



Tree Hill Nature Preserve

The beautiful rolling fifty-plus acre preserve of Florida hammock known as Tree Hill is defined by spring-fed Red Bay Branch and Howland creeks. Originally part of Spanish land grants to Italian immigrant Francis Richard - grants that formed the basis of the area now known as Old Arlington - a special 250-acre mill grant in 1817 allowed for the impoundment of the creeks to provide water power for a combination grist, saw, and sugar cane mill, and cotton gin. Once in place the dam for the mill created a 150-acre lake that all but surrounded the property. This, along with preservation by subsequent owners, saved the original natural characteristics of the area.

The mill grant was subdivided into farm lots in 1913 and the family of Cleveland Johnson moved on the land in 1914. Naming their property Red Bay Ranch, they both farmed and operated a dairy. By 1934 Cleveland's daughter Claris and her husband George Jaques had taken over the dairy and daughter Mary Louise and her husband Ted Powell ran the farm. The Jaques closed the dairy in the late 1930s and opened Lone Star Stables, which remained in operation until 1997. In 1945 Cleveland's wife and family matriarch Louise Bruce Johnson renamed the property "Tree Hill" after the stately oak at the top of the hill.

In 1971, a group of citizens led by Espie Patrinely and Dr. Grace Hardy organized the Preservation Association of Tree Hill (PATH). With the cooperation of the Johnson children, PATH, through the State of Florida, acquired thirty plus acres of Tree Hill property and opened Tree Hill Nature Center. The remaining Lone Star Stable property was purchased by PATH in 1997. Because of their vision this pristine land of tall pines, massive oaks and quiet streams remains much as it was when native Indians occupied the area and will be enjoyed for generations to come.

1918 Arlington Map




Mary, Claris, Bruce, Louise and Cleveland Johnson, 1925
F. W. Bruce Collection

Mary L. Johnson Powell and Claris Johnson Jaques Life long residents of Tree Hill 1914-1993
F. W. Bruce Collection

Cane grinding at Tree Hill 1923
F. W. Bruce Collection

For more historic marker locations, visit www.OldArlington.org

This marker erected in 2009 with a grant from  Comcast through Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority.