

# Safford Pavilion: A Brief Introduction

## History of Site before Structure was Built

- The pavilion recognizes Anson P. K. Safford (1830-1891) for his contributions to the Tarpon Springs area. A native of Vermont, Safford moved to the West and served in the California State Assembly and later as Governor of the Arizona Territory. He panned for gold while in California and also worked as a surveyor in Nevada. He died in Tarpon Springs in December 1891. He came to Florida and became involved in the speculation that took place in the 1880s after Hamilton Disston's land purchase.
- Anson and wife Soledad Bonillas (a native of Mexico) started the first Catholic chapel and school in the area. She became involved in the creation of Tarpon Springs' Woman's Town Improvement Society in the early 1890s.
- Anson's sister, Mary J. Safford, came to the region in 1883. The Saffords originally stayed with Mary Ormond Boyer, her father (A.W. Ormond), and her husband (Joshua C. Boyer). The Ormonds, Boyers, and Saffords formed a close friendship during the early years of Tarpon Springs' history.
- Anson's Tarpon Springs home has been restored and now serves as a museum.

## Construction Information

- The pavilion appeared sometime in the mid-1890s, though no records have been located that give the exact date of construction. Longtime residents remember it on the landscape by 1900.
- It became an important landmark at the city's cemetery (Cycadia Cemetery).
- Hexagonal block floors and cypress poles form the base of the structure.

## History of Use

- Cycadia Cemetery was started in 1887 by a member of the Beekman family.
- The pavilion was used as a shelter for funerals and other gatherings at a time when few funeral homes existed.
- By the 1930s, John Cheyney donated additional land to the cemetery site, and the city took over control of cemetery operations by 1946. The Cycadia Improvement Association became an important force by the early 1950s for maintaining and improving the cemetery site.

## Moving of the Structure to Heritage Village

- Historical Commission members approached the Tarpon Springs Historical Society about the possibility of moving the Safford Memorial as early as September 1979. At that time, Tarpon's leaders decided to maintain the structure in that city.
- Structure arrived in May 1982, at about the time the Greenwood House arrived. It required some reconstruction. The removal of some cypress trees at a planned site for a shopping center provided wood for posts during the partial reconstruction.

# The Safford Pavilion

## Overview

For over eighty years, the Safford Memorial Pavilion occupied a prominent position in Cycadia Cemetery. This park and graveyard, located east of U.S. Highway 19 near Tarpon Springs, served as one of the earliest formal burial sites since organized settlement along the Pinellas Peninsula began in the 1800s. The shelter, built to protect visitors during inclement weather who attended funerals or other gatherings, honors Anson Peacely Killen Safford, a former Territorial Governor of Arizona who worked with Hamilton Disston to open the Pinellas frontier from the early 1880s until his death in 1891. Anson and his wife, Soledad Bonillas Safford, played an important role in the development of Tarpon Springs and the area around Lake Tarpon (formerly Lake Butler).

However, the story of Anson Safford and his family reaches far beyond the Pinellas Peninsula. From his early years panning for gold in California and climbing a gilded political ladder in Territorial Arizona, to his later involvement with Hamilton Disston and other financiers, Safford's experiences before reaching the remote settlement around Springs Bayou prepared him for his leadership in banking, real estate, and public service in the growing community of Tarpon Springs. Other members of the Safford clan also made a lasting impression in the area. Anson's younger sister, Dr. Mary Jane Safford, had served as a Civil War nurse, earned a medical degree from a New York college, and established successful practices in Chicago and Boston before becoming the first trained physician to live in upper Pinellas. Soledad B. Safford, Anson's third and final wife, came with him to the area and soon joined other prominent women in civic activities, including a local town improvement association that sustained the Cycadia Cemetery for many years.

Although the Safford Pavilion recognizes the former governor for his efforts, by extension it also serves as a tribute to all members of the Safford family. Constructed during the 1890s with cypress poles and knee braces, the pavilion started to deteriorate by the 1970s. After discussions starting in 1979, the City of Tarpon Springs agreed to donate the Safford Pavilion to Heritage Village, and the Pinellas County Historical Society offered funds to move it onto its present site by the spring of 1982.

