

Boyer Cottage: A Brief Introduction

History of Site before House was Built

- Aside from itinerant fishermen, few settlers lived in the area around Tarpon Springs during the 1870s. The area did receive attention from planters and farmers in more settled areas such as Brooksville, because of the excellent fishing in the waters of the Anclote River.
- A. W. Ormond and daughter Mary traveled through Florida in 1876, and arrived in the area of present-day Tarpon Springs.
- A year later, Joshua Boyer arrived from Key West during a trip along the Anclote and happened upon the Ormond residence. He decided to stay in the region and homesteaded forty acres. A native of Nassau, Boyer frequently sailed around the Keys and along the Gulf coast of Florida. An obituary also claims that Boyer's parents had lived in Nova Scotia at some time in the past.
- Joshua and Mary fell in love, and genealogical records indicate that they married in April 1877 in the City of Tampa, seat of Hillsborough County.
- Many histories of the Tarpon Springs note that the city probably got its name from Mary after she saw tarpons springing from the bayou, though some believe that Josh Boyer, because of his experience as a fisher, gave the community its name. Boyer himself credits Mary for naming the town in honor of "the great numbers of tarpon fish that frequent the springs."

Construction Information

- Original structure (similar in appearance to its present condition) was a small square home of approximately fourteen by fourteen (280 square) feet built near Spring Bayou. Constructed sometime in 1878, and considered a "temporary structure" until the Boyers could erect a more permanent dwelling.
- Representative of wood-frame Gulf Coast vernacular architecture found in similar structures of the period along the coast from Florida to Texas. The one-room cottage had board and batten exterior siding and a shingled, high-peaked roof.
- Subsequent additions to the structure appeared after 1906, including two side sections and a rear section. These areas were damaged by a fire before the cottage moved from Tarpon Springs to Heritage Village.
- Although Tarpon Springs did have an electric plant before the turn of the century, this structure lacked electricity throughout its history in Tarpon Springs.

History of Occupants

- Joshua and Mary Boyer occupied the structure by 1878. In 1881, Hamilton Disston purchased approximately four million acres of land in Florida for a quarter an acre. This purchase included many valuable acres throughout present-day Pinellas County. Part of Disston's purchase in Tarpon Springs included the site the Boyers squatted upon; Joshua Boyer had to repurchase his land at \$1.25/acre. As the Lake Butler Villa Company developed lands in and around Tarpon Springs, Boyer gave up control of much of his holdings in the region.
- An 1878 *Sunland Tribune* article about the "Anclote Region" notes that while the area had received only occasional attention since the Civil War, "more recently it

has been settling up quite rapidly.” The article touted the Anclote River area as the best large-scale fishing area between the mouth of Tampa Bay and the Cedar Keys area. The few families along the northern Pinellas region often engaged in farming and/or citrus cultivation.

- In January 1883, a *Sunland Tribune* reporter making the long trip from Tampa to Tarpon Springs met Boyer and had venison—“which is not an unusual dish with them”—at the cottage before visiting the “proposed city.” By that time, town entrepreneurs had approximately 20,000 feet of lumber on hand for construction projects, with more on the way. After clearing trees along the right-of-way, city leaders had started to construct thirty-foot wide avenues.
- Boyer built a barn that apparently become a home and boarding house that served as the town’s first hotel. The structure was known as “Long House” and the “Tropical,” and was later held by Walter Meres of the pioneer Meres family. Guests included A. P. K. Safford and other notable early visitors.
- Though the 1880 census notes Boyer’s profession as “sailor,” Boyer operated a ferry to Cedar Keys, a regular coach to Tampa (then a two-day trip), and a livery stable during the 1880s and 1890s.
- By 1885, Joshua’s brother, mother, and two sisters came to the areas. Boyer’s nephew (son of his brother, John), D. P. Boyer, remained in Tarpon and served as a leader in the community (city judge).
- In 1898, Joshua, Mary, and her father (A. W. Ormond) moved to Eau Gallie in Brevard County. The 1900 census has Joshua as a fisherman and his father-in-law as a farmer. A false legend claimed that A. W. Ormond later helped to establish Ormond Beach. By 1910, Joshua managed a meat market and Mary ran a boarding house in Brevard County. The Boyers occasionally visited Tarpon, and news of their arrival often appeared in the *Tarpon Springs Leader*.

Significant Events/Activities

- During the early 1900s, elegant homes sprouted up in the area around Spring Bayou. The simple cottage seemed out of place alongside such impressive structures. The cottage moved to 140 Orange Avenue in 1920.
- The Protos family purchased the home and held it for many years.

Moving of the House to Heritage Village

- The building suffered from fire damage shortly before its planned move to Heritage Village.
- Approval to move the cottage occurred at the March 1978 Historical Commission meeting.

Boyer Cottage

Overview

A native of the Bahamas, Joshua C. Boyer sailed along the Anclote River to Spring Bayou in early 1877. At that site, he met Alexander M. Ormond and his daughter, Mary Ormond. The Ormonds, natives of North Carolina, had recently homesteaded on a parcel near present-day Pinellas Avenue in Tarpon Springs. Joshua Boyer wed Mary Ormond in April 1877. They built a small cottage near the intersection of Boyer Street and Pinellas Avenue, and soon thereafter constructed stables for livestock. Many sources credit Mary Boyer for giving Tarpon Springs its name in 1879 or 1880.

The Boyers lived in this cottage for approximately twenty-one years, from 1877 until 1898. This period roughly corresponds with the Gilded Age of American history, a period between Reconstruction and the Progressive Era characterized by the expansion of railroads and frenzied business speculation. The Boyers certainly witnessed a “gilded age” of sorts along the northern Pinellas Peninsula. After Philadelphia magnate Hamilton Disston acquired substantial tracts of land throughout Florida, he dispatched his representatives to examine his purchases. Soon the Boyers served as hosts for Anson Safford, a former gold miner and territorial governor of Arizona, as well as many other agents of Disston. By the 1880s, their quiet settlement along the Bayou grew into the largest city in Western Hillsborough County. Many meetings to cement business deals during the early 1880s occurred either at the Boyer Cottage or a small hotel he operated.

