

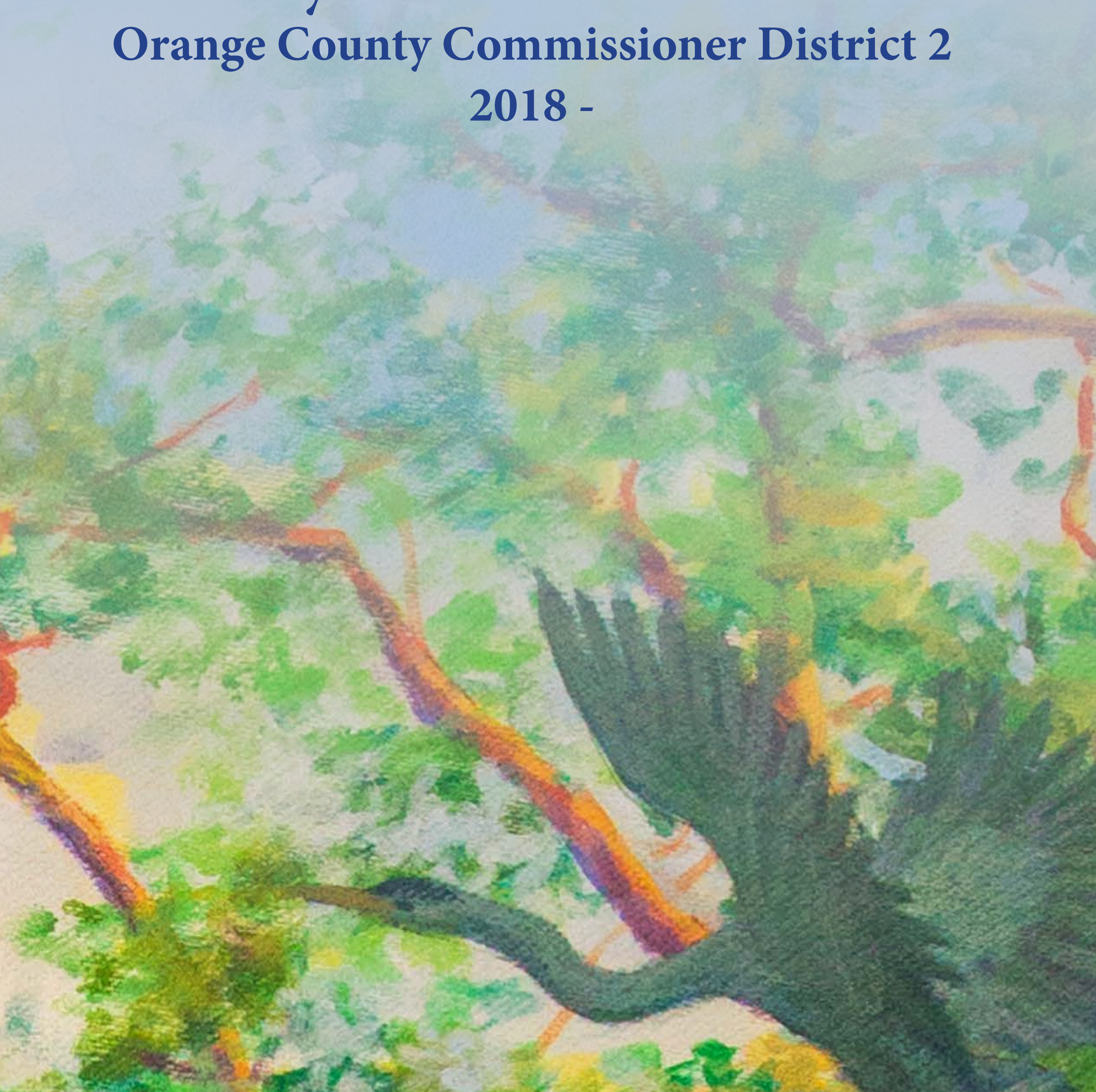


A Driving Tour of Southern Apopka

*Lakeville, Clarcona, Paradise Heights,
and Lake Apopka*

By Christine Moore

**Orange County Commissioner District 2
2018 -**



Lakeville

The Lakeville community began in 1884. It boasted a post office, hotel, school, general store, citrus groves, and rental cottages on Lake Apopka. However, the 1894-95 freezes caused the population to decline and today the area has been generally annexed by the City of Apopka or remains in the Clarcona Rural Settlement.