## **A Pioneer of the American West and of the Pinellas Peninsula**

A native of Lamoille County, Vermont, Anson Peacely Killen (A.P.K.) Safford entered the world on 14 February 1830 as a child of Joseph Warren and Diantha P. Safford. Other children included a brother, Alfred, and a younger sister, Mary Jane (born 31 December 1834). The family moved from Hyde Park, Vermont, to Crete, Illinois, when young Anson was eight years old. Some biographical accounts note that the children failed to get a formal education because of the family's poor financial situation. At the age of twenty, Anson Safford joined other residents of Will County, Illinois, who decided to move from the Midwest to California in 1850. His parents had recently died and the California "gold rush" had just come to life. As a young man, Safford mined for gold in Placer County, California, an area between Sacramento and the State of Nevada. Soon after feeling the sting of the gold bug, Anson sought public office. Though he failed to win a seat in the California state assembly during the 1854 election, he did serve as the delegate for the legislature's Seventeenth District from 1857 until 1859. In 1859, he resigned his office and moved to San Francisco to engage in business. By the spring of 1862, Safford relocated to Humboldt County, Nevada. Before the end of the year, he became a county commissioner. During the mid-1860s, Safford took an extended tour of Europe "partly for health and partly to increase his knowledge of human affairs and the world's resources." From 1867 until 1869, Safford served as Surveyor-General of Nevada after receiving an appointment to that post from President Andrew Johnson.<sup>1</sup>

An active member of the Republican Party, A.P.K. Safford obtained a commission from President Ulysses S. Grant to serve as the third Territorial Governor of Arizona in April 1869. He held this post for two consecutive terms, from 1869 until 1877. While some referred to him as the "Little Governor" due to his short stature, many Arizonians praised Safford as the "father of public schools" for his efforts to establish a comprehensive educational system in the territory. Although the 1870 census counted nearly two thousand school-age children in Territorial Arizona, no public schools existed

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<sup>1</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 6 January 1961; *Tampa Tribune*, 11 August 2001. For a brief biographical summary of A.P.K. Safford's life, see: <http://jeff.scott.tripod.com/GovSafford.html>. For a discussion of Safford's Illinois compatriots who traveled to California by 1850 to participate in the gold rush, see: <http://www.pibburns.com/carbtill.htm>

to serve this population before Safford took office. As chief executive, he worked diligently to recruit teachers to the Arizona frontier, codify educational practices, and establish a territorial tax for schools. Despite a strong initial opposition from lawmakers, Safford's program to divide revenues among counties and provide free public schools for pupils scattered across the vast territory garnered praise from the residents. He also returned to the mining business during his stint as territorial governor, and engaged in other speculative activities. Some retrospective newspaper stories claimed that Safford left the governorship after two successful terms with little more than two mules and a buckboard wagon. Whether true or not, Safford quickly channeled his efforts into new mining opportunities near Tombstone. While Arizona seemed too remote for many consumptives and others seeking a healthful environment, Safford no doubt enjoyed the healthy physical and economic climate available on this frontier.<sup>2</sup>

Governor Safford did encounter criticism at a juncture between his private and personal lives. While receiving praise for his improvements to education and the infrastructure of the Arizona Territory, his January 1873 divorce of Jennie (or Jenny) L. Tracy sparked controversy. The daughter of a California carpenter, as a young woman Jennie Tracy held progressive views for the mid-nineteenth century: She championed women's suffrage and lobbied against cruelty to animals. Jennie met Anson by early 1869, possibly during an April visit to San Francisco just before he received his appointment as territorial governor. While it remains unclear whether their romance had political overtones—possibly so Governor Safford would have a first lady during his public service—Judge John Anderson united them in matrimony during at July 24 ceremony in the territorial capital of Tucson. Less than two months later, a pregnant Jennie departed for San Diego, California, while Anson visited northern Arizona. They met again and stayed together for a few weeks in San Francisco in late 1869, though Jennie decided to return to San Diego rather than accompany Anson to Tucson. Frank Alfred Safford, their son, was born in July 1870; however, Anson probably did not visit his estranged wife until March 1871. Frank died as an infant on 28 August 1871. Jennie

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; Thomas E. Sheridan, *Arizona: A History* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995), 233-234; *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arizona: Compiled by the Workers of the Writers' Program for the Work Projects Administration in the State of Arizona* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1989), 117-118; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 6 January 1961; *Tarpon Springs Herald*, 12 April 1973.

refused to return to Arizona, and filed for divorce by December 1872. In bitter tones, she alleged that her husband had kept a mistress during their marriage and had kept her in the dark about his battle with syphilis. These allegations, whether true or not, prompted Safford to tell Jennie that he would settle the matter with the assistance of Arizona's territorial legislature.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1873, lawmakers passed a bill that officially divorced Anson and Jennie Safford. Only one member of the lower house, Jose Redondo of Yuma, voted against the measure. In an ironic twist, Governor Safford not only signed the bill into law, but by doing so also signed his own divorce decree. Those familiar with the controversy surrounding the Florida legislature's 1901 law written solely to permit railroad tycoon Henry Flagler to divorce his institutionalized wife, Ida Alice, on grounds of insanity may note a peculiar similarity in the actions of the Arizona assembly. Within three months, Jennie married a man named Horace Loomis, leading many researchers to believe that she had questionable motives for her scandalous statements about Anson. With few Anglo women on the frontier, Governor Safford then followed a romantic path common among Arizona's Anglo leaders: he exchanged vows with a woman of Mexican ancestry. Thomas E. Sheridan, an Arizona historian, estimates that sixty-two percent of marriages in Tucson and Pima County involving Anglos during the 1870s brought together Mexican women and Anglo men. Safford's second wife, a Mexican named Margarita Grijalva, passed away in 1880 during childbirth, though their daughter, Marguarite (or Margarita), survived.