Joshua and Mary Boyer witnessed substantial changes in Tarpon Springs during their time at this cottage. By 1898, they moved to Eau Gallie, a small settlement along the Indian River in Brevard County. They continued to visit family and friends in Tarpon during the early 1900s, and their small cottage—with subsequent additions—remained on Pinellas Avenue until about 1920. From there, the Boyer Cottage moved to Orange Avenue, a block north of the main business district, until 1978. During this time, the cottage became one of the few residences in the City of Tarpon Springs that lacked electricity. In early 1979, members of the Protos family that had owned the building decided to donate it to Heritage Village.

A Safe Place to Anchor

Although Panfilo de Narvaez had visited the Pinellas Peninsula in April 1528, extensive settlement of this region did not occur until the late 1800s. Many of the indigenous Native American cultures had disappeared by the early 1700s. By the mid-1700s and early 1800s, itinerant fishers of Spanish ancestry regularly sailed along Florida's West Coast. During these excursions, some parties anchored near the wide mouth of the Anclote River or ventured along the river to camp in its protected harbor. Others trolled the waters of Tampa Bay, a large body of water that often appeared on early maps with its given Spanish name, "Bahia del Espiritu Santo" (in translation: "Bay of the Holy Spirit").

"Anclote" derives from a Spanish word for a kedge or small anchor commonly used by sailing vessels. Similar to Boca Ciega Bay in southern Pinellas—a twisting bay meaning "Blind Mouth" or "Blind Pass"—Anclote seems an appropriate name given the river's ability to hide and protect sailors who encountered rough weather or hostile parties. Spanish and French maps of the early 1700s prominently noted the Anclote cape and river regions. Cartographers designed many of these early maps by using the sketchy navigational notes of Gulf Coast expeditions while working in their European studios. Some illustrative examples follow.¹ A 1718 French map of Louisiana and Florida includes a "Cap Anclote" designation for Anclote Key near a site referred to as "Tampa." The wide mouth of the Anclote River made it appear that this inland waterway connected with Tampa Bay, creating an image of the Pinellas peninsula as an island entirely disconnected from peninsular Florida.² English mapmaker John (John) Senix duplicated this 1718 map in his 1721 rendition.³ A 1720 image created by H. Moll, a geographer, also separates much of Pinellas south of the Cape of Anclote from the rest of Florida.⁴ A

¹ Bertha E. Bloodworth and Alton C. Morris, *Places in the Sun: The History and Romance of Florida Place Names* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 98

² For an image of this 1718 map, *Carte de la Louisiane et du cours du Mississipi [i.e. Mississippi]: dressée sur un grand nombre de mémoires entr'autres sur ceux de Mr. le Maire / par Guillaume Del'isle del Academie R'le. des Sciences*, see: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1700/ct000666.htm>.

³ For an image of Senix's map, *A map of Louisiana and of the river Mississipi [i.e. Mississippi] : this map of the Mississipi [i.e. Mississippi] is most humbly inscribed to William Law of Lanreston, esq. / by John Senex*, see: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1700/ct000682.htm>.

⁴ For an image of H. Moll's 1720 map, *A new map of the north parts of America claimed by France under ye names of Louisiana, Mississipi [i.e. Mississippi], Canada, and New France with ye adjoining territories of England and Spain : to Thomas Bromsall, esq., this map of Louisiana, Mississipi [i.e. Mississippi] & c.*

1744 French map places “Caye d’Anclote” much further north of Tampa Bay.⁵ A Spanish map of Florida and Cuba released in 1757 places an island of Anclote well offshore and northwest of Tampa Bay.⁶ Mention of “Cayo del Anclote”—literally “Anclote Key”—appears in William Roberts’s 1763 *Account of the First Discovery, and Natural History of Florida*. This publication, released the year Great Britain acquired the Florida territory from the Spaniards after defeating France and Spain in the Seven Years’ (or French and Indian) War, includes maps of Florida. One plate depicts peninsular Florida as a series of disconnected islands from south of present-day Marion County to the mouth of the St. Johns River. Like a dish smashed into pieces, this map gave an impression of island chains with interconnected (and unexplored) bodies of water. For example, another map plate in this book includes an image of Bahia del Espiritu Santo (Tampa Bay) that connects through an interior waterway (possibly the Manatee River) to the Laguna del Espiritu Santo (possibly Lake Okeechobee) and the St. Johns River. Roberts notes that the “very large and noble” Tampa Bay “is capable of receiving the largest fleet that ever was collected in this part of the world, and may, in case of any future rupture [war], be of great importance to the crown of Great Britain.” He devotes little attention to Anclote, however, briefly mentioning that the lands surrounding this area constitute “a place but very little known.”⁷

Navigational maps of the Tampa Bay region improved during the late 1700s and early 1800s. A fairly accurate 1777 map of Espiritu Santo Bay shows the Pinellas islands from approximately Redington Beach southward, and differentiates between Espiritu Santo (lower Tampa Bay) and Tampa Bay (now old or upper Tampa Bay). Expeditions along the land also noted a reservoir of fresh water at the site of Mirror Lake in this rendition.⁸ Maps published after Florida became a state in March 1845 generally offered accurate illustrations of Florida’s gulf coastline between Cedar Keys and Tampa Bay.

is most humbly dedicated, H. Moll, geographer / laid down according to the newest and most exact observations by H. Moll, geographer, see: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1700/ct000677Pan.htm>.

⁵ For an image of this map, *Carte de la Louisiane cours du Mississippi [i.e. Mississippi] et pais voisins : dediée à M. le Comte de Maurepas, ministre et secretaire d’etat commandeur des ordres du roy / par N. Bellin ingenieur de la marine, 1744 ; Dheulland sculp, see:*

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1700/ct000661All.htm>.

