

Junior Docent Program



Historic Building Information

Table of Contents

Harris School Replica	3
Historical Themes	4
Time Traveler.....	4
Lowe Barn: Building a Bigger Barn	5
Sugar Cane Mill	5
Boiling Shed.....	5
Smokehouse	5
Lowe House and Barn: A Brief Introduction.....	6
Fire Station and Truck	7
McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin: Cotton, Cattle and Citrus	8
McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin: A Brief Introduction	9
G. W. Moore House: More Than A Farm Home	10
George Washington Moore House: A Brief Introduction.....	11
Plant-Sumner House: An Unknown Beginning.....	12
Plant-Sumner House: A Brief Introduction	13
Sulphur Springs Depot: All Aboard!	14
Sulphur Springs Depot: A Brief Introduction.....	15
Union Academy: A Hand-Me-Down School.....	16
Union Academy Schoolhouse: A Brief Introduction.....	17
Sponge Warehouse.....	18



Harris School Replica

Circa 1912

Who Was Harris?

William Harris and his wife, “Mamie,” raised their 6 children in the rural Lealman area of the Pinellas Peninsula in the early 1900s. William, better known as “Uncle Bill,” farmed citrus and later worked in real estate and banking. This civic-minded businessman also served as a school trustee for 14 years and a Pinellas County Commissioner from 1927 until his death in 1940.

A Truly Classic School

The structure you see today is a reconstruction of the original 1912 school building. As class enrollment grew, they “modernized” the school with flush toilets, a workroom and a larger blackboard. A windmill, used to pump water, stood at the back of the original school building in its rural setting. Construction on a replacement building occurred as the 1912 structure experienced overcrowding. During the 1924-1925 academic year enrollment in the “new” Harris School soared to over 100 pupils.

Pig Clubs

School Superintendent Dixie Hollins started “Pig Clubs” at schools in the mid 1910s. This taught students, including the Harris children, how to care for farm animals. The extra activities kept the children busy and focused during the lazy summer months.

School Sweets

Students in Pinellas, such as those at Bay View School, kept jars of sugar cane syrup with their names on them in the closet. They dipped bread, biscuits and sweet potatoes into the syrup as part of lunch.

Historical Themes

Time Traveler

This one room school house showcases Heritage Village's Historical Themes. These themes are displayed along the walls of the school and various artifacts are on display for the public to handle and discuss. Take a few minutes to travel back in time and examine the five exhibit banners. Each banner represents one of the following aspects of change over time in Florida and the Pinellas Peninsula and the various artifacts relate to one or more of these themes. Where would you place the train light? How about the whisk? After reviewing each item, decide where it should go and tell your group (if applicable), why.

Agriculture

- While Pinellas County has long been famed for its citrus, a variety of other crops and types of farming have contributed significantly to the area's agricultural heritage. By the 1870s, farmers in northern Pinellas were shipping high quality Sea Island cotton as well as growing sugar cane, cabbage, sweet potatoes, watermelons and oranges. Cattle and livestock played a significant role in Pinellas County. During the Civil War, the local "Cow Cavalry" drove livestock from the peninsula north, providing meat, tallow and hides to Confederate troops. In the turbulent years following the war, local ranchers sold cattle to Cuba. Agriculture – including hog, poultry and egg farming – declined steeply from the 1950s on due to post-war urbanization.

Tourism

- The mild coastal climate has long attracted tourists and seasonal visitors to Pinellas County. After the Pinellas peninsula was declared the "healthiest place in the world" to live at an AMA convention in 1885, settlers flocked to the area. Others made second homes here to escape the cold, northern winters and helped shape the community. Trains, automobiles and later, airplanes, combined with aggressive marketing and a spirit of boisterous boosterism, generated successive waves of tourists who enjoyed spring training, a myriad of roadside attractions and beautiful beach resorts. Today tourism and affiliated service industries continue to be vital to the Pinellas economy.