1. Railroad Track

Lakeville Road / Apopka Blvd

The Florida Midland Railway route through Lakeville connected Apopka southward towards Ocoee and Winter Garden. By the late 1880s, rail stations were located in Lakeville, Apopka, East Apopka, Plymouth, Lake Brantley, and Altamonte Springs. Rail travel replaced water as the main means of travel.





ACTIVITY: Discuss how the early railroads were important to progress in small towns like Lakeville.

2. The Train Museum at Lakeville Elementary School

2015 Lakeville Road, Apopka, FL 32703

Lakeville Elementary School is the only elementary school in the country with its own railroad museum. The school first opened in 1998 and the museum was dedicated in 2000. The museum expanded in 2007 with the purchase of a caboose.



ACTIVITY: Take a picture in front of the caboose at Lakeville Elementary School. The caboose is located on the northern portion of the school property.



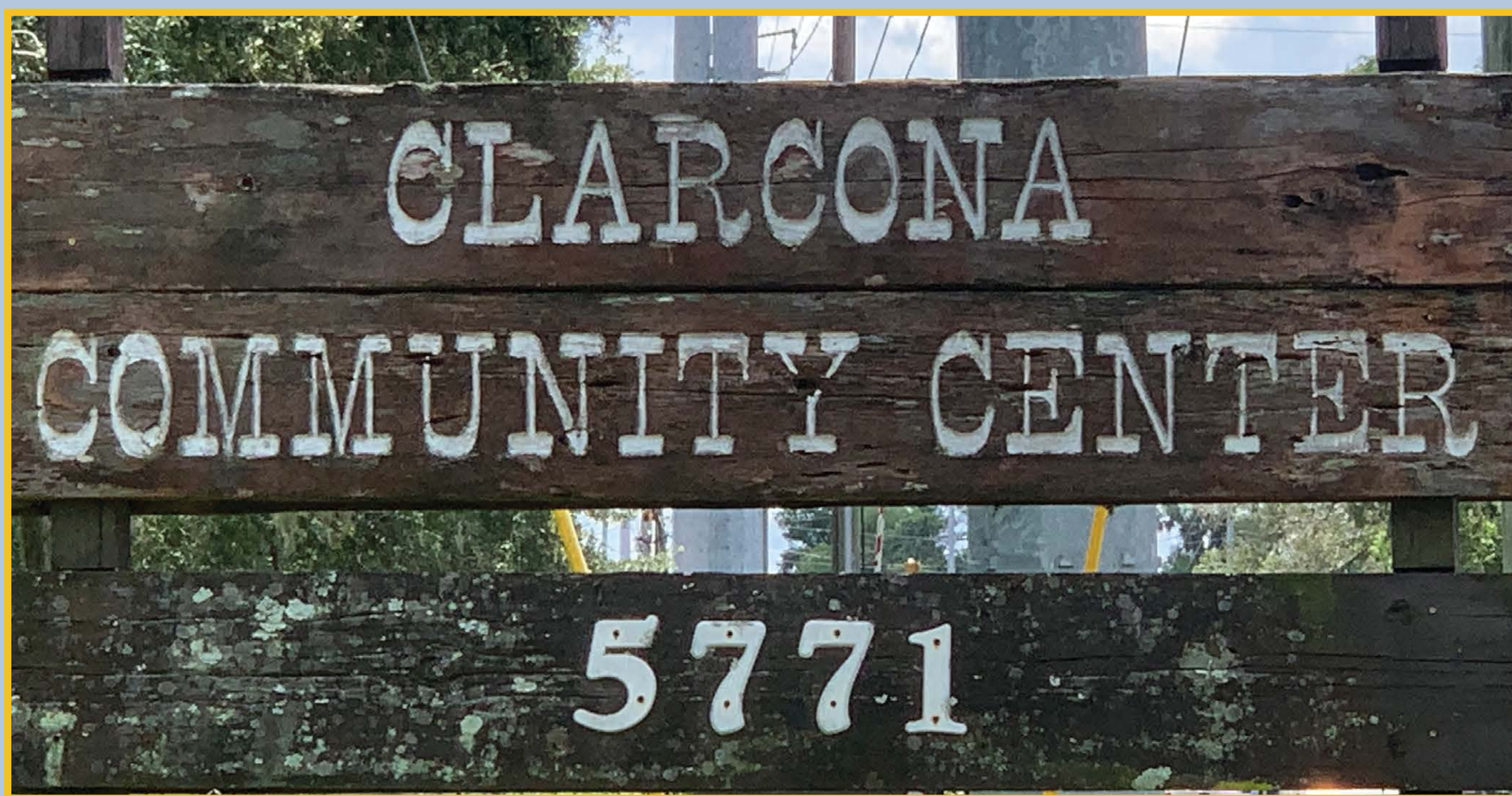
Clarcona

The earliest residents, the Gill and Goolsby families, first settled on Grassmere Lake. The town's namesake, Colonel T. Elwood Zell, arrived after the Civil War. After the US Army cleared part of Lake Apopka to grow crops during WWII, agriculture dominated the area until 1999, when all but one farm was purchased by the State of Florida for lake restoration.

3. Clarcona Community Center

5771 N. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando, FL 32818

The Clarcona Community Center is owned and operated by the Clarcona Improvement Association. The Community Center is a facility available for meetings, parties, churches, and other functions.



ACTIVITY: What role does a community center play in a small rural community?

4. Apopka Vineland Outpost

5794 N. Apopka Vineland Road, Orlando, FL 32818

The West Orange Trail begins at Killarney Station on Old State Road 50 and extends north through District Two into Apopka. Ten miles of this 20.1 mile trail are equestrian or for horses. The Apopka Vineland Outpost is one of five trailheads along the West Orange Trail.





ACTIVITY: Take a bike ride or short stroll along the heavily tree-lined trail.

5. Clarcona Horseman's Park

3535 Damon Road, Apopka, FL 32703