⁶ See: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1700/m054001.htm>.

⁷ William Roberts, *An Account of the First Discovery, and Natural History of Florida*, Bicentennial Floridiana Facsimile Series (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976), 16-17.

⁸ See: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1700/m010700.htm>.

These images clearly marked the area around the mouth of the Anclote River as a notable and prominent area, and most showed the islands, keys, and land areas along the Anclote River with excellent detail. For example, an 1875 map clearly outlined the Anclote River, nearby islands, Lake Butler (now Lake Tarpon) and other navigable waterways in and around Tampa Bay.

Early arrivals to the region braved hostilities during the Civil War. By 1864, William Lawrence Thompson and wife Julia Holland moved with family members from Hamilton County to an area about four miles south of present-day Tarpon Springs. Some narratives note that they became the first farmers to cultivate oranges in the northwestern corner of the Pinellas Peninsula. Their son, William Benjamin Thompson, cleared lands (possibly further south near Curlew) and planted citrus by the 1880s.⁹

The first settlers came to the Anclote region after the Civil War. Frederic and Franklin B. Meyer left their Marion County farmsteads in 1867 and settled north of the mouth of the Anclote River. They may have heard about the region's excellent reputation for fishing from other farmers in west central Florida. For example, planters living in and around Brooksville occasionally ventured to the mouth of the Anclote during the antebellum period in search of fish. While such visits probably subsided during the Civil War, interest in the area increased by the late 1860s and 1870s. In time, the families huddled along this area established a small settlement near the mouth of the river known as Anclote. R. F. Pent, a June 1878 native of the Tarpon Springs region and grandson of B. F. Meyer, described the isolated Anclote settlement in his 1964 history of Tarpon Springs. While local forests offered an abundance of game, other provisions required long trips to a cabin near Clear Water Harbor, or more distant locations such as Tampa or Cedar Keys. Daniel Brinton's 1869 guidebook to Florida described many of the "low and marshy" rivers north of the mouth of Tampa Bay as "producing little of value except a fine variety of cedar." At this time, most new arrivals to Tampa Town, a community of approximately 600 residents, reached their destination by taking a one-day trip by a steamer from Cedar Keys along the Gulf for a fare of \$10. During passage between Cedar

⁹ For an image of this map, "Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1877 by Asher and Adams...," see: <http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/florida/maps/1800c/m011403.htm>; Gertrude K. Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs, Florida: The Early Years*, 2d ed. (Tarpon Springs: Tarpon Springs Area Historical Society, 1992), 5-6.

Keys and Tampa, travelers may have noticed the small settlement that began to take shape at Anclote by the early 1870s; Brinton certainly learned of the spongers that had started to harvest the reefs in the area by the late 1860s.¹⁰

Indeed, divers from Key West and other coastal outposts began to collect sponges as the small Anclote community attracted settlers. By Pent's estimate, over ninety percent of the spongers and sailors who visited Anclote from the Keys came from "British extraction." Some of these men originally came to the Keys from the Bahamas or British West Indies to perform the dangerous tasks of "wrecking" and salvaging on the many boats damaged while journeying near the Florida reefs. In time, some Conch transplants became spongers who harvested the Gulf waters and socialized with the local women during their visits to Anclote. Between 1868 and the mid-1870s, Anclote attracted sponging fleets and residents from the Keys, other areas of the American South, and distant lands such as England. Pent's narrative describes some of these early residents, including Captain Samuel Hope, who arrived by way of Brooksville, and Arthur Farquar, a native of England who constructed a sawmill at the site later occupied by the former Stauffer Chemical plant. During this period when Anclote had a grocery and post office, Pent noted that Tarpon "remained an unsettled forest" where deer, bobcats, turkeys, and other animals freely roamed.¹¹

A Fishy Story of How New Settlers Sprung into Action and Built a Town

Alexander W. Ormond and his daughter, Mary E. Ormond, settled in the area of present-day Tarpon Springs in 1876. A native of North Carolina born in August 1822, he fathered Mary with a woman originally from North Carolina who is unnamed in census records. Mary, the only known child of A. W. Ormond, came into the world about 1853 in her parents' home state of North Carolina. While all published accounts note their arrival in Florida by 1876, records from the 1870 federal census indicate that they may have lived in Hillsborough County much earlier than originally thought. A man named "A. W. Orman" and his daughter, "Mary Orman," lived at Stephen Knight's homestead

¹⁰ R. F. Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs* (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors, 1964), 7; *Sunland Tribune*, 25 May 1878; Daniel Garrison Brinton, *A Guide-Book of Florida and the South*, Bicentennial Floridiana Facsimile Series (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1978), 96, 106-108.

¹¹ Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 7-15; Brinton, *A Guide-Book*, 98-99.

in Hillsborough County. While their reported ages do not correspond exactly with other records, both claimed to be natives of North Carolina. “Orman” worked as a farm hand. Further research of property records may therefore place the Ormonds in Hillsborough County—probably closer to Tampa than the upper Pinellas Peninsula—by 1870.¹² By 1876, Alexander and Mary Ormond decided to move to the upper Pinellas Peninsula. They cleared land and constructed a small cabin near the present-day intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive and Pinellas Avenue.