His third and final wife, Soledad Bonillas, remained a companion until his death in December 1891. A native of Mexico born in 1860, she married the former governor circa 1882. Many Hispanics in Arizona and other areas along the Borderlands resented the paternalistic leadership of Anglo politicians who seized political control after the United States acquired this region through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and the 1853 Gadsden Purchase. Among territorial governors, however, Safford remained popular with many Mexicans living in Arizona because of his marriages to Grijalva and Bonillas. As a footnote of some international significance, Soledad's older brother played

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<sup>3</sup> *Yuma [Arizona] Daily Sun*, 31 August 2003. Available electronically: <http://yumasun.com>. See also: <http://jeff.scott.tripod.com/GovSafford.html>; Sheridan, *Arizona: A History*, 109.

an important and controversial role in diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico in his later years. Born in Mexico in 1858, Ignacio Bonillas benefited from Safford's educational platform as he attended schools in Tucson and later taught in Arizona. After graduating from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Soledad's brother brokered contracts with American mining companies in Mexico and served as mayor of Nogales, Sonora (Mexico). Most notably, and long after Anson's death, Ignacio received an appointment from President Venustiano Carranza to serve as the Mexican ambassador to the United States in 1917, at a time when American and Mexican leaders fumed over the raids of Carranza's chief nemesis, Pancho Villa. Bonillas also tried unsuccessfully to win the presidency of Mexico in 1920. The intersection of Anson, Soledad, and Ignacio illustrates the fluid nature of the Borderlands frontier during this era.<sup>4</sup>

Safford remained in the Arizona Territory through the first part of the 1880s. The former governor served as an Arizona delegate at the 1880 Republican National Convention. Searching for new business opportunities and hoping to engage other speculators in his mining interests, A.P.K. Safford traveled to eastern cities, including Philadelphia. Through his dealings with wealthy manufacturer Hamilton Disston, Safford met other powerful entrepreneurs, including Henry B. Plant, and joined a partnership that soon brought him to the Florida frontier. Once Disston had obtained four million acres of land from the State of Florida, he and Safford became real estate prospectors who laid claim to the profitable mother lode of fertile land along the Pinellas Peninsula. By 1882, the Saffords and their three children (daughters Margarite and Gladys, and adopted son Leandro) came to the Anclote River by way of Cedar Keys. W. L. Straub's history of Pinellas noted that the Saffords happened upon Captain Sam E. Hope, who directed his son to lead them to the remote settlement of Tarpon Springs. After arriving at Spring Bayou, the Saffords lodged at the homestead of Joshua and Mary Ormond Boyer. Anson's family soon moved to an unpainted, three-room cottage across from the Bayou.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.; James E. Officer, *Hispanic Arizona* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987), 404. For a brief discussion of the struggle between American officials, the Carranzistas, and Pancho Villa's bandits, see: George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 5th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 1119-1121. See also: Tucson Unified School District History web site, <http://www.tusd.k12.az.us>.

<sup>5</sup> *Tampa Tribune*, 8 January 2000, 11 August 2001; *Tarpon Springs Herald*, 12 April 1973; R. F. Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs* (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors, 1964), 20; William L. Straub, *History of*

### **A Successful Sibling Takes a Different Route to Tarpon Springs**

Dr. Mary Jane Safford joined her brother Anson and his wife Soledad Safford as they moved to Tarpon Springs. Three years old when the family left Vermont for Illinois, Mary Jane Safford returned to her native state after her parents' death in 1849 to take classes at an academy in Bakersfield. As a young woman, she became fluent in French and German. By the 1850s, she returned to Illinois and lived with Alfred, her elder brother, while she worked as a schoolteacher. As Anson panned for gold in the West, Mary Jane planned to help the wounded during the Civil War. In early 1861, she lived in Cairo, an Illinois town near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. When the Civil War began, many volunteer troops from other areas of Illinois converged near Cairo to protect the strategic waterways. Close quarters brought epidemics to the camps. By the summer of 1861, Mary Jane Safford brought food and tended to ill soldiers. She soon won the trust of officers and surgeons at the encampments, and worked under the tutelage of noted nurse "Mother" Mary Ann Bickerdyke. Safford's proficiency in French and German allowed her to tend to members of foreign brigades who fought in battles along the Mississippi. City leaders later praised Safford as the "Angel of Cairo" for her work during the Battle of Shiloh and other campaigns.<sup>6</sup>

Mary Jane Safford's nursing experience on the battlefield encouraged her to become a physician. Exhausted from her wartime service, Safford traveled through Europe during the later years of the Civil War. She returned to the United States in 1866, graduated from the New York Medical College for Women in 1869, and returned to Europe for advanced surgical training. While Anson established public schools in the Arizona Territory, his younger sister became the first documented female physician to perform a surgical removal of an ovary. By the early 1870s, Mary Jane returned to the United States, launched a private practice in Chicago, married a Bostonian named James

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*Pinellas County, Florida, Narrative and Biographical* (St. Augustine: The Record Company, 1929), 163. Ongoing research of land records, railroad corporations, and other entities by historian Joe Knetsch has uncovered new business and social ties between Anson Safford, Hamilton Disston, Henry Plant, and others not adequately documented in newspaper articles or other sources.