Orange County Government operates the Clarcona Horseman's Park. Its offerings include show rings with bleacher seating, judging towers and horse stalls. Soon a new topper will cover the western ring. Tent and RV camping are also available.



ACTIVITY: Visit the park on a weekend to watch a horse show.



Paradise Heights

Paradise Heights is an Orange County designated rural settlement of 126 acres on the shores of Lake Apopka. At one time it boasted three fish camps. The area offers several historic properties and refurbished fishing cottages. Paradise Heights went into decline in the 1960s as the lake began losing its game fish population due to severe pollution.

6. McCormick Rd Baptist Church

2100 W. McCormick Road, Apopka, FL 32703

McCormick Baptist Church was built in 1950 and in 1987 the Florida Baptist Convention sold the property to Paradise Heights Baptist Church. Today it is called One Way Christian Church, a multi-generational community church.



ACTIVITY: Discuss the importance of faith-based organizations in small towns.



7. Sub Shack

53181 Ocoee Apopka Road, Apopka, FL 32703

The building was first built in 1925. In 1993 it was known as Cooks Corner and used for a furniture store. Later it became a thrift and video store and produce stand. It first became a sub shop in 2007.



ACTIVITY: Stop at the Sub Shack for lunch and enjoy eating at one of the outside picnic tables.

8. Walker Road – Fish Camps & Cottages

3828 Walker Road, Apopka, FL 32703

In the late 1800s visitors first began spending winters in Florida. Lake Apopka was known far and wide for its excellent bass fishing. Fish camps emerged by the 1900s and Walker Road housed several fish camps including: Johnson's, Fisherman's Paradise, and Well's Gap Fish Camps.



ACTIVITY: Look at the condition of the lake and imagine potential future development.

9. Magnolia Park (*Lovell's Landing*)

2929 S. Binion Road, Apopka, FL 32703

Magnolia Park is a 56 acre park located on the east shore of Lake Apopka. Orange County Commissioner Cliff Freeman in the early 1960s advocated for the purchase. This is the Lovell's Landing site where in the 1920s the city of Apopka built a dock, clubhouse and picnic grounds, and held annual fish rodeos. An eco-tourism building, new restrooms, fishing pier, dock, pavilion, and inclusive playground will be completed in 2022.



ACTIVITY: Hike the Lake Apopka Loop or take photographs of a sunset over Lake Apopka.