A native of the Bahamas soon joined the Ormonds as a nearby neighbor. Joshua C. Boyer, eldest child of Abraham and Hannah Campbell Boyer of Nassau, became a proficient navigator by the mid-1870s. Born circa December 1851 in Nassau, Joshua had one younger brother (John Grey, born September 1859), and two younger sisters (Elizabeth, born circa 1860, and A. G. Boyer, born about 1864). Boyer’s parents may have lived in Nova Scotia before moving to the Bahamas. As a young man, Josh made a journey similar to other early sailors who arrived along Florida’s West Coast by way of the Bahamas, including descendants of the Lowe and Meares families of Anona. Boyer left the Bahamas, immigrated to the United States in 1869 or 1870, spent time in and around the Florida Keys, and traveled northward along the Gulf Coast. An 1877 fishing trip brought him to the small Anclote settlement, and he decided “by chance” to stop at the Ormond residence near the protected waters of Spring Bayou. Within a short time, he constructed his “permanent home” south of Boyer Street and Pinellas Avenue. He soon erected a livery stable that later became the area’s first “hotel.”¹³

Shortly after arriving, Joshua Boyer wed Mary Ormond and they built a small cottage on his land. They courted for a brief period before exchanging vows in Tampa in April 1877.¹⁴ Intended as a temporary structure, the fourteen-by-fourteen wood

¹² Census records used in this research appear in files located at the Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

¹³ Genealogical research on the Boyer and Ormond families appears in files held at the Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; *St. Petersburg Times*, 17 May 1933; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 18. For a brief autobiographical account of Boyer’s life in Tarpon Springs, see the typewritten “Some Early Reminiscences of Tarpon Springs, Florida, by J. C. Boyer, Eau Gallie, Florida.” A copy of this narrative appears in files at the Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo. The story also appeared verbatim in an issue of the *Tarpon Springs Leader*. In an extract from the 1900 census, Boyer claimed he emigrated from the Bahamas to the United States in 1869.

¹⁴ Gertrude Stoughton’s history of early Tarpon Springs marks the wedding date of Joshua and Mary Ormond Boyer as 14 April 1877. Some genealogical sources, possibly using Stoughton as a source, also

“Honeymoon cottage” built by Boyer had one room and a high-peaked roof with wooden shingles. Similar in form to many early cottages constructed along the Gulf Coast between eastern Texas and Florida, this compact wood-frame vernacular building included board and batten siding with interior floors showing tongue and groove planking and a covered front porch.¹⁵ During the early 1900s, Joshua Boyer fondly remembered those first few years living in relative isolation near Spring Bayou:

Everything there was ours. The land and the game and fish were as free as the air. In the words of another, ‘We were monarchs of all we surveyed.’ Our nearest neighbor was Mr. Asa Clark who lived in the Whitcomb place a mile away. Our next nearest neighbor was W. B. Thompson, in the Curliru Settlement, four miles distant. There was also the Myers (sic) family, three miles down the Anclote River.¹⁶

Wild deer, turkey, squirrels, and other animals provided a steady diet of meat for their table. Josh and Mary did much of their trading at the sawmill and mercantile located at the Seaside settlement located west of their homestead. With the nearest frontier post office then located at Clear Water Harbor (now Clearwater), settlers retrieved mail for neighbors whenever they traveled south for supplies.¹⁷

By the late 1870s, others had started to visit the area around Spring Bayou, an inlet given that name because of the occasional upwelling of water through an underground spring connected to Lake Butler (now known as Lake Tarpon). The turbulent waters and protected enclave attracted a variety of marine life, including schools of tarpon. The abundant fauna and fish sustained these settlers, and soon the remote settlement attracted farmers and speculators in search of lands in the unnamed settlement around the Bayou. A May 1878 article published in Tampa’s *Sunland Tribune* claimed that settlers had quickly learned of the excellent fishing along the Anclote, “the

give that date. A certified copy of the marriage license obtained from the Hillsborough County courthouse—one that, by the way, appears in Stoughton’s book—gives 24 April 1877 as the date of the marriage license’s issue, and 27 April 1877 as the actual date of the ceremony. See: Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 8; copy of marriage license appears in Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

¹⁵ Architectural research by Stephanie Ferrell appears in site files located at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo.

¹⁶ Joshua Boyer, “Some Early Reminiscences of Tarpon Springs.”

¹⁷ Ibid.

best place for fishing on a large scale to be found anywhere on the coast between Tampa (B)ay and Cedar Keys.” Lands along the interior coast of the river provided abundant opportunities for farmers, some of whom had already started cultivating oranges. A letter written by an Anclote resident in the 29 June 1878 *Sunland Tribune* touts the area’s healthful climate, as well as its “romantic building sites, and beautiful bay views.” To those questioning the quality of the soil, this columnist celebrated the orange and lemon groves, as well as a fertile soil along the interior that could sustain corn, cotton, and other agricultural commodities. Praising the abundantly stocked waters as the best fishing spot between Tampa Bay and Cedar Keys, this article argued that starvation could not occur because of the mullet and trout frequenting the river that “would be sure to jump in his line of vision.”¹⁸

Recorded narratives generally credit Mary Ormond Boyer for giving Tarpon Springs its name. However, the quotes and circumstances in these accounts do have slight variations. In his 1929 history of Pinellas County, W. L. Straub claimed that Mary exclaimed “See the tarpon spring!” while with others at an 1880 gathering along the bayou. Thus, it is no surprise that this quote appears verbatim in Josh Boyer’s 17 May 1933 obituary in Straub’s *St. Petersburg Times*.¹⁹ Gertrude Stoughton’s 1975 account adds a sense of dramatic flair as the young mountain woman encounters the noble fish of the Gulf:

To the girl from the South Carolina mountains much was new—the sea, the marshes and the moss-draped trees—but she was particularly amazed by the giant tarpon that swarmed in the bayou, leaping in the sunlight and tossing off showers of spray. In 1879, she proposed a name for the tiny settlement—Tarpon Springs.²⁰

George Frantzis’s account conveniently places the event in 1883, noting that entrepreneur John Cheyney and his wife stood by the Bayou and witnessed the event along with Mary’s husband, incorrectly identified as D. P. Boyer (Joshua’s nephew). According to

¹⁸ *Sunland Tribune*, 25 May 1878, 29 June 1878.

