

6-19-2013

NNB News : 2013 : 06 : 19 : Old Oak Charms Small Town

Ellery Butler

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/nnb_news

Scholar Commons Citation

Butler, Ellery, "NNB News : 2013 : 06 : 19 : Old Oak Charms Small Town" (2013). *NNB News*. 32.
https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/nnb_news/32

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Neighborhood News Bureau (USF St. Petersburg campus) at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in NNB News by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.



MIDTOWN

ST. PETERSBURG

TAMPA BAY

PEOPLE

🕒 June 19, 2013 📧 [Tampa Bay](#) 💬 [No comments](#)

OLD OAK CHARMS SMALL TOWN

By *Ellery Butler*

Gina Bingham, a reference librarian at Safety Harbor Public Library, excitedly tells patrons about the historic Baranoff Oak that stands tall right outside the library. She even writes a blog about this tree, the oldest living oak tree in Pinellas County.

People wonder if the Baranoff Oak was a sapling when Ponce De Leon arrived in Florida.

"The tree is a fascination for everybody that comes into the area. It's very iconic for Safety Harbor," Bingham said.

The oak, which is estimated to be between 300 and 500 years old, is featured in the town's business directory.

"They're not actually sure how old the tree is. People ask that all the time," Bingham said.

The increasing number of questions about the Baranoff Oak has made the need for more information immediate.

It used to be known as the Safety Harbor Oak, but was renamed in 2004 in honor of Dr. Salem Baranoff, the owner of the nearby Safety Harbor Spa. He helped establish the first public library in Safety Harbor, Bingham said. Portraits of Baranoff hang in the library.

"The place where the tree is is actually owned by UCITA Properties, Inc., so it's corporately owned land," Bingham said. "They entered into a partnership with the city in 2003 and they planned this passive park space around the oak, so that now it's protected."

The plans were created in May of 2003 and the park was completed in 2004.

The tree's impressive size, at 20 feet around, and its age make it a big attraction for more than just the citizens and the visitors. A pencil artist, Stephen Malkoff draws for the National Register of Historic Trees. He's earned the nickname "Tree Man" for his works. The Baranoff Oak was his subject in 2006.

Dee Dokumaci, owner of Rose Garden Boutique, said the oak will always be a part of Safety Harbor. If the city contemplates cutting it down, Dokumaci says she thinks there would be big protests.

"I hope they never, ever chop down that beautiful tree. I doubt they will. I doubt that," Dokumaci said.

[baranoff oak](#), [library](#), [safety harbor](#)

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

Name *

RECENT POSTS

Pop open a cold one at Midtown's 3 Daughters Brewing

Polish distillery brings distinctive spirits to Midtown

On patrol, the routine can suddenly turn serious

At alternative weekly, food and drink are her beats

Passionate piano, colorful footwear help him coach journalists

Mining disaster helped steel him for a new career in public relations

As college building goes up, he's a maestro in Midtown

School strives to break the cycle of generational poverty

He finds the facts, the people and the payments that elude others

He lives his son's dream, every step of the way

Lorene's is still thriving after two decades in The Deuces

Inside a struggling middle school, the student newspaper is thriving

18 Years later, he still grieves for his slain brother

Her job: influence decision makers and public opinion

Could Ferguson-like violence happen in St. Petersburg, Tampa?

For daughters of St. Petersburg, two divergent paths

She helps traditional journalists migrate to digital media

Artist, rapper help bridge the gap between St. Pete and Tampa

She gets the word out on congresswoman's schedule and priorities

He builds and he renovates and he barbers and he mentors and...

For volunteers, building homes abroad is life-changing experience

Together again, thanks to hard work and Habitat for Humanity

Covering the Lightning: hip checks aren't just for players

Artist finds inspiration in African and Native American culture

Email *

Website

Comment

Hockey and social media: an exciting mix for young professional

DEPARTMENT OF
JOURNALISM
AND MEDIA STUDIES

