

# **Brandon (New Hope)**

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## **Buckhorn Creek**

6 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.

## ***Brandon (New Hope)***

John William Brandon, along with his wife, their seven sons, and their seven slaves, arrived in Fort Brooke from Tishomingo County, Mississippi, on January 20, 1857. Shortly thereafter they moved to what today is Seffner, and within a year they relocated to New Hope, the community that would eventually bear his family name. Other early residents of this locality were Israel Gardner, Jimmie Hendricks, Dan Kelley, William Parker, and Walter Stanford. The family homesteaded on 160 acres where Mr. Brandon built a large log house near present day Lithia-Pinecrest Road and State Road 60. The family raised cattle and pigs and grew corn, cotton, sugar cane, and sweet potatoes.<sup>i</sup>

After the death of John's wife, Martha (Carson) Brandon, on April 14, 1867, the Brandons moved to Bartow, Florida, where he married Victoria M. Varn, on September 17, 1868. Within a year they relocated to a farm east of Fort Meade, where he also operated a grist mill and a general store. Losing his entire life's savings when someone broke into the store, John Brandon was forced to sell his property, store, and gristmill. Consequently, in 1874, John Brandon moved back to his homestead in New Hope, purchased an additional 500 acres, and began raising cattle, hogs, and sheep, as well as venturing into citrus growing. Shortly after resettling in New Hope, John Brandon donated the land for a school which served the community until the early 20th century. In 1878 he also donated the land and building for the Methodist Church and parsonage and the New Hope cemetery. Eight years later on May 18, 1886, Mr. Brandon passed away.<sup>ii</sup>

The Brandon family's involvement in community affairs did not stop with Mr. Brandon's death. In the early 1890's the community prospered when the Florida Central and peninsular Railroad completed a line through New Hope connecting Plant City and Tampa. New Hope's population totaled 451 settlers in 1890. Because of the railroad, Victoria Brandon contracted with Charles S. Noble, a Florida Central and Peninsula Railroad engineer, to plat approximately forty acres of land north of present day State Road 60, South of Lake Meade, east of Kings Avenue, and west to Parsons Avenue. Filed on April 24, 1890, the surveyor named the community in honor of John Brandon and Noble Street for himself. King Street was named after for John R. King, an early resident who moved to the area from New Albany, Mississippi, in 1881. Victoria Street was named for Victoria Brandon while Sadie Street was named for Sadie Brandon, daughter of Victoria and John Brandon. Following in the tradition her husband had set, Mrs. Brandon donated the street right-of-ways to the county. Along with platting the town, Mrs. Brandon established a post office for Brandon in her home on September 15, 1890, becoming Brandon's first postmaster.<sup>iii</sup>

On May 22, 1890, the *Tampa Tribune* provided a picturesque view of Brandon when it wrote:

The new city of Brandon is located ten miles east of Tampa on the F.C.&P.R.R. The site is on a beautiful, level tract of high pine land, on the south side of the railroad track, while on the north side of the track is

situated the beautiful orange grove of Mrs. Victoria Brandon, which nestling between the city and the beautiful circular lake and deep hammock, on the north-east, is indeed a beautiful picture. The land for the city, as platted, is of the most fertile pine lands of Florida, with tall, aged, immense pines rearing their lofty heads to heaven, with here and there a cluster of beautiful oaks grouped beneath the immense monarchs of the forest. These deep, cool, shady bowers are truly inviting to the lovers of nature....The city at present has only a side-track and platforms for receiving freight, but a depot is promised at an early date. With their present facilities for shipping, large quantities of vegetables are being shipped from that point, every week and are constantly increasing. The passenger trains stop for the accommodation of the traveling public. The first start toward the building of a city is the erection of a commodious store house for Messrs. Cone & Johnson's stock of general merchandise, and Mr. Coe is transferring his saw mill to the new city. A number of parties have engaged lots for the erection of residences, as it is a delightful locality, and if proper rates can be secured over the F.C.&P....it will eventually become a popular locality for the residences of parties doing business at Tampa in as much as with the present schedule the trains come into the city early in the morning and go out at night, affording an opportunity for persons to attend to a day's work and return at night. But aside from this latter consideration it is a lovely and healthy place to reside and is surrounded by a very fertile country which is dotted with large bearing orange groves and quite a number of young groves, all of which are in a most prosperous condition. Notwithstanding the freezes during the past winter the timber and the waters of the lake have protected the fruit so that even now the lemon and orange trees are laden with the half grown fruit in quite an abundance. We predict for the young city a bright future.<sup>iv</sup>

