

Historic Prairie Creek

Researched and written by former resident, the late Ray Hooper.

The area in which we live is a small portion of a vast land mass fronting the Matanzas River on the east and past what is now Wildwood Drive on the west . Rich cultural history is embodied in our area.

1770

In the 1770s, this entire area was part of a land grant to Lieutenant Governor John Moultrie. Moultrie named his plantation 'Bella Vista', which consisted of 1,000 original acres plus an additional 1,500 acres acquired at a later date. Two-story, stone homes along with outbuildings were erected on the plantation fronting on 'Woodcutters Creek'. Here Moultrie produced tar, turpentine and corn. The name 'Woodcutters Creek' was changed to Moultrie Creek in his honor.

1769

Evidence on a survey map (authorized by William Gerard De Brahm, surveyor general of the Southern District of North America, and performed by John and Samuel Lewis in 1769) indicated a residence, 'Fountain Hall' near the end of Lone Wolf Trail. Located on Lot 110 (3689 Lone Wolf Trail) is a large brick well or water storing cistern, which was found by Pete and Reggie Bailey.

1823

Just about ten feet behind the rear lot line of Lot 60 (3541 Red Cloud Trail) was a stone monument marking the historical site of the 1823 Treaty of Moultrie Creek. It was here the most notable negotiations with the Native American chiefs and the United States military, under commissioner George Gadsden, took place from September 6th to September 23rd, 1823. It was such a significant event that men and women residents of nearby St. Augustine traveled in small boats along Moultrie Creek to the site of these talks. A bark house was built by the military on the north side of Moultrie Creek. Later the area became known as Treaty Grounds. The monument since has been moved to Treaty Park.

1837

An important historical event took place just west of the Wildwood Pines subdivision. There in 1837, the US military under General Thomas Jesup surrounded and captured the Native American Chief Osceola, twelve other chiefs and encamped followers. Since the military was presumably there for peace talks and the Native Americans were under a flag of truce, much criticism was heaped on General Jesup's actions, and it weighed heavily on his mind for the rest of his life. Osceola, the chiefs and followers, were marched to the Castillo de San Marcos (Fort Marion) on the Matanzas River and held captive.

1840

To the west of Wildwood Drive in the Wildwood Creek subdivision is the site of Fort Peyton. The fort consisted of four log houses, two occupied by troops, one by officers and the last as a commissary and hospital. In 1837, after Osceola and his followers were captured less than a mile away from the fort, the military abandoned Fort Peyton. In 1840, it burned to the ground. In 1966, the St. Johns County Historical Commission erected an iron monument with a brief history of Fort Peyton, marking the spot.

1975

In 1975, local real estate developer, Terry Pacetti, a descendant of early Minorcan pioneers, desired to purchase and develop this area. He was dropped off at the railroad tracks and proceeded to walk through the entire area. His 1976 purchase of 500 acres, from a trust in Virginia, included mostly

unbuildable wetlands and was accomplished for \$900 per acre. Topography ranged from nearly flat properties to land with a severe drop toward the rear line. After the platting and layout of the first lots on Crazy Horse Trail, roads were built and the new subdivision was named Moultrie Creek.

Lots were put on sale for \$7,500 per acre. Homes and ground with a natural look were encouraged. The sales office and mail boxes were located at the guard house. The first house was built on Lot 18 (3669 Crazy Horse Trail). Many old bottles and relics were unearthed on Lot 43 (3432 Red Cloud Trail). Other homeowners have reported finding what might be termed artifacts (army buttons, bottles, hinges and wheels).

1980

In 1980-81 the entire development of Prairie Creek was bought out by Robert Held, a South Florida developer. Held developed additional areas here, and these land tracts were called Prairie Creek II and Prairie Creek III. It is believed that Prairie Creek was the name local Native Americans had given this area. Held completed his developing efforts and deeded over the common elements of this subdivision to the Moultrie Creek Property Owners Association and the Prairie Creek Property Owners Association.

