DREAMVILLE

TOM PETTY'S GAINESVILLE

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Figure 1. Glen Springs Pool and Park, from a postcard circa 1930-1960.
Image courtesy of University of Florida Digital Collections.

It's nearly impossible to attend the University of Florida and not be familiar with the name Tom Petty. The beloved singer of hits like "Free Fallin'" and "Runnin' Down a Dream" was born and raised right here in Gainesville, Florida. Despite achieving his rise to fame in Los Angeles, his Gainesville roots bleed through his music. Whether it's decorating the side of a bus or being shouted from the stands, "Won't Back Down" echoes throughout the swamp.

To some, the musician's lyrics are an inspiring mantra—to others, perhaps an overzealous cliché. Regardless of opinion, it's an undeniable fact that Petty is part of a rich Gainesville history that most students will barely scratch the surface of. UF students come and go from Gainesville, with their time in the city usually just a short chapter of their lives. But UF is not the pride and joy of Gainesville—the people are. The songs of a local legend reveal a vibrant picture of Gainesville's often neglected past. Beyond the small area of town that makes up the university lies a local culture fueled by history and full of character.

Figure 2. The Elks Lodge of Gainesville, Spring Clubhouse, 2012. Photo by Amy Grossman.

The Elks, a fraternal community-based organization, has lodges located across the nation, including the Elks Lodge of Gainesville. Tucked away behind the lodge's spring house and surrounded by a frame of tall trees lies what's left of a hidden gem: Glen Springs Pool, a natural spring leading into Hogtown Creek. The spring bubbles into the man-made pool perimeter, making Glen Springs a once-popular recreational swimming hole for the Gainesville community. While it closed to the public in 1970, it did not live out its glory days without due time in the spotlight. In the nostalgic ballad "Dreamville" released in 2002 by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, Petty references the spring in a homage to his hometown:

"Ridin' with my momma
To Glen Springs Pool
Water was cold
My lips were blue"

There is a warm yet melancholic tone throughout the song, yearning for a home that only exists in memories. The spring we see today is not the Glen Springs Pool of the 1950s that Petty was singing about. The natural passage of time, combined with a lack of upkeep, has transformed the area almost completely. Yet while the spring may be lacking some proper love today, Glen Springs Pool is a monument of Gainesville culture cemented in song.

Petty immortalized the memory of hundreds of days spent at the springs across generations: people soaking in the sun, water splashing high into the clouds, and towels clinging to shivering bodies that refused to leave until the sun went down. The citizens of Gainesville loved the pool for the joy and memories it gave them. Today, there are no divers jumping or toes dipping into Glen Springs Pool. In fact, it has received minimal attention since its closure, now mainly serving as an abandoned fish pond. Group efforts have been made to clean up the site periodically, but these are small and inconsistent (Grossman et al., 2012). A question has been posed amongst Gainesville residents in recent decades: Will Glen Springs ever return to its former glory? The answer depends solely upon us.

There is a need for greater restoration efforts to preserve the beauty and charm of this

Figure 3. Visitors swimming in Glen Springs Pool circa 1930-1950. Image courtesy of University of Florida Digital Collections.

Figure 4. Glen Springs Pool vent, 2012. Photo by Amy Grossman.

natural site. In 2012, University of Florida graduate Amy Grossman and co-author Beth Zavoyski drafted a Glen Springs Restoration Plan in collaboration with Wetland Solutions, Inc. and the Howard T. Odum Florida Springs Institute. In this plan, they outline the historical significance of the spring, its declining health in recent decades, and precise steps that must be taken in order to return the spring to its former glory. Comparing data from 2010 and 1946 reveals both a decrease in water flow and an increase in nitrate levels, indicating an overall decline in health largely attributed to local urbanization (Grossman et al., 2012). The local government and community could work together to help restore Glen Springs Pool to its natural health and beauty. The city has acknowledged the issue, but in the thirteen years since its publication, Grossman's call to action has yet to be enacted by the local government.

"A long time ago,
million miles away
All the trees were green
in Dreamville"

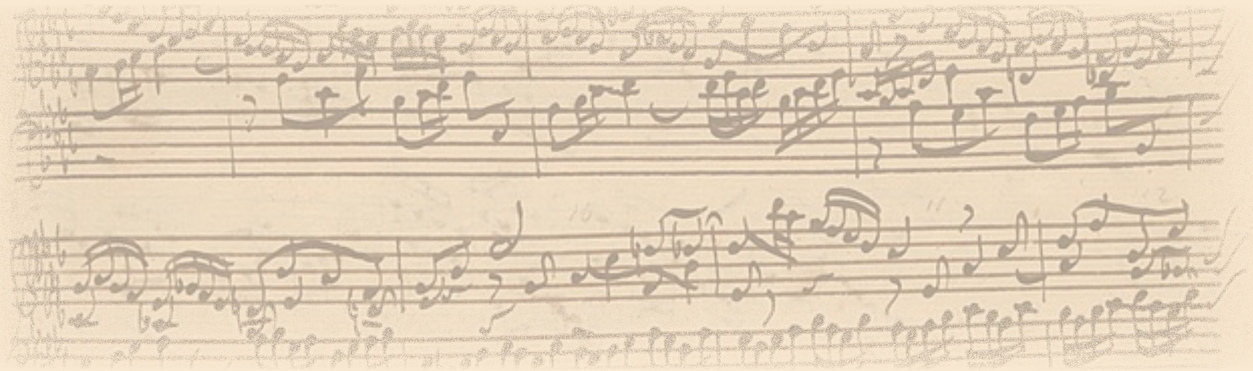
Tom Petty may have been missing home when he wrote Dreamville, but the same words can be said by its inhabitants today. There was a time when the water ran clear and free and the horizon was filled by branching canopies, but that time has passed, leaving only a distant dream in its wake. The earth has a marvelous ability to reclaim what has been taken from it, but there is only so much it can do on its own. The questionable fate of Glen Springs lies in the hands of the City of Gainesville, with no imminent plans for restoration on the docket. As a student, it's easy to get swept up into the university bubble. But Gainesville isn't just a college town—it's a home. We have the privilege of inhabiting this home for a short time without consideration for it beyond our stay. This hospitality should not be repaid with ignorance. Through song, Tom Petty cemented Gainesville's past. Can we secure its future?

Bibliography

Grossman, Amy, et al. *Glen Springs Restoration Plan,* Oct. 2012, floridaspringsinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Glen-Spring-Restoration-Plan-Final.pdf

Figure 6. Glen Springs Pool diving platform in active use, circa 1930-1960. Image courtesy of University of Florida Digital Collections.

Figure 5. Glen Springs Pool diving platform, 2012. Photo by Amy Grossman.



FROZEN HUSK

Luna Inchausti