Community Life

- Pinellas County's long and storied history uniquely reflects the personal way major events and cultural shifts affect American communities. At the same time human activities and values reflect an adaptation to the particular physical environment, climate, geography, and flora and fauna of this area. Warm sunshine, a long growing season and beautiful beaches have historically attracted individuals and many cultural groups to settle in the area. Different areas of the county developed distinctive growing patterns leading to a diversity of lifestyles reflected in religious and educational institutions, social activities, occupations, landscapes, foodways and cultural traditions.

Transportation

- Transportation within the peninsula has changed drastically from those first few families that managed to hack their way through the Florida scrub. The schooners, and later the steamers, that sailed from Cedar Key carried mail and supplies to Pinellas communities and transported their farm products to market by water. The arrival of the Orange Belt Railroad in 1887 brought a new era of development and growth to the towns that the train ran through. While the railroad drastically opened up agricultural markets, the most significant development of the first decade of the 20th century in Pinellas was the coming of the automobile. The need for roads on the Pinellas peninsula, and Hillsborough County government's unwillingness to provide them, prompted the public to declare 'Independence' from Hillsborough and officially establish Pinellas County.

Coastal Living

- Over the years, the coastal waters of Pinellas County have served as a haven, a life sustaining force, a source of profit and a place of respite and relaxation for the people who lived here. Native Americans living along the many bayous and barrier islands feasted on the bountiful shellfish from local waters. Later, Cuban fishermen netted large catches which they shipped back to Havana. Some early settlers operated coastal shipping businesses while others engaged in boat building. Bahamian and Greek spongers helped turn Tarpon Springs into the "sponge capitol of the world." Improvements in transportation provided the impetus for the growth of the commercial seafood industry and also sparked a booming tourist trade. Vacationers and winter visitors were drawn to the warm gulf waters for sport fishing, sailing and other recreational maritime activities—which continue to attract visitors today.



Lowe Barn: Building a Bigger Barn

Circa: 1912

Wesley and Mary Lowe farmed a variety of crops in the Anona region, a community that grew up around Wesley's father's homestead. As their family business grew, so did the need for a larger barn. By 1911 the family replaced a smaller barn with the one now located at Heritage Village. Wesley's son Sumner recalled "handing wood up from the little barn to his father" as the family salvaged the best lumber for the new building.

The Lowes stored hay in the barn and they kept horses and cows. Sumner fondly remembered his father kept a horse drawn buggy and wagon in this barn before they purchased their first automobile.

Livestock in Largo?

Paul Randolph purchased the Lowe property in the late 1940s for cattle and horses at the Randolph Farms. As late as the 1960's, his cowhands herded cattle to nearby pastures from the barn across the quiet and little traveled Indian Rocks Road. The original site of the barn is now part of the Randolph Farms Condominiums.

Building Nuts & Bolts

Wesley Lowe used cypress lumber, a rot resistant wood, as the foundation for this functional structure. The new owner Paul Randolph added the stables and pens on each side of the barn.

Sugar Cane Mill

Patent Date: November 25, 1890

Sweet Success; Dizzy Business

To extract juice from the sugar cane plant, workers fed stalks in between the two rollers and caught the crushed cane as it came out. The cane juice flowed from the grinder into a huge barrel. They rolled the full barrel to the boiling shed and emptied into a cast iron kettle. Then they cooked the juice down to make sugar cane syrup.

Boiling Shed

Kettle Manufactured by Kehoe's Iron Works, Savannah Georgia

Delicious Treats from the Heat

This structure resembles many boiling sheds found along Florida's west coast during the late 1800s and early 1900s when sugar cane was a supplemental cash crop. Farmers harvested stalks of cane and ran them through a sugar mill to extract the juice. They boiled the juice to make sugar cane syrup. A fire at the back of the shed, tended with a long rake, swirled heat around and under the kettle of syrup making an even temperature. The longer the syrup boiled, the thicker it became. It takes 10 gallons of sugar cane juice to make 1 gallon of syrup.