<sup>6</sup> "Safford, Mary Jane," *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, available: <http://search.eb.com>; VandeCreek, Drew E., "Illinois Volunteers," available: <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/civilwar/narrative4.html>; "Mary Jane Safford," available: <http://thecivilwar.netfirms.com/women/w28-safford.htm>; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 20 April 1961;

Blake, and joined the faculty of Boston University School of Medicine and the staff of the Massachusetts Homeopathic Hospital. She divorced Blake in 1880 and brought her practice to Tarpon Springs as that town's first resident physician and the first academically trained woman to establish a medical practice in Florida. Though short in stature like her brother—"Little Governor" Anson—Mary Jane filled a big role as she treated community members at the vintage 1883 Safford house she shared with Anson, Soledad, and their children. R. F. Pent, an 1878 native of Tarpon, remembered a childhood visit to this "quick and alert" doctor when his foot required "a little surgery" sometime during the 1880s. Mary Jane Safford retired from medicine by 1886.<sup>7</sup>

### **Building a Community Where the Tarpons Spring**

By 1883, the Saffords constructed a frame vernacular house that doubled as Anson's business office and Mary Jane's clinic. The hard pine used in this structure came from Disston's sawmill in New Jersey. One account of the house's construction notes that mill workers numbered the planks and boards before shipping them to Florida, a process similar to that used in the movement of the Wesley Lowe House from its original site in Anona to its location along Thirty-Seventh Street circa 1950. A clipping cited in a 1990 *St. Petersburg Times* article proclaimed that "(b)y Soledad's charm, grace of manner and beautiful character, her home became the social center of town, entertaining many distinguished guests." Lumber for other early structures also came from Disston's sawmills and business interests in Philadelphia and Atlantic City.<sup>8</sup>

Others early residents joined the Saffords in building the community of Tarpon Springs. A.P.K. Safford founded Tarpon Springs in 1882. Soon thereafter, Orlando lawyer Major Matthew R. (W. J.) Marks drew up the town site. Safford and Disston arrived via the Anclote in February 1882, met with Marks to examine lands in the Tarpon Springs area, and planned to visit Polk County in early March to inspect Disston's holdings there. Marks oversaw construction of a hotel and other buildings before returning to Orlando, where he would serve as that city's mayor by December 1888.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 59; *Tampa Tribune*, 8 January 2000.

<sup>8</sup> Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 163; Gertrude K. Stoughton, *Tarpon Springs, Florida: The Early Years*, 2d ed. (Tarpon Springs: Tarpon Springs Area Historical Society, 1992), 9; *St. Petersburg Times*, 27 March 1990; *Tampa Tribune*, 8 January 2000.

Anson and Soledad helped establish St. Ignatius of Antioch, a Catholic chapel, in the small community and provided land for its building in 1888. As Disston's agent, Anson Safford controlled substantial acreage in parts of present-day Pinellas, Pasco, and Hillsborough counties that became organized under the Lake Butler Villa Company. Serving as president of this corporation, Safford acted as a land broker who sought to attract investors and residents for a winter colony. By 1884, Safford met Granville E. Noblit, a Pennsylvania native and rheumatic who came to Tarpon after stops in Eustis and Tampa. In a 1921 retrospective interview, Noblit told a reporter that he remembered seeing just "half a dozen residences and a few business houses" on this first visit to the heavily forested area. As Hamilton Disston worked to bring the Orange Belt Railway to the Pinellas Peninsula and his proposed community of Disston City, Safford sold tracts owned by Disston through the Lake Butler enterprise while Noblit helped to survey the proposed route. When the railroad terminus moved south from Tarpon towards St. Petersburg by 1888, Disston suffered financial difficulties and Noblit turned his other commercial activities, including a feed and hardware store. Before his death, Noblit established a 500-acre farm at Lake Villa that included dipping vats to eradicate ticks from livestock. By 1918, Noblit provided the labor and county authorities provided the material for the construction of a large cattle dipping vat for farmers around Tarpon Springs.<sup>9</sup>

John Cheyney, a Philadelphia native, worked with Safford on Disston's local business interests. Straub's biographical narrative notes that Cheyney served as a bank clerk in Philadelphia before arriving in Tarpon in 1889 at the urging of Disston, a family friend. Initially unfamiliar with the sponge business, Cheyney met with William Roberts and other longtime spongers from Key West. In addition to his leadership as the first commercial sponge operator of the city, Cheyney soon took an interest in real estate.

