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**Lake County**  
**WATER AUTHORITY**  
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# Bourlay *Historic* NATURE PARK

LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA



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**WATER AUTHORITY**

# Bourlay *Historic* NATURE PARK

The **Lake County Water Authority (LCWA)** accepted the donation of this 88-acre parcel in Leesburg from the Trust of Arthur (Buddy) Bourlay II, in honor of his parents, Arthur Hugh Bourlay II and Virginia Cole Daley Bourlay. Today this beautiful and unique property, now known as the Bourlay Historic Nature Park, is being used for a passive recreational park. The park is located on North Canal Street between Highway 441 and Lake Griffin.

## HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT

Partnerships with the City of Leesburg, Leesburg Regional Medical Center (LRMC) and Ford Press, Inc. have resulted in many enhancements to the property. As part of LRMC's campaign, "Giving for a Healthy Community," the hospital's employees funded the purchase of 10 exercise stations, benches, bike racks and picnic tables. An old Florida-style Cracker Home, generously donated by Ford Press, Inc., was relocated to the parking/trailhead area of the Bourlay Historic Nature Park. This "shotgun" home is approximately 80 years old and after being renovated by Alee Academy, has become the Park's welcome center.

## PROPERTY HISTORY

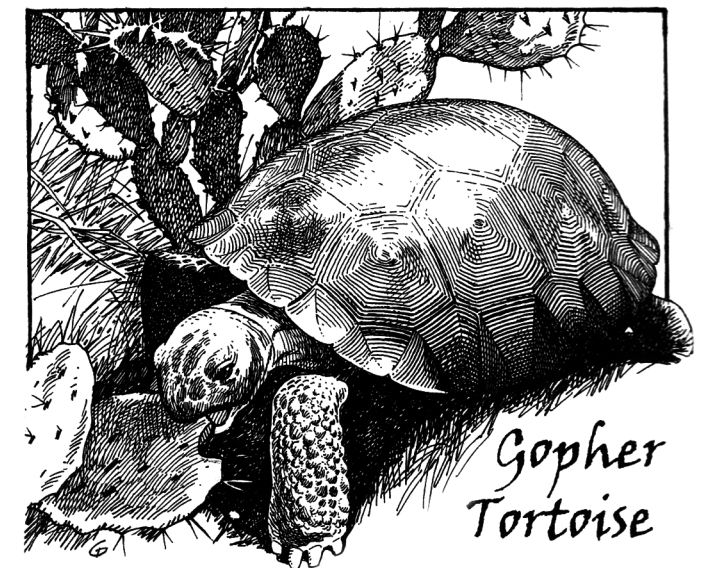
A single-family, two-story, 1930's era home and pole barn, which belonged to the Bourlay Family, are still located on the property. The previous property owners can trace their lineage to the Evander Lee family, one of the area's

pioneer families. The surrounding area was also the home site of the first settler Thomas Robertson. A commemorative plaque honoring this War of 1812 veteran can be found beneath the large live oak, to the left of the cracker house. Also historically significant is the documented location of a steamboat landing which delivered mail and supplies, and provided transportation to and from the area. Religious circuit riders would preach to willing listeners at this landing, and the historical spot has been marked by a plaque donated by the Morrison Methodist Church commemorating the first Methodist services held in the area.

## LAND MANAGEMENT

The property has a variety of upland, wetland, and lakefront communities that are undergoing restoration. The property has been impacted by the planting of slash pines, building of canals to shed water from the property, and construction of a northern canal to transport stormwater from the surrounding neighborhoods into Lake Griffin.

Staff has stepped up its efforts to control and eventually rid the property of invasive exotic



*Gopher  
 Tortoise*





vegetation, which impacts the survival of native species and the diversity of plants and trees for wildlife. Some vegetation on the “hit list” includes Chinaberry, cat’s claw vine, and Caesar weed.

There are multiple trails taking visitors to different areas of the property. Trails can be walked in segments or in their entirety. The total trail length is 2.22 miles. Plant and tree identification signs are scattered throughout the property. Several types of wildlife, such as raccoons and different species of birds; may be spotted while traveling these trails.

#### PINE HOLLOW TRAIL - .35 mile (green)

The development of this trail was funded by a generous donation from the LRMC “Giving for



a Healthy Community” campaign. This trail was dedicated to bicyclists, but can be hiked.

#### BUDDY’S BOUNTY TRAIL - .48 mile (orange)

This main trail provides the visitor an opportunity to walk or run this trail through the center of the park. It has a 10-station fitness course funded by LRMC employees.

#### NATURE WAY TRAIL - .22 mile (yellow)

A short trail connecting the education gazebo to Buddy’s Bounty Trail. The gazebo provides a shady place for tired visitors and an opportunity to spot the property’s wildlife residents.