Smokehouse

Originally built in 1898 in Largo

A Cure For Meat

Before grocery stores or reliable refrigeration, rural families preserved or 'cured' their meat or fish in smokehouses. While the meat was still fresh, they covered it with a salt based seasoning, about 6-8 pounds of salt per 100 pounds of meat. Then they placed the seasoned meat in the smokehouse where a fire burned at the back. The process took anywhere from a few days to several weeks depending upon the thickness of the meat. When it was done, the meat or fish had a brownish crust.

Lowe House and Barn: A Brief Introduction

Construction Information

- The home, a board and batten structure, largely the work of Wesley Lowe, contained pine and cypress. The two-story building certainly stood out along “The Narrows” and in the Anona area after its construction in 1888.
- The barn, constructed in 1912, replaced a smaller barn that once sat on the Lowe property. Some of the wood may have come from an earlier structure.

History of Occupants

- The Lowe family, led by Captain John T. Lowe, came to the area by the late 1850s. A native of the Bahamas born in 1830, John Lowe’s ancestors had previously lived in the Carolinas and other British colonies. As Loyalists during the American Revolution, some probably fled to East Florida, then to the Bahamas. John Lowe came with family members to Key West as a child in 1840. He married Laura Meares, a native of Nassau. Members of the Lowe and Meares families helped to establish the Anona settlement and lived in the Seminole/Largo area near “The Narrows” of Boca Ciega Bay. The families came to the area from Key West. Captain John Lowe had made frequent trips along Florida’s west coast between Key West and Cedar Keys.
- During the Civil War, some members of the Lowe family fought in distant battles for the Confederacy, while those who remained on the homestead suffered the effects of the Union blockade (the “Anaconda” Strategy).
- Lowe and his children (especially Jefferson T. Lowe and Wesley Lowe) played an important role in the development of the Anona settlement. Younger son Asa M. Lowe would later become a business leader in the Tarpon Springs community.
- Wesley Lowe and family lived in the structure until the 1930s.
- By late 1940s, Paul Randolph and Hugh Ford acquired the property. Shortly after this transaction, with Randolph planning to demolish or remove the structure, Maurice and Corinna Lowe Condrick acquired the house. Corinna was a granddaughter of Capt. John T. Lowe and daughter of Wesley. As a young woman, Corinna taught in Tarpon Springs schools and spent a lot of time with her uncle, Asa M. Lowe. She married Maurice Condrick and moved to southern St. Petersburg.
- The Condricks had the Wesley Lowe House dismantled (numbering each piece) and reconstructed on a tract of land at 800-37th Street North in St. Petersburg (a block south of the St. Petersburg Public Library’s main branch).
- After the Condricks died, the structure was given to the St. Petersburg Historical Society. The Society, with limited funds and a tight deadline, was able to have the structure moved (in one piece) to the Haas Museum complex near Central Plaza in 1970. The house remained at that site until it was moved to Heritage Village.



Fire Station and Truck

Frances

The American La France fire engine, nicknamed 'Frances', went into service at the Belleview Hotel in 1917. Imagine a hotel with its own fire truck! The self-sufficient hotel, one of the largest structures on the Pinellas Peninsula, had its own water system, police and fire protection. Frances was a sentinel protecting the extravagant wooden hotel until 1934. Capable of pumping 375 gallons of water per minute, this top-of-the-line truck carries a 30-foot extension ladder, searchlight, locomotive bell with clapper and an electric siren horn.

Saving Frances

The hotel gave Frances to the town of Belleair in 1934 where she helped fight fires for 30 years. Several individuals and groups cared for Frances, but by 1979 a retired fire captain rescued her from a junkyard in Tarpon Springs and spent the next 7 years restoring her to original condition. She went 'home' to the town of Belleair for about 10 years before coming to Heritage Village.



McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin: Cotton, Cattle and Citrus

Circa: 1852

James and Elizabeth McMullen built this 1½ story log cabin near Alligator Creek, part of present day Clearwater. They raised livestock and farmed, growing a variety of crops including cotton. Their cattle ended up on dinner plates throughout the South and even Cuba. The McMullens pursued opportunities during the turbulent years following the Civil War by selling cattle to Cuba where the economy was stable. By 1869 the family manufactured syrup barrels and held sugar cane grinding parties. Later they converted their cotton fields into citrus groves.

Why Did The McMullens Come?

In 1841, 18-year-old James Parramore McMullen, suffering from ‘consumption’ or tuberculosis, gathered his bedroll, gun, horse and dog and left his southern Georgia home. He regained his health while living alone on the Pinellas Peninsula. Later he returned to his family homestead in Georgia and recounted stories of this place to his 6 brothers. It would be another 7 years before he came back to upper Pinellas, but this time it would be with a wife and a determination to make this area home. They persevered even in the aftermath of the Second Seminole War (1835 – 1842) when skirmishes continued in the region for years. Between 1851 and 1871, one by one, the 6 brothers followed James to Pinellas.

Building a Community

The McMullens were more than farmers. In the 1870s, miles from their home and farm, they created the Bay View settlement at the place where farmers loaded livestock onto boats in Tampa Bay. Always the entrepreneurs, they soon added a store and hotel. In the years that followed the family, including James, his 6 brothers and their children, helped shape the future of Pinellas as visionary community leaders, business developers and politicians.

A Rugged Pioneer Woman

Elizabeth Campbell McMullen, a Hernando County native, was probably the first midwife in the area. By 1900 this cabin witnessed the birth of nearly 60 children, including many of the extended McMullen family. During the Civil War, Elizabeth protected the family homestead and raised their children while James served with the Confederate Cow Cavalry. For nearly 20 years, this was the most substantial home in the Upper Tampa Bay.

McMullen-Coachman Log Cabin: A Brief Introduction

Construction Information

- Exact date of construction remains unknown, though it was built no later than 1852. Most family sources place 1852 as the year of construction, though other sources mention earlier years. It was possibly the second (or later) structure occupied by the McMullens, who had certainly established some sort of shelter shortly after the time of their arrival on the peninsula.
- Captain Jim's family—along with some slaves from the area—cleared the land and constructed the house.
- This double-pen log house has pine logs originally joined by pegs rather than nails.
- Large open porches, a broad stairway, and excellent ventilation (including openings between some of the pine logs) made it easy for James P. McMullen to overcome bouts with consumption (tuberculosis). He wanted cracks “large enough to throw a cat through” to get sufficient fresh air.
- The upper story had its own breezeway. Much of the original furniture was made from nearby materials (including the Spanish moss mattresses).

History of Occupants

- Captain James P. McMullen and wife Elizabeth were first owners of the cabin. Throughout the late 1800s, the cabin became an important gathering place for many members of the McMullen clan. James homesteaded on a 240-acre land grant. He spent a great amount of time in and around upper Tampa Bay and operated the first formal school on the Pinellas peninsula.
- Elizabeth was a midwife for many women in the area. She worked on the fields during the Civil War. When marauders threatened them during the war years, Elizabeth and her children spent some time at a fort in the Keystone area, where—according to family history—she patrolled the fort with musket in hand.
- The Coachman family purchased the cabin and surrounding lands in 1901. Members of the Coachman family came to the area from Georgia, though some came to Polk County by the 1880s before moving to the Pinellas peninsula. The Coachmans lived in the cabin through the 1920s (sometimes using it as a summer camp or storage area), and constructed other buildings on the property. A freshwater well was located adjacent to the cabin.
- By the time the Coachmans acquired the structure, it needed some maintenance. Windows had shutters, but no glass. The Coachman family filled the cracks between the logs. They added a kitchen and dining room, as well as a large back porch. With the assistance of McMullens, they located some of the original furniture and in February 1936 the Clearwater chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated the cabin as an historic structure. A bronze plaque was placed on the front wall at that time.
- The Coachman family allowed members of the public to visit the cabin by the mid-1930s. A “congenial hostess” often greeted each visitor by giving them a glass of orange juice and describing—much like a docent—life along the Pinellas peninsula during the early years. After World War II, the structure was closed to the public. For awhile, members of the Coachman staff used the space for their work duties. By the late 1960s, the Coachmans used the cabin as storage space.