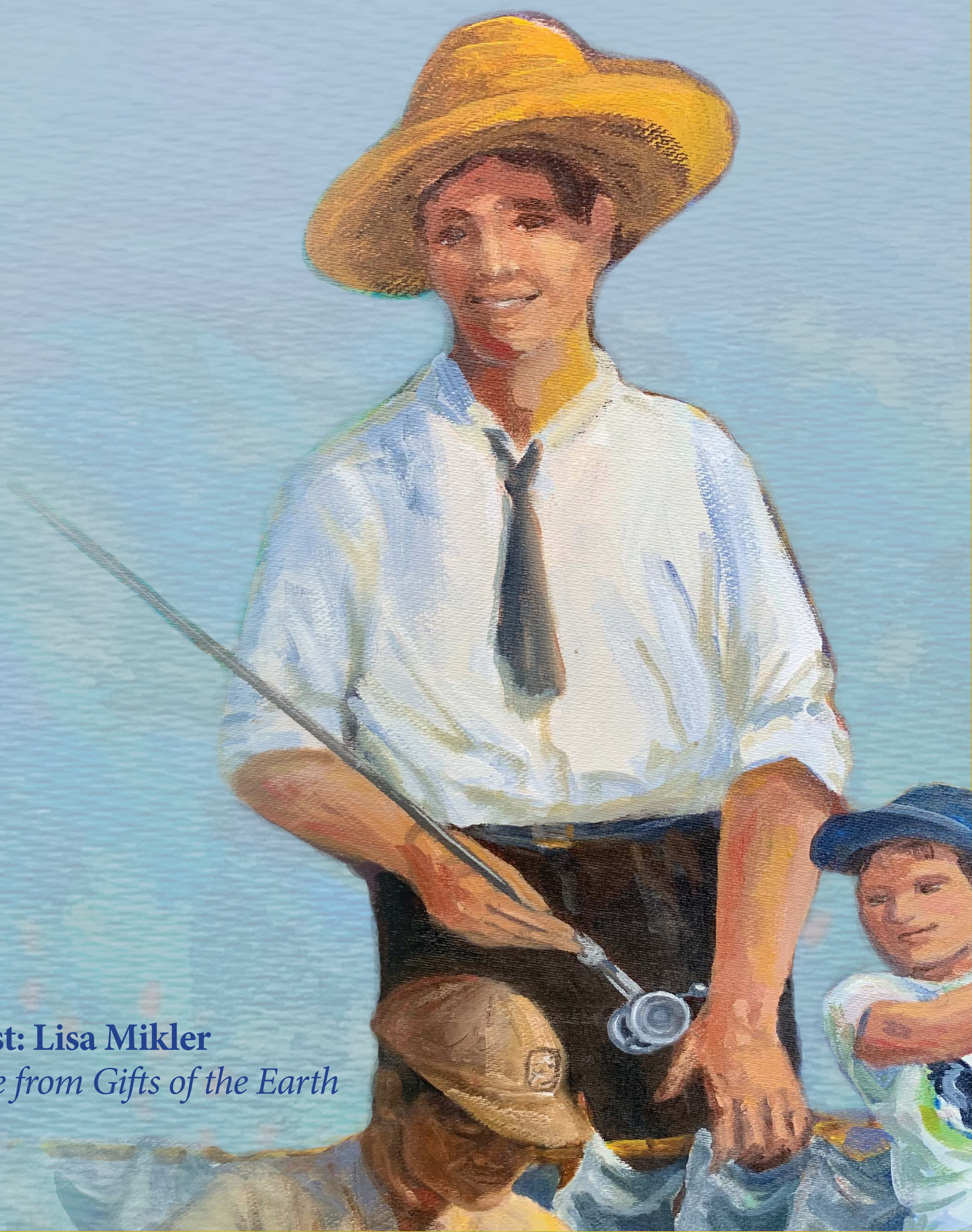
History of Lake Apopka

In the early 1800s the Seminoles still had villages on Lake Apopka. The last Chief was Coacoochee and his nickname was “Wild Cat”. Several decades later, pioneers, such as William Lovell, used the lake to transport goods from Winter Garden to Apopka. By the 1880s train travel replaced water travel. Still, due to the quality and supply of game fish, avid recreational fishermen from all over the country stayed at 29 camps around the lake.

In the late 1800s, early farmers and fishermen dug a canal connecting Lake Apopka with the Harris Chain. This inadvertently lowered the lake by 3 ft thus beginning the lake’s demise. Additionally, human waste from a growing Winter Garden and fertilizers and pesticides pumped from the farms over the decades led to its ruin. The game fish died, the water turned green, and the alligator population exploded.