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<sup>9</sup> Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 20, 96-97; *Sunland Tribune*, 2 March 1882; *St. Petersburg Times*, 27 March 1990, 30 June 2000; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 29 April 1921, 6 January 1961; *Tarpon Springs Daily News*, 25 January 1918; *St. Ignatius Roman Catholic Church, Tarpon Springs, Florida: Twenty-Fifth Silver Anniversary, 1956-1981* (Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth Pub. Co., 1981), 19, 94. Assorted biographical materials on Major Matthew Robinson Marks (sometimes referred to as Major W. J. Marks) reside in box 6 of the Donald J. Ivey Research File on Florida Politicians, Special Collections and Archives, University of South Florida St. Petersburg.

After Anson Safford's death, Cheyney carried on the late governor's work by becoming president of the Lake Butler Villa Company.<sup>10</sup>

Safford continued to engage in civic and business ventures through the 1880s. In 1885, Safford met with the then-Duke of Sutherland and Lady Caroline Blair after they docked their yacht *San Peur* along the Anclote River in search of supplies. The former governor introduced these English visitors to the local residents, and in short time the Duke purchased thirty acres on a bluff overlooking Lake Butler (now Lake Tarpon). One early resident remembered seeing Safford negotiate with the Duke of Sutherland along the beach in the moonlight. In time, the small settlement of Sutherland—now Palm Harbor—took shape south of Tarpon. A correspondent for the *West Hillsborough Times* praised Safford in the newspaper's 15 April 1886 edition after visiting with him at Tarpon. The writer touted Safford as “the originator and presiding genius of the wonderful enterprise manifest in that beautiful and rapidly growing town.” The article complimented Safford's “foresight, wise investment of capital, and indomitable energy as the founder and promoter” of the community. In 1887, Tarpon Spring's fifty-two residents celebrated the town's incorporation. The former governor also negotiated with a steamship company to ensure regular shipments between Tarpon and locations such as Tampa and Cedar Keys. An undated and typewritten promotional report on Tarpon Springs from the mid 1880s credited Safford's “energy and perseverance” for the construction of the promenade around Spring Bayou and other community improvements. Safford and Josh Boyer served as two of the community's first five aldermen. Early measures approved by this first town council included rules prohibiting both gunfire within the city limits and livestock roaming along the roads. By 1891, Safford had become president of the Bank of Tarpon Springs (with son Leondro serving as cashier and notary public) while still overseeing the Lake Butler Villa Company.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 229; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 67-68.

<sup>11</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 16 January 1923, 6 January 1961; *West Hillsborough Times*, 15 April 1886; *St. Ignatius*, 97; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 20; *Tampa Tribune*, 17 December 1891, 8 January 2000. See especially: box 6, folder 12, Ivey Collection, USF St. Petersburg.

## Untimely Deaths and a Timeless Memorial

Two events in December 1891 shocked the residents of the community along the Anclote. In poor health through most of the late 1880s, Dr. Mary Jane Safford finally passed away on December 8. News of her death filled the front page of December 12 issue of the *Tarpon Springs Truth*. Exactly one week after Mary's passing, on the morning of December 15, Governor A.P.K. Safford died suddenly after a prolonged illness. Both probably died of typhoid fever. An obituary in the *Tampa Tribune* credited Anson Safford as "one of the leading factors in the development of Florida . . . especially on the West Coast, where he was a power. To him more than any one man were the people of that section of the county indebted for the building of the Orange Belt Railroad."<sup>12</sup> After Governor Safford's death, John Wasson of Pomona, California—a friend and associate of Anson who had once credited Anson for taming the Arizona Territory at a time when it was "almost in a state of anarchy"—wrote the following about his contributions to the Pinellas frontier:

(H)e gave his time and personal labor especially to building the town of Tarpon Springs. This was purely pioneer work. The land was all in a state of nature. Where Tarpon Springs stands with its public schools, churches, hotels, banks, and other institutions, he practically found a forest. The building of a town was almost wholly (sic) his personal work.<sup>13</sup>

Even before his death, A.P.K. Safford enjoyed recognition in the form of a steamship named in his honor, the *Governor Safford* that—along with a smaller boat, the *Mary Disston*—operated between Cedar Keys and the Anclote River years before the Orange Belt Railway arrived. An October 1885 column that originally appeared in the *West Hillsborough Times* boasted that Anson's namesake steamer was even "fitted out with an electric light."<sup>14</sup>

Governor and Doctor Safford found their final resting place at Cycadia Cemetery. This graveyard garnered its name from the many cycads, or sago palms, originally

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<sup>12</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 6 January 1941, 6 January 1961; *Tampa Tribune*, 17 December 1891.

