

## City of Lake Butler Fact Sheet



The City of Lake Butler is named after Robert Butler, who was an American military officer and acting governor of East Florida between 10 Jul 1821 and 11 Jul 1821, after Florida was ceded to the United States by Spain.

Robert Butler was born in 1786. In his youth, he joined the U.S. Army, attaining the ranks of colonel and commander. Shortly after the death of his father Thomas Butler, Robert Butler and his siblings became wards of future president Andrew Jackson. He was a graduate of West Point and later served with distinction in the War of 1812. He served in the Battle of New Orleans as Jackson's adjutant.

Later, as the representative of Jackson, he received the surrender of East Florida at St. Augustine, from the Spanish governor, José María Coppinger. Mr. Butler was named acting Governor of East Florida on 10 July 1821; but he was in charge for only two days, until the arrival of John R. Bell.

He was later appointed as the first surveyor general of the territory of Florida and settled on a plantation near Lake Jackson located to the north of Tallahassee. Robert Butler died in 1860. He is the namesake of the city of Lake Butler, Florida.

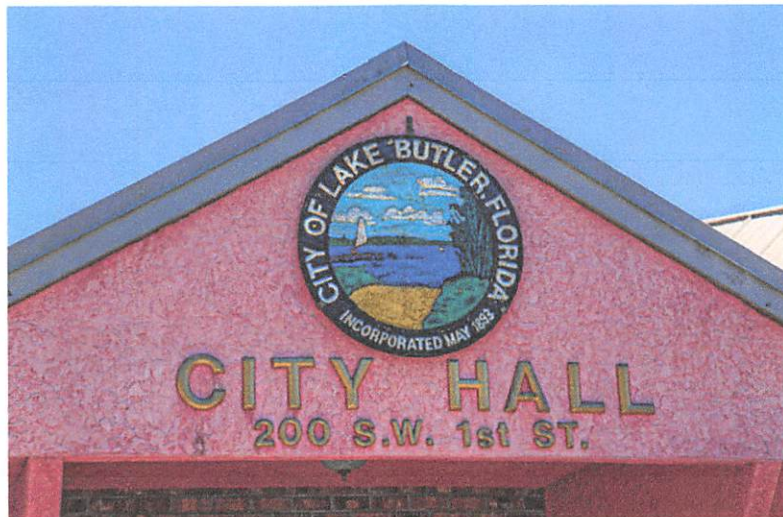
The City of Lake Butler was incorporated in 1893, 126 years ago. Lake Butler is in the triangle of the major cities of Jacksonville, Gainesville, and Lake City. As a small rural agricultural community, it is the county seat for Union County. The current population of 1,800 has been declining since 2000 when the peak was 2,300 residents in the City. All the public safety for the City - police, fire, and emergency management - is being handled by the County. The major business is timber, agriculture, and trucking. Education is outstanding in Lake Butler. With the proximity to the University of Florida and several other colleges and universities the graduates of the high school have many options to continue their education.

Interesting facts – Lake Butler does not have a hotel or motel for weary travelers.



## Union County History of which the City of Lake Butler is the County Seat

Union County, established on October 1, 1921, is the smallest of Florida's 67 counties. Its 245 square miles are bounded by Baker County on the north and by the natural boundaries of Olustee Creek, the Santa Fe River and the New River. Once occupied by the Timucuan Indians, this area was a part of the Spanish Florida colony ceded to the United States in 1821. Early settlements centered around Providence, a stage stopover, and Worthington Springs on the Santa Fe River, which were protected by military posts at Fort Ward and Fort Call during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), while Fort Crabb secured the area north of Lake Butler. Cattle, lumber, and sea island cotton provided a basis for economic development, and in 1859, the town of Lake Butler was established as the county seat of the newly created New River County (later Bradford County in 1861). The lake and town were named after Colonel Robert Butler, the first Surveyor General of the Florida Territory. Growth and prosperity in the area were forestalled by the Civil War, and then hampered by the lack of adequate transportation facilities. But by 1890, the Georgia Southern and Florida Railroad had crossed the county, with depots at Lake Butler and Guilford. Lake Butler prospered and was incorporated as a city in 1893. The Jacksonville and Southwestern Railroad (later a branch of the Atlantic Coast Line) was completed in 1899, serving Raiford, Johnstown, Lake Butler, Danville, Dukes and Worthington Springs. Cattle, dairy and food crop production expanded after the boll weevil struck the cotton fields in 1918. Raiford was the center of lumber and naval stores operations, while Worthington Springs became a popular resort noted for its health-giving waters, and in 1913, a state prison farm established near Raiford provided additional economic stimulation and diversity to the local economy. By 1920, the demand for division of the area from Bradford County had peaked and on May 20, 1921, the State Legislature created Union County, from that portion west of the New River. The name Union was chosen to reflect unity. With a population of more than 10,000, Union County has retained its rural character. Forest products and agriculture continue to provide its economic base, supplemented by the state prisons, light manufacturing, and the trucking industries that have replaced the railroads as its transportation link with the nation.





