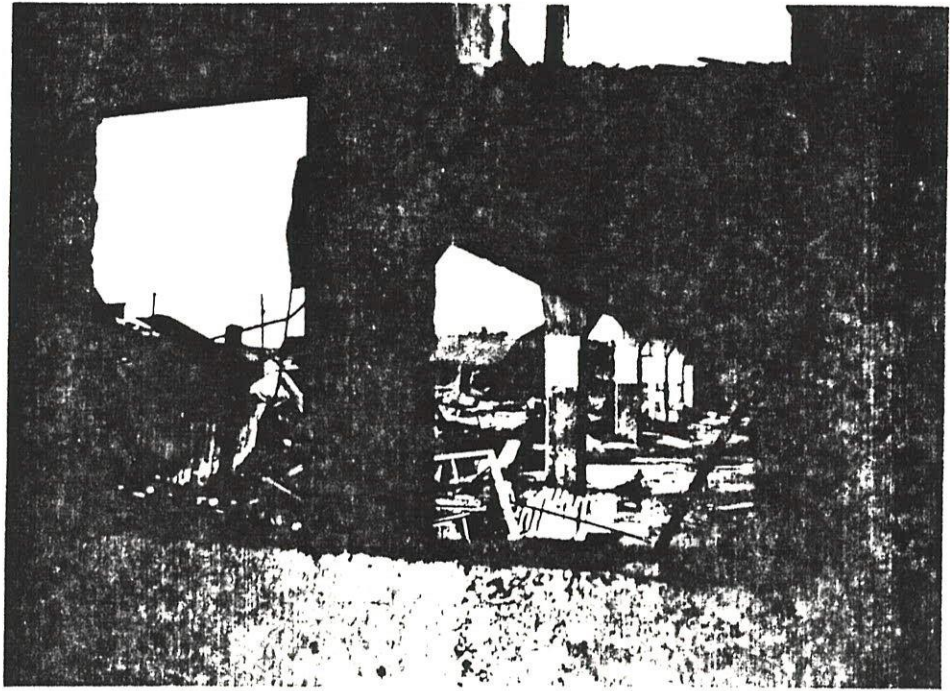
In return, I received a letter from a Gary E. Jahraus of Major Realty Corporation, identifying himself as Agent for Stoneridge Properties.

After accusing us of working against Wal-Mart locating in our area (which incidentally, we did not) and causing Stoneridge untold "financial hardship," he suggested that we in Swiss Golf "remove and replace the trees." Can you picture that!

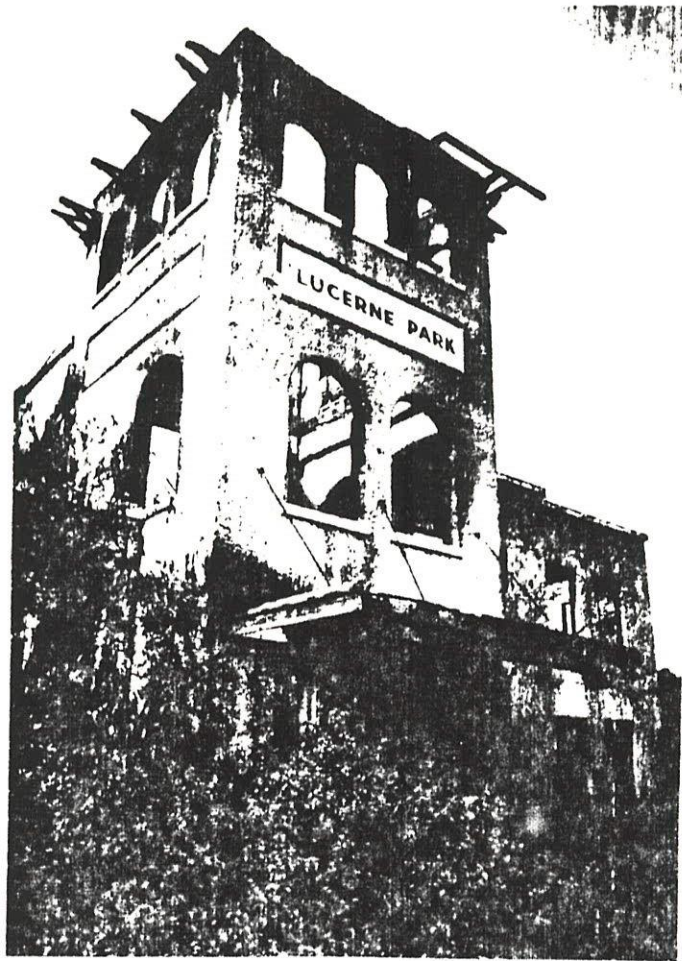
Rather a long anecdote but I thought you'd be interested in knowing why we still look at a lot of dead wood!

So, the history of the area continues and still makes for interesting discussion.

Jean Kaas



after the fire



After the fire