The railroad planted the seeds of change for Brandon. Prior to the 1890s, residents had to travel along sandy or muddy roads to Plant City or Tampa for supplies that they could not make themselves. When the F.C.&P. decided not to erect a railroad depot, the Brandon community built one and located it on the northwest corner of Victoria Street and Moon Ave. After the railroad was completed and the depot built the poor roads could be avoided. More importantly though, businesses were started in Brandon. Because of the train, Bloomingdale resident Daniel J. Galvin moved to Brandon, establishing a general store and becoming postmaster. Combined with Messrs. Cone and Johnson's enterprise, local businesses diminished the need to travel to Tampa and Plant City for many goods. By 1911 P.H. Varn operated Brandon's general store and served as the area's postmaster. Telephones also reached the area by the second decade of the 20th century. During the height of Florida's land boom, Brandon businesses also prospered. While no longer serving as postmaster, Varn had moved into the fruit packing industry by 1925. Ralph McIntosh became postmaster in 1922 and stayed in the position until he retired in 1958. The postmaster did not receive a salary, but was paid from a portion of revenues collected. Fueled by the timber industry around Brandon, Mr. Coe continued to operate

his sawmill where families could go and procure wood to expand or build homes. Residents could also get their hair cut by C.M Hogan; have their plumbing fixed by J.L. Brooker; get their cars repaired by W.L. Hone; shop at C.N. Morgan's general store, Ralph McIntosh's butcher shop, or W.H. Brown's grocer and feed store; and purchase land from G.W. Stevens, Brandon's real estate agent.<sup>v</sup>

Possibly because Brandon did not incorporate all of the older community of New Hope, Brandon's population in 1900 was 317. By 1910, however, Brandon's population grew to 573. This growth may in part be attributed to Mr. Galvin being elected county commissioner, during which time the commission improved roads around Brandon. Most of the residents were farmers. Land in the area sold for approximately \$15 or \$16 an acre during this era. The typical farm consisted of a few acres of oranges which served families as a cash crop, a small plot of sugar cane which was turned into syrup and a portion for candy, and a vegetable garden for home use. Chicken and hogs were raised, and the family usually kept at least one cow for milk. Other cash crops included peaches and grapes.<sup>vi</sup>

While the New Hope school continued to operate until it burned down during the 1890s, other schools opened that serviced the general area, including Limona School, Valrico School, and Williamson School. A Brandon School was first mentioned in the July 3, 1894, school board minutes. In August, 1901, voters established Brandon Special School Tax District No. 11, and elected Isaac M. Brandon, J.R. Brooker, and D.W. Yancy as trustees. Three months later, James H. Brandon donated one square acre of land to the trustees for the erection of a school. This school has generally been referred to as "Brandon's first school." Following this, in 1914, the county erected the first of the "Twin Towers" building on present day McLane Middle School at 306 Knights Avenue. The second building was erected in 1917, with the first serving as an elementary school while high school students attend classes in the second structure. Other schools in the general vicinity were closed and consolidated into the Brandon school. As the

institution grew during the following decades it became a focal point for the Brandon community where plays, dances, and even movies were shown.<sup>vii</sup>

In 1920, 492 people called Brandon home, including Victoria Brandon. Besides having served as postmaster and having Brandon platted, Mrs. Brandon also raised her children and tended her farm. On October 4, 1900 she married Charles C. Sherrill. Mr. Sherrill passed away on June 20, 1917, and Mrs. Brandon died on December 4, 1926. Mrs. Brandon's community had a population of 1063 in 1930, consisting of 537 males and 526 females, 1041 Whites, and 22 Blacks, with the majority of Whites being U.S. born.<sup>viii</sup> The reason for the small number of African Americans within Brandon might be revealed in a 1930s description of the community:

This thriving little community [of Brandon] impresses the visitor with its cleanliness and good repair of homes.

It has long been noted as a locality in which negroes are forbidden to

settle.

The first home in this town was built in 1856 by John Brandon, for whom the town was named. In later years Brandon was settled to a great extent by Northerners.