G. W. Moore House: More Than A Farm Home

Circa: 1875

George Washington and Frances Moore left Kentucky in 1875 to follow his parents to the Pinellas Peninsula. They built this house next to his parents' plot of land – just east of Stevenson Creek. George, a blacksmith and machinist, and 'Fanny' had 5 children. The family grew vegetables, cultivated citrus and other fruits while also raising cattle and hogs that roamed freely.

Citrus – The Florida Gold Rush

Cotton, the primary crop in Pinellas during the 1870s, gave way to citrus groves. The Moores were among the first in the region to grow oranges and grapefruit. With the arrival of the Orange Belt Railway in 1888, the Moores were in a position to move citrus quickly from their packing plants to distant markets. Their agribusiness thrived until 1910 when they sold the land.

Florida Cracker Style

This native pine home typifies the average farmhouse of the late 19th century. The original two-room home had full porches on the front and back – a welcome relief from the heat prior to air conditioning. They converted the back porch into two rooms and built an additional room along the front porch. Commonly known as the Florida Cracker style, the home's design follows the Gulf Coast Cottage style found along the coast in the Deep South. Look for the original two rooms.

Yellow Fever Hits The Moores

In 1887 George Washington Moore traveled to the small town of Tampa on a business trip where he contracted yellow fever and died. This deadly virus, spread by mosquitoes, ravaged many Florida communities during the 1880s. The Pinellas Peninsula escaped an outbreak because of its sparse population and geographic isolation from the rest of Florida.

George Washington Moore House: A Brief Introduction

History of Site before House was Built

- The parcel where this house once stood was part of a land grant from the Armed Occupation Act of 1842.
- George Washington Moore's original home, built on his homestead in 1875, probably burned down. The house at Heritage Village was the second house built by Moore in the Clearwater-Dunedin area.

Construction Information

- This Florida "Cracker" house, a Gulf Coast cottage, is built from native pine. The structure has board-and-batten exterior siding.
- The structure originally had only two rooms with open porches on the front and rear. When occupants required additional living space, they enclosed the rear porch and part of the front porch. These additions transformed the structure into a five-room house, with a room that could be used as a kitchen. An outhouse used as the bathroom also came to Heritage Village from this original property.

History of Occupants

- George Washington Moore was born in 1845, the year Florida became the twenty-seventh state, in Bedford, Virginia (now part of West Virginia). He met wife Francis A. Meador while living in Virginia and had two children while living there. He arrived in the Pinellas peninsula in 1875 and established his residence in the Clearwater-Dunedin area. His three younger children are natives of Dunedin. His father also came to the area in 1875. Both George Washington Moore and his father died in the same year, 1887.
- In 1879, he built the Moore House near the present location of Highland Avenue and Sunset Point Road. Though census records of the 1880s note his occupations as blacksmith and machinist, he also started an orange grove and cultivated crops.
- During this period, landowners operated under the "open range" system that allowed their cows, hogs, and other animals to roam freely.
- While on a business trip to Tampa in 1887, Moore caught yellow fever and died there shortly thereafter. Although the epidemic left Tampa under quarantine, only two Pinellas peninsula residents (including Moore) died from the outbreak.
- Son Moffet W. Moore played an important role in the Dunedin business community for many years. His jobs included making cement blocks, operating a feed store, delivering ice, making ice cream for commercial sales, manufacturing cigar boxes, operating the Dunedin cemetery, and engaging in real estate. He helped to organize the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce on 18 February 1926.
- It is believed that a member of Arthur Lewis Duncan's family brought grapefruit from the Odet Philippe plantation to cultivate in the Dunedin area by the 1890s.
- Daughter Effie married Arthur Horace, an entrepreneur who developed Clearwater Nurseries (with his twin brother, Albert N.) and served as postmaster at the Keene post office.