<sup>13</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 6 January 1961. The quote about the Arizona Territory resembling "a state of anarchy" appears at: <http://jeff.scott.tripod.com/GovSafford.html>.

<sup>14</sup> *Weekly Floridian*, 8 October 1885; Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 21-22.

planted along the path to the cemetery by women leaders in the community. Women who worked to improve the town's graveyard formed the Cycadia Cemetery Association circa 1884. During these early days, one of the women brought her mule and wagon to the homes of other members and shuttled them to the cemetery. The gravesites of Anson and Mary Jane Safford included large granite blocks that came by horse and wagon from their native Vermont. In February 1892, shortly after Anson's death, Soledad Bonillas Safford became the founding president of the Woman's Town Improvement Association (WTIA) of Tarpon. Although the cycads died in an early freeze, the women leaders of the WTIA maintained the graveyards as a civic endeavor for many years. The Tarpon Springs WTIA later became known as the Civic Club in 1906 and later the Woman's Club. Similar to their sisters that launched the St. Petersburg Woman's Town Improvement Association nine years later in 1901, these pioneer ladies tended to the town park (located at the intersection of Pinellas and Tarpon avenues), kept the streets clean (often with their own brooms), and also lit the city's early street lights each evening.<sup>15</sup>

Sometime between 1892 and 1900, a pavilion was raised at Cycadia Cemetery to recognize the large contributions of the "Little Governor." Built to the west of the Safford's tombs, this structure exhibits the Adirondack Rustic style's focus on natural materials and designs that became popular during the late 1800s and early 1900s, although not generally found as widely in Florida as in other areas. The cypress and pine trunks and planks support a roof that provided shelter for funerals and other gatherings at Cycadia Cemetery at a time when solemn ceremonies occurred at graveyards instead of funeral parlors. Although the "Safford Memorial" sign adorning this structure probably referred solely to A.P.K. Safford, residents certainly recognized the contributions of other members of the Safford family. A 1961 article in the *Tarpon Springs Leader* also mentioned the possibility that Soledad may have sponsored this memorial; no precise records about its funding or date of construction are known to exist.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *St. Petersburg Times*, 15 November 1999; Straub, *History of Pinellas County*, 164. Much of the information about the Town Improvement Association and its early leaders appears in an undated clipping from the *Tarpon Springs Leader* entitled, "Pioneer Women of Tarpon, A Series Written in 1924 By Helen A. Hennig." A copy resides in box 6, folder 12 of the Ivey Papers, USF St. Petersburg. An undated image of the Cycadia Cemetery plat appears as Image PR0663, Florida Photographic Collection, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee.

<sup>16</sup> Research by Stephanie Ferrell, located in the Heritage Village Library and Archives, discusses the architectural characteristics of this structure; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 19 February 1953, 6 January 1961, 19

Although their large gravestones made the Safford siblings notable early occupants of the cemetery, they were not the first laid to rest on the site. Many of the earliest settlers around Spring Bayou considered the mineral springs and climate as proof that the Lake Butler Villa lands offered an excellent site for a health resort. In his history of Tarpon, R. F. Pent included a story about how the cemetery received its first “customer.” Pent claimed that on one early evening in the mid-1880s, a man named Conolly argued with Major Marks at the Tropical Hotel on the intersection of Tarpon and Pinellas avenues. When Conolly left the room to get his revolver, Marks fled the building and ran away. Conolly ran out onto the darkened streets and saw a shadow approaching from Spring Bayou. Thinking he had noticed the silhouette of Marks, Conolly fired his weapon and the shadow fell to the ground. Rather than settling an argument with Marks, Conolly had instantly killed an innocent man named Cork who became the first person supposedly buried at Cycadia. According to Pent, residents circulated a cruel joke that Tarpon’s healthful climate required that “someone had to be killed in order to start a cemetery.” A 1921 interview with early resident L. D. Vinson supports Pent’s story of the shooting at the Tropical Hotel, adding, “Tarpon Springs is the best city this side of Heaven, for a lot of people refuse to leave here for Heaven.” Records of Cycadia burials maintained by the Pinellas County Genealogical Society call into question Pent’s lively tale by listing a C. L. Webster, a teenager who died in 1872, as the earliest burial and one that predated the formal establishment of the cemetery. Most sources agree that Viola Keeney Beekman donated the first official parcel for the cemetery in 1887.<sup>17</sup>

Sometime in the mid-1890s (after 1893), Soledad B. Safford married William Walwork Parkin (or Parken), a friend of her deceased first husband. Some records, including tombstones at Cycadia, spell his family name as “Parken.” A short while earlier, probably during the 1893 recession, Soledad had sold some of her inherited property along Spring Bayou and had the Safford home disassembled and moved approximately 100 yards from its original site to its present location, 23 Parkin Court, on

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January 1961. Longtime resident H. Joe Smith remembers seeing the pavilion when he arrived in 1900; earlier memories of the pavilion have not yet been located as of December 2003. Smith and his wife supported the preservation efforts of the Cycadia Improvement Association as late as February 1953.