¹⁹ *St. Petersburg Times*, 17 May 1933; William L. Straub, *History of Pinellas County, Florida, Narrative and Biographical* (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1929), 163.

²⁰ Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 7

Frantzis, Mary said, “See the Tarpon in the Springs!”²¹ Longtime area resident and columnist Glen Dill, Sr., author of many “Suncoast Past” articles in north Pinellas and Pasco County publications, embellished the tales of Frantzis and Stoughton in a September 1977 clipping:

Anyway, one day in 1879, Mary was standing at the Bayou, probably with Joshua and her father, and noticed a big commotion in the water. According to historian George Frantzis, she loudly exclaimed, ‘See the tarpon in the springs!’ That remark about the great fish that used to swarm in Spring Bayou is how the city got its name of Tarpon Springs.²²

The most authoritative account on the matter appeared in an early typewritten statement by Josh Boyer held by family members, one that later appeared in an issues of the *Tarpon Springs Leader* and the archives of the Tarpon Springs Historical Society. Boyer proclaimed: “In 1880 my wife gave the name, Tarpon Springs, to the town. This name was selected because of the great numbers of tarpon fish that frequent the springs.”²³

The 1880 federal census notes four residents in the Boyer Cottage. Father-in-law A. W. Ormond (miswritten by the census taker as “Norman”) was fifty-eight years old, without a listed occupation, and either widowed or divorced. As head of household, twenty-seven year old Joshua worked as a sailor. His wife and Elizabeth (his twenty-two year old sister) shared duties by “keeping house.” Neighbors at the time included Captain Hiram F. Pent, R. F. Pent’s father, who regularly traveled by boat to Cedar Keys, and members of the Gause and Youngblood families. Joshua’s sister, Elizabeth, soon fell in love with John P. Youngblood. Four days after receiving a marriage license on 22 March 1822, they exchanged vows in a ceremony in Tampa. John P. and Elizabeth Boyer Youngblood continued to live as neighbors for the next few years.²⁴

²¹ George Th. Frantzis, *Strangers at Ithaca: The Story of the Spongers of Tarpon Springs*, 2nd millennium limited ed. (St. Petersburg: Fanitsa, 2001), 31.

²² *Suncoast Shopper & News*, 7 September 1977.

²³ Joshua C. Boyer, “Some Early Reminiscences of Tarpon Springs.”

²⁴ Census information appears in files at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo. A digitized image of John P. and Elizabeth Youngblood’s marriage license is available through the digitized Hillsborough County Marriage License Collection, University of South Florida Libraries, Tampa. See also: Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 28.

A Gilded Age in a Small Gulf Shore Community

While the Boyers christened the settlement's name, events in Tallahassee and Philadelphia soon unsettled their tranquil and remote frontier. With coffers running low, leaders in the State of Florida negotiated a real estate transaction with Philadelphia entrepreneur and manufacturer Hamilton Disston that allowed Disston, his brother Jacob, and other associates to acquire four million acres of Florida lands for one million dollars. Although authorities pledged to transfer swamp and submerged lands that required reclamation, in reality the Disston land purchase included many handsome tracts without flooding problems. Notable tracts covered much of present-day Pinellas County. By early 1882, advance members of Disston's expedition had arrived at Tarpon Springs to claim their purchase. Major Mathew Robinson Marks, a former officer in the Union army who worked as an engineer and attorney, surprised the Boyers as he arrived with a surveyor (Captain John B. Walton), a bookkeeper (W. N. Conley), and legal counsel (John C. Jones). The Boyers provided shelter and hospitality to these men as they examined the lands purchased by Disston and developed plans for establishing a city. Before the end of the year, the Boyers also served as host to the family of Anson Peacely Killen (A.P.K.) Safford, a Vermont native and third governor of the Arizona Territory. A former gold miner who spent time scouring the West in search of mineral treasures, Safford had joined into a partnership with Hamilton and Jacob Disston before arriving in Florida. By 1883, Safford made plans to sell parcels around Tarpon Springs, while Marks and Walton surveyed the land and designed the town. They crafted a map of the planned community by 1884.²⁵

Disston's purchase did spur controversy for many homesteaders. W. L. Straub's account of the Disston land purchase enshrines this speculator in hagiographic terms. Noting that many squatters had previously homesteaded on lands acquired by Disston, Straub proclaimed that "in his magnanimous (sic) spirit, which characterized his actions at all times, [Disston] allowed settlers to remain, authorizing the State to issue them deeds, and thus the settlers came into good titles, without the necessity of paying for their homes." Recognizing Disston's entrepreneurial spirit, Straub asserted that Disston "goes

²⁵ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 260-261; Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 8-10.

down in history as the pioneer who blazed the way, the Saviour of the State.”²⁶ Contradicting this effusive encomium, Boyer and others who settled in the areas around Spring Bayou actually had to repurchase their lands from Disston’s enterprise at about \$1.25 an acre. The 1884 town map of Tarpon Springs designed by John Walton shows that Boyer had lost any claim to lands around the Bayou, including tracts then held by Hamilton Disston, A.P.K. Safford, Major Marks, and others.²⁷

While many accounts credit A.P.K. Safford as the “founder of Tarpon Springs,” Joshua Boyer could rightfully claim a place as the settlement’s first ambassador. Safford and other early arrivals stayed at the town’s first “hotel,” a structure located near Pinellas Avenue just south of Boyer Street that had originally served as the stable for the Boyers’ horses. Boyer had relocated the horses, renovated the building, and opened it as The Long House. Within a short while members of the pioneer Webster, Noblit, and Meres families arrived in Tarpon. Soon, Walter Meres took over The Long House, but Boyer kept his horses and continued to meet with newcomers.²⁸ An account in the 11 January 1883 *Sunland Tribune*—written shortly after Governor Safford’s arrival—mentions a trip to “Tarpon City” by a correspondent staying at Yellow Bluff, near present-day Palm Harbor. Members of the entourage met Josh Boyer and Captain John B. Walton as they approached the remote community. Boyer and Walton treated the party to a feast of “fine venison”—a dish commonly enjoyed at Boyer’s residence—before touring the “proposed city.” According to the newspaper article:

We saw improvements going up on all sides; at the spring they have a substantial wharf, large and strong enough for the accommodation of large steamers to load and unload, which shows some of Captain Walton’s genius in construction. We also notice a large warehouse, which will be used to store the furniture now en route for the new hotel which is to be built in the near future.²⁹

²⁶ Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 261.