Plant-Sumner House: An Unknown Beginning

Circa: 1896

This building has a mysterious history. It is very similar in style to houses built by the railroad magnate Henry Plant. He built the luxury hotel, the Belleview, and some believe Plant's supervisors, either from the railroad or the hotel, lived in the house.

The building dates to the mid 1890s and few homes on the Pinellas Peninsula could then boast the modern conveniences of this otherwise modest middle class home. This seven-room home had electricity, running water and an elaborate bathroom. It received running water from the hotel's waterworks, which predated Clearwater's city water system.

A More Likely Story

In 1912 Robert and Julia Sumner purchased and then moved their family into this home. Robert, a busy and versatile family man, was a Methodist minister, dairy farmer, occasional veterinarian and postmaster for the town of Belleair. The Sumner children came of age in boom-era Pinellas, choosing college and careers over chasing cows. In the mid 1950s, Calvert and Pauline Whitehurst lived in the house. Calvert walked across the railroad tracks to his job at the West Coast Fruit Company owned by the Kilgore family.

Middle Class Farmhouse

This homestead – style house is a middle class suburban variation of the farmhouse. Check out the four brick fireplaces and the 7-foot tub – they are in their original condition.

Plant-Sumner House: A Brief Introduction

History of Site before House was Built

- Located near Henry B. Plant's Belleview Hotel (now the Belleview Biltmore).

Construction Information

- Probably built in 1896 with modern amenities for its time (running water, indoor plumbing, electricity). Exact pedigree of the structure still uncertain.
- Similar in construction to the Plumb House, another "Plant" House bought and moved by the Plumb family.
- Modern kitchen and side porches added to the structure by 1930s.

History of Occupants

- By many accounts, the home originally served as a home for the railroad supervisor responsible for trains coming from the Clearwater city depot to the Belleview Hotel.
- Robert Sumner, a minister who came to the area from Maitland, moved into the home with his family in 1912. Sumner served as the postmaster, a dairy farmer, and a minister in the area.
- A member of the Whitehurst family lived in the house from the mid-1950s until the early 1970s.

Significant Events/Activities

- While living in the house, the Sumners kept several cows on their property and sold some of the milk to neighbors. The 1910 census notes that Sumner had owned a dairy farm while living in Maitland.
- By 1920, Sumner served as Belleair's postmaster.

Moving of the House to Heritage Village

- This house became the first structure brought to Heritage Village.
- Vandalism at the park during its early days (late 1976), led to the erection of the fence around the park's perimeter. There was concern about damage to Plant-Sumner and Seven Gables, the only two structures on the site at that time.
- The house had deteriorated to the point that it required both reconstruction and restoration. Many parts of the house were "built" in the mid-1970s to replace areas where termite damage and other deterioration had required demolition.
- In February 1977, volunteers from the Junior League of Clearwater painted the house. Work on restoring and rebuilding Plant-Sumner was almost finished by the fall of 1977.



Sulphur Springs Depot: All Aboard!

Circa: 1920s

Before railroads came to Pinellas, settlers traveled by foot, buggy, on horseback or by boat. The state's first railroad ended at Cedar Key, nearly 100 miles north of the Pinellas Peninsula. In the 1880's, Russian immigrant Peter Demens launched his Orange Belt Railway in Pinellas and Henry Plant brought his railroad to Tampa. Business ventures and tourism flourished after regular railroad service came to Pinellas. It improved efficiency in transporting crops and other goods to distant markets and bringing people here to enjoy the climate.