<sup>17</sup> Pent, *History of Tarpon Springs*, 25-27; *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 22 April 1921, 19 January 1961. For a list created by the Pinellas County Genealogical Society, see: <ftp://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/fl/pinellas/cemetery/cycadia.txt>

a parcel of land slightly north of Spring Boulevard that was also part of Anson's original land holdings. Until Parken's death in July 1903, he and Soledad split their time between residences in Tampa and Tarpon Springs. Parken and his parents (Nicholas and Emily) occupy cemetery plots near Anson and Mary Jane Safford. The Safford House became a boarding home known as the "Ansonia," and later changed hands as a private residence until acquired by the City of Tarpon Springs in 1995 from then-owner Aldo Pelligrini. Restorations to this structure—the first building in Tarpon Springs to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places—continued during the late 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

Soledad Bonillas Safford Parken remained in Tarpon Springs until her death. In her later years, she married a cigar maker named Salvador F. Martin. She passed away in March 1931 without relatives to pay for a proper headstone. Placed in the family plot near the Safford Memorial Pavilion, her gravesite was marked by a simple wooden cross after her funeral. Termites and the rugged environment soon destroyed the cross, and for many years the burial site of this important community matron remained unmarked. By 1982, the Tarpon Springs Historical Society raised funds for a proper headstone, but—in a case of mistaken location—cemetery staff erected the marker at the wrong place. Rather than resting alongside Anson and Mary Jane, Soledad actually occupied a space on the other side of the Governor, between him and her second husband. In March 1990, the cemetery caretaker discovered the mistaken location of the headstone and finally put it in the proper place, nearly fifty-nine years after her death.<sup>19</sup>

### **Later Improvements to Cycadia Cemetery**

As president of the Lake Butler Villa Company, John K. Cheyney remained an important community leader in Tarpon Springs throughout the early twentieth century. His patronage of the Cycadia Cemetery allowed for its expansion by the early 1930s. In 1934, Cheyney deeded ten acres south of the cemetery for use as a park, and seven acres north of the cemetery for an expansion of the gravesites. By the spring of 1935, workers with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) cleared roots, stumps, and muck from the site. These New Deal laborers planned to dredge and create a lake in the

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<sup>18</sup> *St. Petersburg Times*, 30 June 2000; *Tarpon Springs Herald*, 12 April 1973; *Tampa Tribune*, 8 January 2000. See also: box 6, folder 12, Ivey Papers, USF St. Petersburg.

center of the parcel. By July 1935, the *Tarpon Springs Leader* reported that Cheyney had transferred additional lands between Tarpon Avenue and the Seaboard Air Line to the cemetery association. By one account, Cheyney's donations to the Cycadia Cemetery totaled nearly thirty-five acres by the summer of 1935. Officials from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) approved plans to continue the FERA's efforts by allocating \$3,525 in federal funds to convert this marshland to parkland.<sup>20</sup>

Other improvements to the cemetery and pavilion occurred after World War II. Similar to the transfer of Williams Park in St. Petersburg from that city's WTIA to the municipality in 1910, the ongoing maintenance requirements and the expansion of the grounds began to overwhelm the women who led the Cycadia Cemetery Association. By 1946, the association transferred title and management responsibilities to the City of Tarpon Springs. A non-profit Cycadia Improvement Association assisted city officials with projects at the facility, such as removing sandspurs and weeds, edging the lawn around grave markers, and fertilizing the grounds. During 1952, the Association spent \$292.75 to purchase fertilizer, chicken manure, and other materials, as well as to cover labor expenses. This organization welcomed contributions as its only funding source, and could claim donations of approximately \$306 for the year. By March 1955, cemetery officials formalized plans to construct a mausoleum on the site. Association members restored and repaired the Safford Memorial Pavilion circa 1960. In the late 1970s, city officials discussed the merits of using low-risk inmates from the Tarpon Springs Correctional Center as day laborers to provide supervised labor at the cemetery.<sup>21</sup>

### **A Moving Monument and Monumental Similarities**

Kendrick Ford, former director of Heritage Village, met Colonel Salley, a one-time member of the Pinellas County Historical Commission (PCHC), to discuss a possible move or reconstruction of the Safford Memorial Pavilion. At that time, in early 1979, Commission members had already considered the possibility of constructing a bandstand for public performances. Ford also asked Park Department employee Mike

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<sup>19</sup> *St. Petersburg Times*, 27 March 1990.

<sup>20</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 21 June 1935, 26 July 1935, 2 August 1935, 16 August 1935, 23 August 1935.

