



Historic Overview

The Local Historic District is comprised of two historic elements, the evolution of the Tarpon Springs as a winter resort and the development of the downtown. During the decade of the 1890s, Tarpon Springs was actually the largest city on the Pinellas Peninsula. Also during this time was the development of the area around Spring Bayou as a major winter resident for mid-western and northern millionaires hence, the nickname the “golden crescent”. The unique elevated topography along the banks of Spring Bayou influenced the placement of buildings creating an elegant residential district comprised of large Victorian era homes, many of which remain intact today. Many of houses along the bayou ornately designed boathouses, all of which are gone. Notable among the residences is the largest house in Spring Bayou, the Shingle style house built by George Clemson from New York, who made his fortune in hack saw blades. The Spring Bayou area contains a number of Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Frame Vernacular style houses, most of which have been well maintained. The “golden crescent” was also the focus of numerous events ranging from boat races to dramatic entertainment on floating stages. Today, the most significant event that occurs is the celebration of the Epiphany.

Naturally, as Spring Bayou became the winter residence of millionaire’s, the downtown evolved. Downtown in those days was situated along Tarpon Avenue between the city dock and the railroad station. In 1911, the Tampa and Gulf Coast Railroad linked Tarpon Springs and Tampa, with the new railroad station at the corner of Lemon and Ring Streets. Later, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Depot was constructed that is located at the corner of Tarpon and Safford Avenues and now home to the Tarpon Springs Historical Society. Many of the buildings constructed in the late 1900 teens and twenties still remain. Exceptional buildings include the G.W Fernald Building, the Old Tarpon Springs City Hall (now the Tarpon Springs Cultural Center), the Meres Building and the Shaw Arcade. The largest and most architecturally significant building is the Byzantine Revival style St. Nicholas Church, built in 1943.

The Local Historic District has two buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Shaw Arcade and the Safford House.