²⁷ Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 8-10, 12.

²⁸ Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 10-11; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 18. The reader should note that the Meres family possesses a different ancestry than the Meares family that occupied Lowe’s Landing and Anona by the late 1850s.

²⁹ *Sunland Tribune*, 11 January 1883.

By one estimate, Boyer and other developers had already secured or prepared nearly 20,000 feet of lumber board for construction projects. Local boat builders had started to construct a “large lighter” (not the shallow steamer *Mary Disston*) to meet deep-water vessels near the mouth of the Anclote River that brought furniture, provisions, and freight. Boyer claimed that he “had to take care of all of these new-comers in [his] residence until later in the year [1883]” when the Tropical and Tarpon Springs hotels opened for business. Meanwhile, the article credits Major M. R. Marks of Orlando for his work on behalf of Disston interests to clear trees and “growth of every kind” while platting avenues thirty-feet wide.³⁰

The Boyers joined other speculators in panning for speculative wealth during Tarpon Spring’s “gilded age.” As the Disstons, Safford, and other conducted business through the Lake Butler Villa Company, Boyer expanded his agricultural enterprises and operated a regular mail coach across the barely improved roads between Tarpon Springs and Tampa. Boyer hired Osmond Knowles as his driver and maintained a livery barn. The journey between Tampa and Tarpon Springs generally took two days under favorable weather conditions. Still a proficient sailor, Boyer maintained his sloop, the *Tantalus*, in excellent condition and it remained one of the fastest boats on the coast. Boyer often competed in races against the boats of other civic leaders, including James M. Vinson’s *Vinessa*. Boyer gained great notoriety as a guide who took fishing parties along the Anclote and into the Gulf of Mexico. As his commercial activities grew, Boyer encouraged family members to move to this frontier boomtown. By the early 1880s (possibly 1882), Josh’s brother—John Boyer—and their mother arrived from the Bahamas and built a house close to the Boyer Cottage, near the southwestern corner of the intersection of Pinellas Avenue and Lime Street. Other family members arrived by 30 June 1885, when the Florida state census listed many members of the Boyer family living in close proximity. Joshua, then thirty-three years old, listed his occupation as “speculating,” while twenty-six year old John claimed to work as a “farmer.” Sister A.G. Boyer lived at John’s residence, along with mother Hannah. The Youngbloods remained nearby neighbors, though a twenty-three year old Florida native named A. J. Youngblood lived as a “servant” with the Boyers. Two boarders who were probably Boyer’s nephews,

³⁰ Ibid.; Joshua C. Boyer, “Some Early Reminiscences of Tarpon Springs.”

Frederich and Osmond Knowles, also resided with the family. The John Boyer home, a center of much activity during the 1880s and 1890s, remained at the busy corner near the center of Tarpon Springs for over eight decades.³¹

Three events in 1887 illustrated the maturation of Tarpon Springs: the city's incorporation, the construction of the lighthouse on Anclote Key, and the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway. Stoughton mentions a February 12 meeting at the settlement's schoolhouse where most of the registered voters decided to incorporate Tarpon Springs as a city. Joshua Boyer joined Anson Safford as two of the inaugural aldermen who served with Mayor Wilber F. De Golier. While the lighthouse offered protection to boats sailing along the Gulf shores near the Anclote River, the arrival of the Orange Belt solidified Tarpon Springs' position as the predominant city of Western Hillsborough well into the 1890s. The locomotive had bypassed the small and declining settlement of Anclote. In time, Anclote largely disappeared in a fashion similar to Hamilton Disston's dreams of a megalopolis of Disston City when "General" John Constantine Williams persuaded Peter Demens to turn the Orange Belt away from Disston's holdings in southern Pinellas and towards the tiny settlement of Wardsville that became St. Petersburg. The arrival of the railroad in upper Pinellas led to the demise of Tarpon's most notable steamboats. The larger *Governor Safford* departed for service as a ferryboat in New York and South Carolina before sinking in 1908; the smaller *Mary Disston* brought equipment to lower Pinellas (before the completion of the Orange Belt) and later fell apart near Key West. A fourth event in 1887 demonstrates how transportation remained dangerous in the region. R. F. Pent recalled an incident when Mary Ormond Boyer rode on her buggy along Pinellas Avenue. The horse, named Jim, became agitated and frightened, possibly by Mary's umbrella. Jim took off and Mary held on for dear life as the buggy roared along the sandy and rutted roadway. The horse did not stop until she lost her umbrella.³²

³¹ Frantzis, *Strangers at Ithaca*, 37; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 163; Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 12; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 18-19, 29,42. United States Archives and Records Service, *Schedules of the Florida State Census of 1885* (Washington: National Archives, 1970); *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 13 May 1921, 19 May 1933. According to Pent, Knowles also operated a hardware store with Horace Webster.

³² Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs*, 17-22; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 57-58. Images from the Stokes Photographic Collection digitized by the University of South Florida Libraries capture views along the route of the Sanford and St. Petersburg Railway during its construction. Photographs taken along the Anclote River show a variety of boats, a growing number of boathouses along Spring Bayou, and other scenes that capture Tarpon Springs during the mid and late 1880s.