A Crew's Quarters

In the 1940s staff at the Auburn & Syracuse Line Railroad in New York came up with the idea for a caboose. The last car of a freight train, the caboose housed the crew and the conductor's office. The 5-member crew included an engineer, fireman, conductor and 2 brakemen. The conductor, who rode in the caboose with the brakemen, was the boss on the train. Riding up front, the engineer drove the train and the fireman kept it fueled.

During the early years of steam power, brakemen manually stopped each car as the train slowed to a stop. By the 1870s, with the invention of automatic air brakes, their duties shifted to include flagging signals to the engineer. With advancements in technology, including computers and radios, today's freight train crew only requires a conductor and engineer. The caboose, once a proud symbol of our national railroad system, is becoming extinct.

Sulphur Springs Depot: A Brief Introduction

History of Site before Structure was Built

- Located along railroad property adjacent to Temple Terrace Highway, now Busch Boulevard. Sulphur Springs was a northern suburb of Tampa at the time.
- Although built many years after the Orange Belt Railway arrived along the Pinellas peninsula in 1888, this station signifies the importance of the Orange Belt, as well as the contributions of Henry Flagler, Henry Plant, and other railroad operators during the late 1800s and early 1900s to settlement along Florida's peninsula.
- Even with the arrival of the Orange Belt, people demanded direct rail service between Tampa and Tarpon Springs by September 1890.

Construction Information

- Only major structure at Heritage Village that originally was built outside the boundaries of present-day Pinellas County.
- Constructed at a time (early 1920s) when railroad transportation was an easy way for many visitors to come to peninsular Florida. The "good roads movement," tin can tourist camps, and the creation of automobile clubs encouraged travel after World War I and fueled the land boom.
- Work on rails to the Sulphur Springs extension began in May 1908.
- The Tampa and Gulf Rail Lines opened by 1910.
- This 1155 square foot station reflected the architecture found in many early Florida depots. Rail travel reached its peak during the 1920s, the period that this station (identical to the Yulee station in design) received its heaviest traffic. Emphasis was placed on utilitarian purpose rather than aesthetic design.
- The station also reinforced social customs and traditions of the period, as noted by separate waiting rooms and facilities for white and "colored" patrons.

Significant Events/Activities at the Structure and in the Surrounding Community

- The arrival of the railroad increased migration to the Pinellas peninsula by connecting many small communities to one another and to the outside world.
- Before the railroad, land routes proved difficult to travel (especially during wet summers) and most delivery of goods and services occurred through water transport between Tampa, Cedar Keys, or Key West.
- Before 1912, a lack of adequate transportation funding from Hillsborough County officials emboldened many residents along the Pinellas peninsula (then known as Western Hillsborough) to seek independence. While this station served residents after Pinellas became a separate county, the earlier battles over "good roads" and better transportation continued to dominate headlines.



Union Academy: A Hand-Me-Down School

Circa: 1915

This building, probably built as a World War I barracks, was a portable classroom at the all white Tarpon Springs Elementary School for about 20 years. In 1942 school officials moved the building to the Union Academy campus, the established elementary school for ‘colored’ students in Tarpon Springs. While there, the flexible building served as a classroom, cafeteria and home economics room for more than 20 years.

Separate But Unequal Education

By the end of the Reconstruction era in 1877, laws required racial segregation throughout the South including Florida. Schools for black children lagged behind their white counterparts. Black students attended shorter terms, occupied crowded classrooms and used outdated textbooks, discarded from white schools. Tarpon Springs had a one room school for African American children and by 1917 the class size swelled to 73 students. To relieve overcrowding, officials approved and built a new four-room structure named Union Academy on a small plot of land where classes began in 1919.

Better Boys

In 1964 school officials improved the Union Academy campus. Leaders in the black community purchased this building and moved it down the street to become home to the “Better Boys Club” for 15 years. Heeding the club’s motto: “Building Boys is Better Than Mending Men,” club leaders nurtured African American boys and teenagers who gathered here when few organizations welcomed them. By the late 1970s, the deteriorated structure was an eyesore with few remembering its once important role in the community.