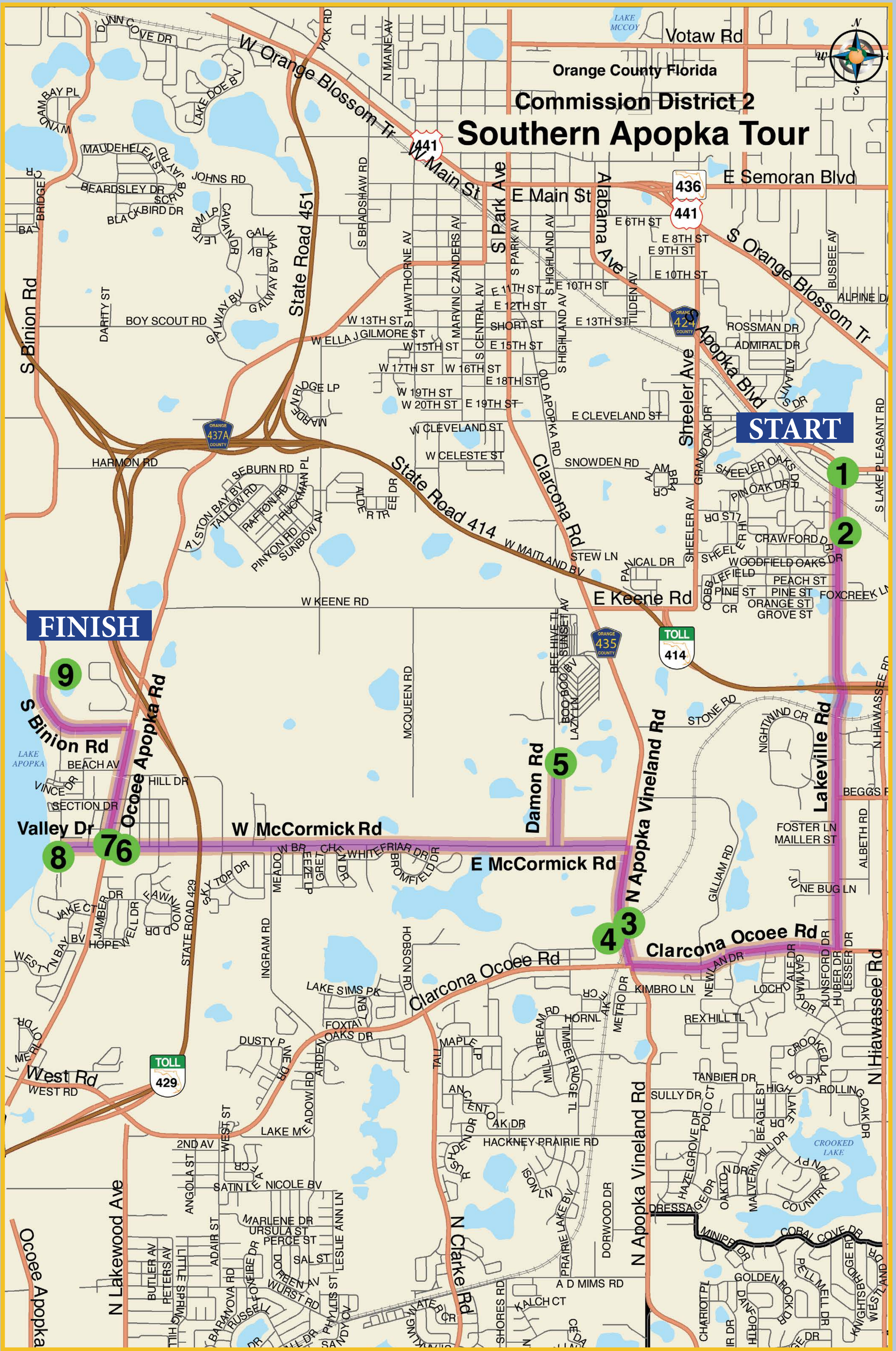
In the 1990s the State of Florida purchased the farms and began restoration efforts. The lake is now recovering and residents have learned better practices.

Artist: Lisa Mikler
Scene from Gifts of the Earth





Christine Moore
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The driving tour requires ninety minutes of time and covers about seven miles.

For more information:

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YouTube: Christine Moore or FB: Ahapopka
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It is recommended students read Ahapopka prior to taking the Southern Driving Tour. The entire series of driving tours is available at the North Orange County Library and Canon Coffee.