



# Communities of the Kathleen Area (Images of America)

*Lois Sherrouse-Murphy*

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Settlers from Georgia and the Carolinas began arriving in the communities of the Kathleen area in the 1840s, well before the establishment of Polk County, Florida, in 1861. In the summer of 1851, circuit-riding preacher Rev. J.M. Hayman offered his first sermon at Br. William T. Rushing's homestead at Indian Pond in Socrum, a site soon to become home to Bethel Baptist Church. Against the backdrop of the Seminole Indian Wars, the Civil War, public land incentive programs, and the coming of the railroads in the 1880s, the seven other northwest Polk County communities of the Kathleen area (Galloway, Gibsonia, Green Pond, Griffin, Kathleen, Providence, and Winston) soon followed and were well established by 1900. Self-sufficient and resilient pioneers set up homesteads, nurtured large families, built churches and schools, served in positions of leadership, and created an agricultural-based economy with cattle raising, citrus, timber and logging, and strawberry farming.

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