<sup>21</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 19 February 1953, 3 March 1955, 6 January 1961; *Safety Harbor Herald*, 6 October 1977.

Corba to examine the structure. Both Ford and Corba noted that eight decades of exposure to the Florida climate had rotted the cypress posts and weakened the pavilion. By the late 1970s, the wrought iron “Safford Memorial” sign had been removed and was kept in Salley’s garage. Given the structure’s marginal condition, the PCHC voted to reject Salley’s original plan to move the structure intact and instead ask the City of Tarpon Springs for permission to obtain the hexagonal stones from underneath the pavilion and the sign for Salley, and build a replica at Heritage Village. Over the next few months, Ford and Salley attempted to reach an agreement with the city’s attorney to move the hex stones and leave the pavilion at the cemetery. Salley placed the sign at the Tarpon Springs Museum by June 1979, and pledged that Heritage Village could use it for a replica structure. When PCHC members learned in the late summer that the Tarpon Springs Historical Society expected to keep the memorial at Cycadia Cemetery, members agreed that the proposed bandstand would serve the same purpose, and they suspended their pursuit of the hexagonal blocks and sign.<sup>22</sup>

Interest in preserving the Safford Pavilion resurfaced over the next two years. By the spring of 1982, Ford arranged for movers to transport the roof, benches, and hexagonal blocks from Cycadia Cemetery to Heritage Village. The structure arrived in pieces on 6 May 1982. Some funds for this project came from the Pinellas County Historical Society. Most of the cypress posts, like the wooden cross that once graced Soledad’s grave, had rotted beyond use. However, the delay in acquiring this structure fortuitously coincided with plans to develop Loehmann’s Plaza at the corner of U.S. Highway 19 and Coachman Road. Frank Mudano brought some cypress cleared from this shopping center construction site and workers used these new beams to replace the damaged supports during the restoration of the pavilion.<sup>23</sup>

The Safford Pavilion represents much more than a shady seat on the corner of the park: Its location near the Boyer Cottage and the Williams Park Bandstand replica seems quite logical—even if originally unintended—given the close connections between Joshua and Mary Ormond Boyer and the Saffords during the early days of Tarpon

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<sup>22</sup> Records of the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, 21 March 1979, 18 April 1979, 20 June 1979, 19 September 1979.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 May 1982; Interview of Ken Ford, former director of Heritage Village, by Stephanie Ferrell and Jim Schnur, 3 May 2003, Heritage Village, Largo.

Springs, not to mention the amazing similarities between John Constantine and Sarah Williams of St. Petersburg and the Saffords at the northern end of the Pinellas Peninsula. Both Anson Safford and John Williams sought healthier climates, and each man engaged in a notable amount of real estate speculation along the Pinellas frontier. While histories of St. Petersburg often credit “General” Williams as the father of that city for his work in securing the Orange Belt Railway, Governor Safford could easily claim a similar title for his footprints in early Tarpon Springs. These men died within a few months of one other, and Safford’s December 1891 obituary in a Tampa newspaper credits the “Little Governor” for his work in bringing the railroad to upper Pinellas in similar tones to the praise later heaped upon John C. Williams for brokering a deal to move the railroad from its planned destination at Disston City instead to his substantial holdings along Tampa Bay.

Striking similarities also existed between Sarah Williams and Soledad B. Safford, often considered the “leading ladies” of their respective communities. Each met their spouse along a borderland: Soledad, a native of Mexico, became Anson’s third wife during his time in Arizona, while John C. Williams of Detroit exchanged vows for the second time when he wed Sarah Craven Judge of neighboring Ontario. Both women maintained their civic ties and public activities and remarried after their much older husbands passed away. Just a few months after Anson’s death, Soledad became the first member of the Woman’s Town Improvement Association in Tarpon Springs in early 1892. Nine years later, Sarah joined the St. Petersburg WTIA as a charter member in 1901. Although somewhat coincidental, these connections reinforce how the similar efforts of early families—like the Safford and Williams clans—shaped life on each end of the Pinellas Peninsula.

As a final note, the Safford Pavilion offers just one of many tributes to this family. Residents of Arizona established a city named Safford, in honor of the third territorial governor. Schools in the region also bear his name. In April 1961, a century after the beginning of the Civil War, the Daughters of the American Revolution chapter at Cairo, Illinois, announced plans to erect a memorial to “Angel of Cairo,” the city’s “outstanding woman in the Civil War.” The bronze plaque placed on a red granite boulder in front of the city’s Safford Memorial Library honors Mary Jane as “first woman

in the West to organize Camp and Hospital relief.” In a town on the crossroads of many Civil War stories, the heroics of Mary Safford brought great pride to the community, just as she, Anson, and Soledad did once again along the shores of the Anclote.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Tarpon Springs Leader*, 20 April 1961.