1986

In 1986, Moultrie Creek Property Owners Association and the Prairie Creek Property Owners Association became the Prairie Creek Property Owners Association, Inc.

History of Prairie Creek

By Eugene Weaver

Former resident with his wife, Norma at 3593 Red Cloud Trail. The couple moved to Prairie Creek from Pennsylvania in 1983. Mr. Weaver retired from Wise Potato Chip Co. as Plant Manager.

In 1776 prior to the Seminole wars, John Moultrie, a successful plantation owner in South Carolina, moved to the area surrounding present Prairie Creek. He was a medical doctor educated in Scotland. He acquired approximately 2500 acres and named his plantation 'Bella Vista', consisting of several stone buildings, houses and warehouses. His plantation raised crops (mainly corn) and also produced tar and turpentine near Woodcutter Creek, later named Moultrie Creek, in his honor. Mr. Moultrie lived in the Peck house in St. Augustine and became Lieutenant Governor of Florida.

In September 1823, the Treaty of Moultrie Creek, between the native Americans and government, for the relocation of the Indians to central Florida, was approved. A large attendance of people from St. Augustine attended the treaty arriving by boat on Moultrie Creek (must have been larger then) and by horse and carriage.

In 1823 Indian chiefs and the government, under directive from the US President, held a meeting in Paynes Landing where an agreement was reached to relocate the tribes to land west of the Mississippi. The predominate tribe of the area was the Seminoles, with Chief Osceola as one of the more aggressive chiefs who strongly opposed the treaty and conducted numerous attacks on the military encampments. After five years with many skirmishes, negotiations were explored and on October 21, 1837 a treaty to meet under a flag of truce was agreed, meeting at Fort Peyton located near present Treaty Park. The fort consisted of 4 log houses and a warehouse. It was abandoned and finally burned in 1840. The Indians called the area Prairie Creek. The peace talk was planned by General Thomas Jesup. However, when Osceola and other chiefs arrived, General Jesup ignored the white flag of truce and arrested them. They were imprisoned in Fort Marion (present Castillo de San Marco). The other chiefs escaped but Osceola, under extra guard, could not escape. In December he was transferred to Fort Moultrie in Charleston, SC where he died of malaria in 1838. A monument commemorating this meeting is located near Treaty Park.

Development of the area for the next 135 years progressed – some of the area provided hunting. Houses and a church appeared along Wildwood Drive. In 1975 Terry Pacetti surveyed the area and decided that it was the ideal location for a housing development. He purchased approximately 500 acres from a trust company in Virginia for \$900 per acre. The area then, as well as now, consisted of wet land, flat land, lots of trees and wildlife, and was bordered by Moultrie Creek. The original development was all Moultrie Creek Property Owners Association. The name was changed in September 1986 to Prairie Creek Property Owners Association. It is evident that Mr Pacetti was influenced by the Indian history of the area when selected names for the streets. The first section (Prairie Creek I) was plotted with the county with the street name Crazy Horse Trail. The lot sizes are a minimum of one acre and sold for \$7,500. It was his desire to retain as much of the natural look as possible with the removal of trees restricted. Our covenants, along with the by-laws, govern our development.

A guard house (it also served as a sales office), along with the required roads and utilities, were constructed with the first house built on lot 18 (3669 Crazy Horse Trail). The development continued to grow with the plotting of Prairie Creek II and Prairie Creek III.

Prairie Creek was purchase by Robert Held in 1980 and in 1986 became a homeowners association called Prairie Creek Property Owners Association, governed by a board of 5 directors, elected by the homeowners, who are guided by the covenants and by-laws (recorded in St. Johns County), with a monthly fee to provide maintenance and security.

Prairie Creek was the first gated development in St. Johns County to have 24/7 security control. The development consists of 137 lots with 132 houses – the maximum that can be built. The original identification was by lot number and is still used in the operation of Prairie Creek.