There is a large district or consolidated school here with a student body of 600, drawn from surrounding territory.<sup>ix</sup>

During the mid-1950s, Hopewell Road (today's State Road 60) was connected to Adamo Drive. Two additional lanes were added to State Road 60 through Brandon in 1958. This connection and expansion caused the community to boom, with 5000 people residing in Brandon in 1957 and 8000 three years later. While the *Tampa Tribune's* 1890 prediction of Brandon becoming a bedroom community of Tampa came true, it just took 70 years longer than expected and the transformation occurred because of automobiles and not the train. Brandon's population in 1975 was estimated to be about 45,000, second in growth to the area surrounding the University of South Florida. Neighborhoods sprung up north and south of State Road 60, and in the process Brandon swallowed up such communities as Bloomingdale, Dover, Durant, Lithia, Limona, Mango, Seffner, and Valrico. This greater Brandon area included 106,000 residents, supporting over 150 churches, and more than 5000 businesses. With such growth, people began to grumble about traffic along State Road 60 during the 1970s, and the grumbling (for good reason) continues to this day.<sup>x</sup>

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ii. Donna Brugman, "She Knows the History of Brandon," *Tampa Times* March 19, 1979; James W. Covington, *The Story of Southwestern Florida*, Volume II (New York, 1957), 523; James Scott Hanna, *The Brandon family of Southwest Florida* (Leander, TX, 1968), 13-17; D.B. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, Volume III, 738-742; Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County, Florida*, 77.

iii. Bradbury and Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, 11; Hanna, *The Brandon Family of Southwest Florida*, 17; Ed Hirshberg, "Brandon: The Pioneers," *Good Life Guide* (April-May 1984), 15; "John Brandon," *The Brandon News* [Founders Day Supplement] October 21, 1982, 8; Michelle Jones, "Brandon's a Community Wealthy in Historical Lore," *East Hillsborough Tribune* March 31, 1983, 18-EHP; McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, Volume III, 742; George W. Pettengill, Jr., *Story of the Florida Railroads* (Boston, 1952), 54; Plat Book 1, page 36, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Hillsborough County, Tampa, FL; Lisa W. Rodriguez, "Brandon, Florida, 1890-1990: A Photographic Essay," *Tampa Bay History* 12(2)(1990), 31; Jennifer L. Stevenson, "Brandon Poised to Celebrate its Beginning, its Pioneers," *St. Petersburg Times* February 11, 1990, 1,3; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Compendium of the Eleventh Census: 1890, Part I, Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1892), 88.

iv. "The New City of Brandon," *Tampa Tribune* May 22, 1890, 3.

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v."Alligator Hunting, Skinny-Dipping Occupied Old-Timers," *Brandon News* March 30, 1977; Cari Bollinger, "Former Postmaster Recalls Earliest days in Brandon," *The Brandon News* April 15, 1970, 4A; "Brandon History," unauthored manuscript in Hillsborough/Tampa 6N file, Hampton Dunn Collection, USF Special Collections; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1911-1912*, 68; *Florida State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1925*, 123; Mike Kilgore, "Brandon was Once a Sleepy Village," *Florida Accent* June 15, 1975; Jennifer Orsi, "Tracing Brandon's Past," *St. Petersburg Times* September 4, 1988, 1; Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County Florida*, 77; Rodriguez, "Brandon, Florida, 1890-1990, 35-36; *The Gate-to-the-Gulf (Tampa) City Directory, and Hillsboro County Guide, 1893* (Tampa, Fl: J.O.D. Clarke, 1893), 206.

vi.Leland Hawes, "Remembrances of Brandon, 1909-1914," *Tampa Tribune* June 1, 1986, 1-I, 3-I; Mike Kilgore, "Brandon was Once a Sleepy Village," *Florida Accent* June 15, 1975; Chas Linsley to Cousin Ed, February 19, 1894, Brandon Family File, Hillsborough County Historical Commission Collection, Tampa Bay History Center; Robinson, *History of Hillsborough County, Florida*, 77; "Una Barry Recalls 'Chicken Colony,'" *Brandon News* March 30, 1977; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census Reports, Volume I, Twelfth Census of the United States, Taken in the Year 1900, Population, Part I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Office, 1901), 93; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Abstract of the Census* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913), 575.

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viii.Hana, *The Brandon Family of Southwest Florida*, 17-18; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Volume I, Population, 1920, Number and Distribution of Inhabitants* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1921), 371; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population Bulletin, Second Series, Florida, Composition and Characteristics of the Population* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 51.

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x.Mike Kilgore, "Brandon was Once a Sleepy Village," *Florida Accent* June 15, 1975; Donna Koehn, "The Main Drag," *Tampa Tribune* October 18, 1997, 1-Brandon, 3-Brandon; Victoria N. Parsons, "Centennial Spirit: Brandon's History may be Obscure, but its 1990s Appeal to Young Families is Undisputed," *Tampa Bay Life* August 1990, 45; Rodriguez, "Brandon, Florida, 1890-1990," 32.