# City of Lake Butler Demographics

Unemployment rate: 3.2%    Poverty rate: 24.7%    High School graduation rate: 81%

Population: 1,897    Land area 2.27 square miles    Population density: 993.33 people per sq. mile

Square acres: 1,100.8 of which 179.2 acres are non-taxable or 16.1%

Assessed and exempt values: School 97.672 acres \$6,915,581 8.9% of land mass; County 40.833 acres \$5,330,204 3.7% of land mass; City 20.645 acres \$20,60,443 or 1.8% of land mass; churches 20.031 acres \$3,451,701 or 1.8% of land mass.

Elevation: 134.51 feet    Time Zone: Eastern Standard Time    Daylight Savings time- yes

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>National Average</u>
Female	1,159	52%	50.8%
Male	1,065	48%	49.2%

Quick Facts

<u>Age</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
0-9	327	17.34%
10-19	297	15.66%
20-29	250	13.18%
30-39	221	11.12%
40-49	227	11.97%
50-59	266	14.02%
60-69	192	10.12%
70-79	81	04.27%
80-over	<u>36</u>	<u>01.90%</u>
Total	1,897	100.00%

<u>Race</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
White	1,358	71.59%
African American	522	27.52%
Other	17	00.89%
Median Household Income		\$27,763
Per Capita Income		\$13,687
Median House Property Value		\$79,000

<u>Housing Stock</u>	<u>Number</u>
Owner Occupied Homes	332
Rental Units	474

<u>Employment Breakdown</u>	<u>Number</u>
Educational Services	239
Retail	119
Transportation	89
Public Administration	78

Source: homefacts.com; 2010 Bureau of the Census

# City of Lake Butler Demographics

**Climate** Summer- July high is around 92 degrees; Winter- January low is 41

Sperling's Comfort Index is 73 out of 100. A higher score indicates a more comfortable year-round climate. The U.S. average is 54. Lake Butler gets precipitation, on average of 117 days per year. 0 inches of snow and an average of 53 inches of rain in a year. There are 221 sunny days per year in Lake Butler or 60% of the year it is sunny and pleasant. The national average of sunny days is 205. Lake Butler is 123 feet above sea level.

**Economy** Unemployment rate is 3.2% which is below the national average of 3.9%. Lake Butler has seen a job market increase of 0.4% in the past year. Future job growth over the next ten years is predicted to be 34.8%, which is higher than the nation average of 33.5%. Sales tax rate is 7% which is lower than the national average of 7.3%. The local income tax is 0% while the national average is 4.6%. The average per capita income of a Lake Butler resident is \$13,687 per year compared to the national average of \$31,177 per year. The Median household income of a Lake Butler resident is \$48,045 per year compared to the national average of \$70,850.

**Cost of Living** The cost of living indices are based on a U.S. average of 100. An amount below 100 means Lake Butler is cheaper than the U.S. average. A cost of living index above 100 means Lake Butler is more expensive. Lake Butler Overall Cost of Living Index is 81.3. Housing is the biggest factor in the cost of living. The median home price in Lake Butler is \$113,900 while the average in Florida is \$225,200 and in the U.S. is \$219,700. Groceries at 108.8 and health care at 130.3 are well above the State and National averages.

## Interesting facts and people

*Jay North* – star of the former hit television show “Dennis the Menace” lives in Lake Butler.



*Gerard Warren* – co-owner of the Simmer Down restaurant in Lake Butler. He was an eleven-year National Football League veteran defensive end. He played for the New England Patriots 2010-2011, Oakland Raiders 2009-2007, Denver Broncos 2005-2006, Cleveland Browns 2001-2004 and accumulated 335 tackles, 36 sacks and 7 forced fumbles. A graduate of the University of Florida and Union County High School. Nickname: Big Money.