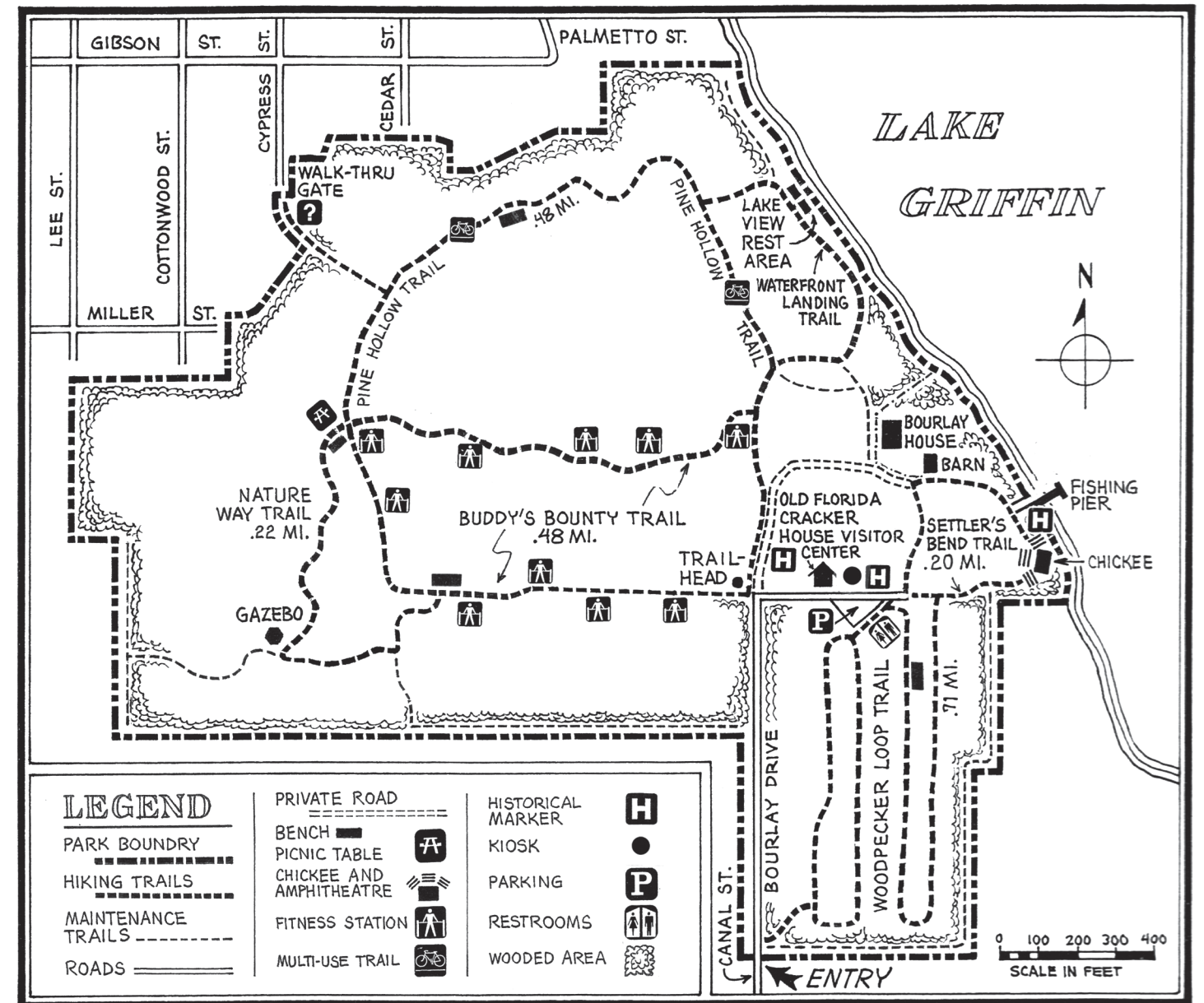
#### SETTLERS BEND - .20 mile (white)

This trail takes the visitor on a short loop along the waterfront and past the fishing pier. It is along this trail that the Morrison Methodist Plaque marks the area of the first Methodist church service in the area, and the place where religious circuit riders came to preach. It also marks the area’s primary steamboat landing. Log benches and a chickee, built as Boy Scout Eagle Projects, commemorate the original “brush arbor” where the church services were held. Now the area is used as an outdoor classroom.

**Visitor Caution – the trails are seasonally wet and muddy, especially Waterfront Landing Trail and Pine Hollow Trail.** Bourlay Historic Park is open daily from Sunset to Sunrise.

**The following are not allowed** - pets, alcohol, motorized vehicles and trapping devices; the removal of plants, animals, historical, archeological, or cultural resources.

**Visit the Lake County Water Authority at [www.lcwa.org](http://www.lcwa.org) or on Facebook for additional recreational opportunities on other Preserves.**



#### WATERFRONT LANDING TRAIL - .26 mile (blue)

This trail will allow the visitor different views of beautiful Lake Griffin. Sit and reflect or enjoy watching the wildlife that use the shoreline for nesting and foraging.

#### WOODPECKER LOOP TRAIL - .71 mile (red)

This walking/running trail is the longest and provides visitors with quick looping trails for

exercise and for enjoying the many birds, especially woodpeckers, which visit and make the Bourlay Historic Nature Park their home. Other feathered friends include the red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, and large pileated woodpecker. The many pine trees along the trails provide a good food source for these chatty birds and a good opportunity to add to a visitor’s life list for birds.