

Lake Lipsey



William and Nancy Wofford (USF)

The following narrative is based on an interview with William and Nancy Wofford on June 29, 2001 at their home on Lake Lipsey. By sharing their experiences, the Woffords provide insight into the history of the lake area.

Personal History



View of Lake Lipsey from the Woffords' dock (USF)

William and Nancy moved to Lake Lipsey in 1970, just as the last phase of Carrollwood was developing. William had always wanted to live on a lake, and when the area around Lake Lipsey began to develop, he picked out a lot on the south side of the lake. The Woffords built a house on the property William chose and have now lived there for 31 years. Unlike the high concentration of homes that currently characterizes Carrollwood, when William first visited the lake area it was very rural. He related the following:

"It looked like a jungle in here. In fact, I couldn't even see the lake. I had to go around the lake to find an opening where I could put in a small boat so I could take pictures from the lakeside. It was beautiful."



John Wofford (the blond) and a friend on Lake Lipsey (William and Nancy Wofford)

William and Nancy's two children, Susan and John, grew up on the lake. When the children were still living at home, the Woffords would fish and swim together. John used a boat as transportation to Independent Day School, a nearby grade school. When Susan married, she and her husband held their wedding ceremony by the lake. After 31 years, William and Nancy continue to express their delight at living on Lake Lipsey. They find living by the water extremely calming and especially enjoy watching the wildlife.

History/Information



Great Blue Heron (William and Nancy Wofford)



Lake area before development (William and Nancy Wofford)



Palm and podocarpus left behind by Cowgill Nursery (USF)

Lake Lipsey is a 19.8-acre lake located in Carrollwood. The lake is the last in a chain of lakes that begins with Lake Chapman and includes Lake Magdalene, Lake Bay, and Lake Ellen, among others. Lake Lipsey's maximum depth is 19.4 feet.

William and Nancy are very knowledgeable about the wildlife on Lake Lipsey, especially the birds. They share a passion for bird watching and own several reference books that have helped them to identify the different types of birds that populate the lake. According to the Woffords, among the thriving water birds are osprey, anhingas, great blue heron, green heron, white ibis, great egret, pelicans, sea gulls, gallinule, mallard, muscovy, and wood ducks. Among the land birds are cardinals, blue jays, hawks, red-winged black birds, grackles, doves, crows, robins, brown thrashers, mockingbirds, and an owl. The Woffords believe the fish population to have remained relatively stable. It consists of bass, brim, carp, catfish, and gar. Additionally, the Woffords have seen raccoons, opossums, squirrels, alligators, and a variety of turtles. Over the past few years, the lake has begun supporting a large number of mussels for the first time since William and Nancy have been living on the lake; the Woffords do not know to what to attribute the mussel population. In terms of vegetation, cypress is prevalent around the lake.

As Carrollwood has developed, the Woffords have noticed a significant decrease in the water quality of the lake. William observed that the water became murkier about ten years after residential development in the area increased. William and Nancy have also seen an increase in algae over the past several months. Unlike when their children were young, the water is no longer suitable for swimming. Nancy attributes the decrease in water quality to water draining from the streets of the subdivisions directly into the lake.

During the interview, Nancy related a brief history of the Carrollwood area, as she has experienced it:

"Carrollwood was built by Sunstate Builders, and most of the property south of MacFarland Road had already been developed before we arrived in 1970. When we started construction of our house, there were houses about a block south of here. Properties on the south end of the main lake were undeveloped. In fact, there was no road and the area looked like a wilderness."

The land the Woffords bought was formerly part of Cowgill Nursery. Although the nursery transplanted many of its plants, they left palms, tibichina, and podocarpus, some of which remain on the Woffords' property. Carl Cowgill is responsible for the spread of the podocarpus in Florida as a popular landscaping plant, and it is very prevalent in the Woffords' neighborhood (O'Sullivan, Keen Oliver. "Cowgilli Podocarpus Dresses Up Tampa," source unknown). Other historical uses of land in the area are citrus and cattle.

Another interesting aspect of the history of the lake area is its significant population of peacocks. Although I saw only one during my visit, I understand there are a number in the area and have been for years. According to an article in the St. Petersburg Times (DeLoche, Frank. "Peacocks Live in Precarious Balance with Neighbors," April 10, 1988), the peacocks were brought to the

area by a Mr. Ingram prior to World War II. He had bought 480 acres on the south shore of Lake Carroll to raise cattle and grow oranges. But the fruit was being stolen off of the trees at night, and his dogs were too easily bribed with food to be good deterrents. Mr. Ingram ended up buying peacocks and guinea hens to protect his property. The peacocks would hear people on the property and begin calling, and the louder guinea hens would join in, alerting the residents to the intruders. When Mr. Ingram died, his will required his heirs to take care of the birds. Eventually they multiplied into a large flock, and as the Ingram estate was developed and homes replaced the orange grove, the peacocks moved across Lake Carroll.

Development



The nearby school building (USF)

When the Woffords moved to Lake Lipsey in 1970, there were only five other houses on the lake, although a great deal of construction had begun. In fact, the houses on either side of the Wofford home were built at exactly the same time as the Woffords'. According to William, the original homes were small "weekend-type" houses that were built around 1940. Gradually the area became saturated with residential development, and now the properties are very valuable. Some of the older houses are being demolished and replaced with newer, more extravagant homes.

A development issue of concern to the Woffords and their neighbors is the expansion of a private school on the lake. According to Nancy,

"The school began in a small building on Orange Grove Drive in 1969 or 1970 and as property became available, continued to expand along the lake front. Their latest expansion included a 35 foot high building only a few feet from the lake."

The school currently serves around 400 children, and while the Woffords applaud its service to students, they are concerned about how the school's expansion will affect the lake. In the past, there was vegetation all the way around the lake, but now the area near the school contains the last patch of lake grasses. As William understands it, this is the area where the aquatic birds feed and nest. If this vegetation is eliminated, there will be no place for the birds to go.

Recently, with the help of the Carrollwood Civic Association, a neighborhood association, some of the neighbors were able to prevent the school from building an administrative building and a childcare center on a lake front lot. The school now plans to use this property as a parking lot and have agreed to landscape in keeping with the surrounding lake environment.

The Future

In the interview, William and Nancy emphasized the importance of Lake Lipsey to their daily lives. Although they can no longer swim in the lake, they enjoy the view from their dock, their screened-in porch, and from numerous windows in their home; the house was designed with the lake as a focal point. They recognize that the residential development of the lake contributed to its pollution and the decrease in lake vegetation. William and Nancy are extremely invested in the future of Lake Lipsey and hope that, with the help of their neighbors, the beauty and serenity of the lake will be maintained.

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