Both Tarpon Springs and the Boyer family witnessed dramatic growth during the 1890s. Rapid development followed the arrival of the railroad. During this decade, John K. Cheyney consolidated his business holdings in the nascent sponge-diving enterprises. Meanwhile, Josh's brother—John G. Boyer—had a fruitful union with Annie M. Priemen. A native of Michigan born in November 1871, Annie had parents of German ancestry who arrived in the United States during the mid-1800s. John and Annie were married by a Catholic priest in Tampa on 26 May 1891, the same day the court clerk issued their marriage license. They probably went from the courthouse directly to the church. They promptly returned to Tarpon Springs and started a family. After giving birth to a son, Denza P. (or Dienza P., often “D.P.”) Boyer in February 1893, Annie and her husband celebrated the arrival of Marguerita (born March 1894), Ina Victoria (born 1896), Hannah (born July 1898), Raymond (born circa 1900), Elizabeth (born about 1905), and Joseph (born circa 1908-1909).³³

A New Home on Florida's Opposite Coast

In 1898, as the Tampa Bay area became a focal point for the Spanish-American War, Joshua and Mary Boyer moved from Tarpon Springs to Brevard County. They settled in the small town of Eau Gallie, north of Melbourne and along the Indian River. The 1900 census describes forty-eight year old Joshua as a “fisherman,” and his seventy-seven year old father-in-law, A. W. Ormond, as a “farmer.” John Boyer and his family remained in Tarpon Springs. While the older children attended school, John worked as a sponge clipper. Although the exact reason for their departure remains unclear, Josh and Mary Boyer and A. W. Ormond relocated to an area with a history of development that closely resembled the early years of Tarpon Springs. InCarolynn A. Washbon's research on the settlers of Indian River Country, she describes settlers moving to Eau Gallie in 1875, the year the Ormonds settled near present-day Tarpon. Families that homesteaded along the Indian River, like those pioneering souls huddled along the Anclote, inhabited an inaccessible region with few neighbors and many challenges. Similar to the upper

³³ A digitized image of John G. and Annie Boyer's marriage license is available through the digitized Hillsborough County Marriage License Collection, University of South Florida Libraries, Tampa. Census information available in research files at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo. An alternate spelling of D. P. Boyer's name is “Dyenza.” See: *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 24 January 1933.

Pinellas Peninsula, early residents of coastal Brevard could enjoy an abundance of wildlife and seafood, but had difficulty obtaining provisions. As early families tried to cultivate crops, they also demanded better steamer transportation in the area. While Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway had launched its operations before the Boyers moved to the region, the developments along the shoreline of Indian River seemed familiar to those who witnessed similar changes along the Anclote. Meanwhile, the new owners of the Boyer Cottage, members of the Segonias family, remembered that the addition of two smaller rooms to the rear of the building took place sometime after they acquired the structure in 1906.³⁴

During the 1910s, members of the Boyer family contributed to the development of both Florida coasts, as well as the safety of soldiers overseas. By 1910, Josh managed a meat market in Brevard County, while his wife of thirty-two years operated a boarding house. The census lists two boarders at their home on Highland Avenue: Joseph Hendricks, a thirty-two year old native Floridian who painted signs, and a sixty-year old James Gordon, a house laborer who emigrated from Scotland in 1905. At John Boyer's home in Tarpon Springs, the seven children ranged in age from just over one year to seventeen years old. D. P. Boyer, the eldest son, worked as a "telephone lineman," while John continued to work in an important local industry as a "sponge packer." Research by Glen Dill placed D. P. Boyer in the Navy by 1912; he built mines used in battles during World War I while stationed in Norfolk and later moved to Indianapolis where he met Gayle Stapp. He married Gayle and returned to Tarpon with her and their baby, Mary Jane, in 1920. A 1918 city directory placed John Boyer's family at 215 West Lime, though some of the older children had already left home. Captain John Boyer took a number of children and church members from St. Ignatius Catholic Church to a picnic at Pinder's Park on the Anclote River in March 1918. Among those in attendance were Soledad Bonillas Parken (widow of Anson Safford, who had died in 1891), Anna Boyer, Elizabeth Boyer, and young Joseph Boyer. Members of the excursion and picnic counted at least seven alligators during their journey. Ina Victoria Boyer had moved to 1743 Boulevard Street in Jacksonville by 1918. By August of that year, she entered service as

³⁴ SeeCarolynn A. Washbon's chapter in James J. Horgan and Lewis N. Wynne, *Florida Decades: A Sesquicentennial History* (St. Leo, FL: St. Leo College Press, 1995), 55-67; Records of the Pinellas County

a nurse. She worked overseas during the months after the end of World War I. By June 1919, she returned to the United States and assisted physicians at Walter Reed General Hospital until May 1920, about the time of her discharge.³⁵

By 1919 or 1920, Joshua Boyer's cottage moved from its original site to 140 East Orange Avenue. The rear-room additions came along with the original one-room cottage and porch. Sanborn fire insurance maps from 1930 and 1945 indicate that the structure sat in the middle of the property, not near the street corner like other neighboring buildings. In fact, another building close to the street that shared the same address may have partially obscured the right front corner of the patio. Although Tarpon Springs possessed an electrical plant before other locations on the Pinellas Peninsula, the Boyer Cottage remained without electrical wiring during its time at both locations.³⁶

The Boyer family remained an important part of the growing Tarpon community during the 1920s and 1930s. Joshua occasionally visited Pinellas County, such as when he stayed with his brother, John, in April 1921. Captain John sailed family members along the Anclote to the lighthouse on the *Ina*, a boat named after his daughter, during the early 1920s. In March 1925, however, John Grey Boyer passed away. With his father's burial at Cycadia Cemetery, D. P. Boyer became the leading member of the family in the community. An alternate city judge since 1931, D. P. Boyer received an appointment to serve as Tarpon's municipal judge in January 1933. "Dee" Boyer, as many in the community knew him, also operated a successful Chevrolet dealership between 1923 and 1948. He served as president (1931-1932) and secretary (1929-1931, 1934-1935) of the Tarpon Springs Rotary Club and had a reputation of never missing a meeting. As a civic leader, D. P. Boyer also supported the Shriners and led the Fernald-Millas Post of the American Legion. With the support of a supervisor from the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation, his wife became the first social worker in the area. Unfortunately,

Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 21 June 1978,

³⁵ See research files at Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, and "Boyer, Ina Victoria," Available from *World War I Service Cards online at the Florida State Archives*; *Suncoast Shopper & News*, 7 September 1977; (*Tarpon Springs*) *Evening Leader*, 18 March 1918.

