

Water watch

Lakes' names spring from variety of sources

By Janita Poe

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

Gatlin, Conway, Bear Head, Little Fish and Tiny.

Could be the orchestra and cast of a fable set to country music.

But all are names of lakes in Orange County and the stories behind their origin often are surprisingly simple.

Many of the 342 lakes in the county first were named unofficially by military families who settled in Central Florida in the mid-1840s, after the Second Seminole War, said Sara Van Arsdell, curator for the Historical Museum of Orange County. Many of the names relate to the war.

Lake Gatlin in Edgewood and Lake Maitland were named for forts. Lake Jesup in Seminole County was named for General Thomas Jesup, who fought in the Second Seminole War.

Other lakes were named for people. Many were named after famous people, some after wives and daughters, Van Arsdell said.

Lake Conway in Belle Isle was named in 1843 for V.W. Conway, a former surveyor general for the county. Lake Mizell was named for the first family to settle in Winter Park. Lake Adair, near Colonial and Edgewater drives, and Lake Jennie Jewel, just south of Edgewood, were named for wives of early settlers.

Winter Park's Lake Virginia was named for the wife of a sawmill owner who settled on the shore of the lake, said John Gross, president of the Winter Park Historical Association.

These informal lake names became official in the late 1800s when most Orange County cities were incorporated.

Most lakes existed for years before they were named. But Lake Rose in Winter Park is an exception. The infamous small lake is a sinkhole named for property owner Mae Rose Williams, 73, whose three-room home was gob-

bled by the 250,000-cubic-foot cave-in in 1981.

Some lakes have had several names. A few have even changed gender.

Lake Corrine, near the Orlando Naval Training Center, was changed to Lake Baldwin in 1967 in honor of Navy undersecretary Robert H. Baldwin, who helped establish the naval training center in Orlando.

Other lakes have no name, especially the smaller ones. Of the 45 Orange County lakes that are 10 acres or more, eight are unnamed. But few people have tried to name those lakes or rename small lakes, Van Arsdell said.

Those who do bestow names are usually developers.

In 1987, developers renamed Lake Kathy as part of the development plan for Metro West. The group wanted a new name because developers had cleaned the lake and expanded it from 6 to 12 acres.

A group of managers named the project, which included naming the lake Deborah, in a Park Avenue restaurant. "The waitress was named Deborah, so they named it after her," said Chuck Burdick, a project manager at Bowyer-Singleton for Metro West.

Burdick said making the name official was not difficult because the lake had been privately owned.

If a community, developer or property owner wants to name or rename a lake, a request must go to the city or county engineering department.

Requests to name or rename lakes are not common. Orlando city engineer Dave Zeno says the few requests come from developers who are platting the land. It is part of the planning process, Zeno said.

If the lake is private, the request is submitted to the city engineer, who checks on possible name duplications in the city. If it is public, it must be reviewed by the engineer, then submitted to the municipal planning board and the city council for approval.