*C.J. Spiller, Jr.* – a graduate of Union County High School in Lake Butler that received a football scholarship from Clemson and became a unanimous All-American selection. He was drafted by the Buffalo Bills ninth overall in the 2010 NFL draft. As a running back he played for Buffalo Bills 2010-2014, New Orleans Saints 2015, Seattle Seahawks 2015, New York Jets 2016, and Kansas City Chiefs 2017. He currently is a free agent.





# City of Lake Butler Demographics

*Jack Montpetit* – invented the spigot freeze preventor was developed primarily to help prevent water systems from freezing and to help conserve water. The device attaches to the outdoor spigot and flows at ½ gallon per hour and makes it ideal also for watering trees, shrubs, and flowers. Montpetit Enterprises, Inc. is based in Lake Butler.



*Dean Elixson* – invented the Go Daddy Custom Hybrid Lures for fishing which are sold nationally.

*Biking and Walking Trail* – Lake Butler is the trailhead for the Palatka-Lake Butler State trail. As part of the Florida trail system, it runs from the Florida Everglades in the South to the Panhandle of the West on the Gulf of Mexico while stretching with more than 1,400 miles of scenic beauty.



One hour to the east is the Atlantic Ocean, one hour to the West is the Gulf of Mexico, one hour to the South is Disney World, one hour to the North is the Georgia-Florida line.

*Prichett Trucking* –



southeast leader in transportation solutions.

*Spires IGA Market* - The longest serving retail business in Lake Butler is Spires Market. Starting in 1890 by George (GW) and Zona Spires it was built beside the railroad. The train would stop in front of the





store, pick up grocery order, and bring back the supplies the next week. Farmers would even come to town and barter their eggs and chickens for groceries, and the store would keep them in a pen outside to sell dressed or undressed. In 1961 the store became part of the IGA group. In 1972, Tommy and Nancy Spires began managing the store after he left coaching in Ocala. As the family was celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary a fire destroyed the store. It was rebuilt on the same location as a 12,000 sq. ft store. In 2010, Mike and Sharlene Spires is moving the legacy as they

have introduced more locally grown and organic produce to support the local farmers. For four generations, this family has catered to the community and the customer base.



# City of Lake Butler Demographics

*Family of Sheriff's* – The Whitehead family have been the “Dean of the Sheriffs” in the State of Florida. Sheriff John Whitehead served for 32 years, his son Jerry Whitehead followed him and served as Sheriff for 29 years, and John’s grandson Brad followed his father and is the current serving Sheriff and has held the office for 6 years. In total this family has protected the City of Lake Butler and Union County for over 67 years. An amazing legacy for this community.

## Sheriff Whitehead passes baton to son

**The Associated Press**  
**LAKE BUTLER** — For 32 years, Sheriff John Whitehead has been the law west of the New River in Union County.  
 But last week he handed his well-worn leather wallet, its five-star badge and his office to a new sheriff — his youngest son, Jerry.  
 At his retirement, Whitehead had been in office longer than any other sheriff in Florida, and the younger Whitehead said his father will always be “The Sheriff” to many of the county residents.  
 Jerry Whitehead even has that problem.  
 “Where’s the sheriff? The retired sheriff, I mean,” said the son, looking around for his father after the swearing-in ceremonies.  
 The elder Whitehead is a legend in these parts, as is the family’s annual barbeque at the Whitehead ranch. It attracts hundreds of people, ranging from governors to politicians to local folks, and is held as the curtain call to the University of Florida homecoming each October.  
 The new sheriff promises he will provide the same services his father did, from investigating crime to giving advice on how to quiet barking dogs.  
 His mother, Vivian, who has served as county jail chief for 32 years, will continue doing that job.  
 Jerry Whitehead, who was a repairman at Florida Hydrocarbons near Brookier before his election, said becoming sheriff fulfilled a life-long dream.  
 “My father was sheriff when I was born. We lived in the jail. When they brought me home from the hospital, that’s where they took me. I lived in the jail until I was 16 years old.  
 “As a kid, you like the excitement. If the radio blared at night, you got up  
 See **WHITEHEAD** on page 2C

John Whitehead
Jerry Whitehead

*F.M. Rivers* – founded the Rivers Hardware Store in 1880 and it continued to operate until it burned in 1985. Rivers attained fame b manufacturing his own invention, the Rivers “double stock” plow, which was popularly used all over Florida and the South. The business was passed on to C.F. Rivers and then to Wilson Rivers, who still lives in Union County.