Union Academy Schoolhouse: A Brief Introduction

History of Education in Tarpon Springs before Structure Arrived at U.A. Campus

- A simple wooden structure for white schoolchildren began operating in Tarpon Springs by the 1880s. A small “Negro school” served African American children in Tarpon Springs before Union Academy opened in 1919.
- Original Union Academy campus opened at a time of great racial hostility in Florida; within a few years, brutal attacks and lynchings took place in Ocoee, Perry, and Rosewood. Violence by the Ku Klux Klan increased during the 1920s.
- Despite the “separate but equal” provisions of case law and court decisions (including the 1896 judgment in *Plessy v. Ferguson* by the U.S. Supreme Court), a wide racial disparity existed in school facilities, teacher salaries, general funding, and length of school terms for African American schools.
- Many white educators and public officials believed that any educational opportunities for black children should fall within the areas of training for agricultural and domestic service. They often cited Booker T. Washington’s emphasis on practical and manual skills as a proper path for black students.

Construction Information

- Built circa 1915, possibly as a barracks or other government building. Moved to all-white Tarpon Springs Elementary as an early portable classroom by 1926. Similar structures were often considered “chicken coops” by students of the time.

History of Use

- Used at Tarpon Springs Elementary through the 1941-1942 school year.
- In August 1942, the school board authorized the relocation of two portables from Tarpon Springs Elementary to the Union Academy campus for \$400. This building was one of the two moved near the corner of Oakwood (Wall) and Grosse.

Significant Events/Activities at the School

- Excellent source of school events and extracurricular activities gleaned from the “Negro” news pages and columns of the *Tarpon Springs Leader* (especially those written by U. A. teacher Ruth Lambright) and the *St. Petersburg Times*, as well as occasional columns in the *Florida Sentinel (Bulletin)*.
- With the opening of Pinellas High School in Clearwater in 1954, school administrators planned to move upper grades (7th and 8th grades) from Union Academy. Parents and others protested this move, which came at the same time the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown* decision had invalidated the notion of “separate but equal” education as way of segregating the races.
- By the mid-1960s, the structure moved to Grosse Avenue and Morgan Street and became home to the “Better Boys Club,” a club for children that used art, athletics, and other activities to provide a nurturing, supportive environment for young black men.

Moving of the Structure to Heritage Village

- Concerned residents in Tarpon Springs, along with county officials and staff at Heritage Village, came together to rescue the structure and have it moved to Heritage Village.
- The building arrived in poor condition, with extensive termite damage and numerous alterations that made many of its original features (i.e., location of exact window outlines, etc.) difficult to detect.



Sponge Warehouse

Built: circa 1930

A Warehouse Near The Gulf

Around 1930 Drosos Alahuzos opened a wholesale sponge business in this wood frame warehouse, part of his family's Philadelphia based business. After his death in 1955, another Philadelphia sponge dealer, George Kousaleos with the Gulf of Mexico Sponge Company, purchased the warehouse. He conducted business from there until the mid 1970s. Both the Alahuzos and Kousaleos families came to America from Kalymnos, known as "sponge divers' island," one of a chain of Greek islands in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Sponge Capital

John Cheyney, a Philadelphia native formed the Ancloite and Rock Island Sponge Company in 1891. He purchased land on Bailey's Bluff where hookers brought their sponge harvests to process and sell. Always the entrepreneur, in 1896 Cheyney hired John Cocoris, a Greek immigrant and sponge buyer to improve productivity in his company.

In 1905 Cocoris brought the first sailing and motor sponge diving boats to Tarpon Springs while actively recruiting nearly 500 sponge divers from Greece. Along with the divers came their families and friends creating Tarpon's unique community with its Greek culture, services and amenities. Soon Tarpon Springs became known as "The Sponge Capital of the World."