³⁶ Sanborn Map Company, *Fire Insurance Maps: Florida* (Teaneck, N.J. : Chadwyck-Healey, 1983), February 1930 map, February 1945 map, microfilm reel 16

limited federal and state funds limited her ability to assist impoverished families in Tarpon during her first years of service.³⁷

Joshua Boyer made his final trip to Tarpon Springs in 1933. On May 16, at the age of eighty-two, he passed away at his home in Eau Gallie, Brevard County. Within two days, his body arrived for services at the Vinson Funeral Home. Rev. Louis J. Richards of the Church of the Good Shepard led the ceremonies, which also included a quartet that sang two hymns. City Judge D. P. Boyer, B. J. Knowles, and Osmond Knowles, all nephews of Josh Boyer, attended the funeral and oversaw the burial alongside his brother, Captain John. Mary Ormond Boyer returned to Brevard County. At the time of her death, she was buried in that county along with her father, A. W. Ormond.³⁸

Did the Ormond Family Name Two Florida Cities?

While Mary Ormond Boyer probably gave Tarpon Springs its name, later claims that she or father Alexander named the community of Ormond Beach seem implausible. Josh Boyer's obituaries in the *Tarpon Springs Leader* and *St. Petersburg Times* claim that Alexander W. Ormond established Ormond Beach after leaving Tarpon Springs. Most accounts of the history of Ormond Beach in Volusia County consider Captain James Ormond as the town's namesake. James Ormond came from the Bahamas to Florida during the second Spanish period after receiving a land grant from the Spanish government. Ormond, who apparently developed a 2,000-acre plantation in Florida, died at the hands of a runaway slave circa 1815. Settlers to the coastline in Volusia County had originally planned to name the settlement New Britain, after their hometown in Connecticut. The name Ormond was chosen by April 1880, however, long before A. W. Ormond settled in the area.³⁹

³⁷ *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 4 April 1921, 22 August 1921, 24 January 1933, 23 February 1940; *Suncoast Shopper & News*, 7 September 1977. See chronology in: *Rotary Club of Tarpon Springs, Florida USA: 75th Anniversary* (Tarpon Springs: Rotary Club of Tarpon Springs, 2002).

³⁸ *St. Petersburg Times*, 17 May 1933; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 19 May 1933.

³⁹ *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 19 May 1933; *St. Petersburg Times*, 17 May 1933; Allen Morris, *Florida Place Names* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1974), 116; Bloodworth, *Places in the Sun*, 55; Alfred Jackson Hannah, *A Prince in Their Midst: The Adventurous Life of Achille Murat on the American Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 81.

A Small Cottage Not Forgotten

In the years after Boyer's death, members of his family passed away or moved to other communities. The cottage, however, remained firmly perched in its new location one block away from the business district. Although the small home seemed out of place just a few steps away from Safford Avenue and the booming stores along Tarpon Avenue, this simple cottage caught the eye of a young boy raised in a home across the street, at 137 East Orange. Born in the Fourth of July in 1937, George D. Protos lived in a family that treasured its Greek roots while celebrating the new opportunities offered in America. Most sources credit the arrival of John Cocoris and his work with John Cheyney for the transformation of the sponge-diving industry in Tarpon Springs. During the early 1900s, Cocoris encouraged many divers to move from their ancestral islands along the Mediterranean to harvest the treasures of the Gulf of Mexico. As a young man with a strong interest in history, Protos needed only to look across Orange Avenue to see a small wooden homestead that told a large story. He graduated from Tarpon Springs High School, earned a pharmacy degree at the University of Florida, and returned to his home across from the Boyer Cottage. By the mid-1960s, George married, started a family, and continued to serve the community as a pharmacist, a director at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, a board president of the Sponge Exchange, and a member of Tarpon's Old Timers Club.⁴⁰

The Protos family maintained the building until 1978. By that time, George and Anita Protos decided to donate the historic cottage to Heritage Village in Largo. They had first checked to see if the City of Tarpon Springs had the financial resources to preserve the structure before making their decision. Members of the Pinellas County Historical Commission approved the plan to move the cottage at their meeting on 20 March 1978. About one month before the planned move of the Cottage, someone entered the building and started a fire that gutted part of the interior. Although Commission members expressed concern about the cottage's structural integrity, Park Director Kendrick Ford reassured them that the charred inside rooms did not compromise the building or weaken its foundation. In any case, the Boyer Cottage would have required

⁴⁰ *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 September 2001.

demolition and rehabilitation whether or not the fire had occurred. The cost to move the cottage remained at \$2,500.⁴¹

In late April 1978, George and Anita Protos watched as the structure left the city that sprang up around it. A future mayor of Tarpon Springs who shared her husband's passion for their community, Anita Protos told a reporter that "the house looked like it was crying. . . . I'm happy, yet I'm sad." Restoration efforts focused on the original fourteen-by-fourteen foot structure, and workers removed the subsequent additions. George and Anita Protos took great pride as their daughter, Harriet, cut the ribbon at the dedication of the Boyer Cottage at its new home in Heritage Village. Just as Joshua Boyer saw the city of Tarpon spring up around his small cottage, the Protos family witnessed how their efforts to preserve the cottage saved a large and important piece of our county's history.⁴²

⁴¹ Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 8 March 1978, 21 June 1978; *St. Petersburg Times*, 30 April 1978.

⁴² Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 17 May 1978.