

12-1-1979

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Tampa Morning Tribune

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### Recommended Citation

Tampa Morning Tribune (1979) "All About Fair Arcadia," *Tampa Bay History*. Vol. 1 , Article 10.  
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol1/iss2/10>

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## ALL ABOUT FAIR ARCADIA

### *EDITOR'S NOTE*

In the spring of 1897, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* offered readers vignettes of smalltown life on the west coast of Florida. Reporters were sent to write stories dealing with then such villages as Clearwater, Ozona and Fort Meade. This article, which highlights Arcadia, was featured in the July 21, 1897 issue of the *Morning Tribune*.

The beautiful little town of Arcadia is situated on the Bartow and Punta Gorda division of the Plant System, about fifty miles south of Bartow, and twenty-seven miles north of Punta Gorda. It is the county seat of DeSoto county, one of the richest and finest orange-growing counties in the state, and which is also famous for the cattle industry also is sufficient to support the entire population of the county in ease and luxury. However, some of the largest and finest orange groves in the state are found within a radius of a few miles from Arcadia; and this year it is estimated that between 30,000 and 40,000 boxes of the fruits will be shipped from this point. Last year the shipments aggregated 13,000 boxes, which should be proof sufficient that the old sweet seedling trees were but little damaged by the cold wave of 1895. Of course, the young budded groves suffered some from the unusual cold, but it would now require an expert to detect that any damage at all had been done, even to the young budded groves.

To demonstrate that confidence in orange culture has been restored here the writer was shown a fine grove which was sold little over a year ago for \$15,000 and which is now valued at \$60,000, and could not be purchased from the present owner for that sum.

The town of Arcadia is situated on one of the prettiest sites in the state; it is high, dry and rolling, and is said by the settlers to be one of the healthiest localities in Florida.

The city officials are: Mayor Jon. L. Jones; city clerk, Dr. Ed. Green; city attorney, Charles Forrester; marshal, R. F. Richard; collector and assessor, Dr. Ed. Green; city council: T. J. Sparkman, F. Marquis, H. L. Holzendorf, Marion Waldron, W. H. Seward.

The population of the town is about 800, and is composed of the wealthiest and most progressive citizens of DeSoto county.

The mayor, Mr. Jon. L. Jones, is serving his second term, having been re-elected last December.

Sheriff O. H. Deshong, made famous by his recent escapade in New York City, where he so successfully guyed the city and county officials of the metropolis is one of the bravest and most efficient officials in the state. Mr. H. E. Carlton is the efficient clerk of the court. Judge A. E. Pooser is judge of the county court. Tax assessor, N. C. Larsen; tax collector, N. M. Sauls; county treasurer, S. E. Whidden; county solicitor, C. W. Forrester; county physician, Dr. C. H. Smith; county commissioners: J. M. Bourland, chairman; Geo. W. McLane, Wm. King, C. Jones and S. L. Avant.

Preparations are now being made for the establishment of a county high school. However, Arcadia now has an excellent grade school. The school trustees are: John L. Jones, chairman; T. J. Sparkman, secretary and treasurer; and F. M. Waidron.

Arcadia is well supplied with houses of worship and large church congregations. Rev. R. H. D. McRae, pastor of the Methodist congregation. The Episcopalians have a small but devout congregation, but have no resident rector, though services are regularly held once a month. The Sabbath schools are all in a flourishing condition.

In fact, Arcadia and DeSoto county have about gotten rid of the lawless element, and the criminal branch of the courts now have but little business to attend to. The jail is almost entirely empty, and cattle stealing is a thing of the past.

Judge Ziba King, who is, in fact, as well as in name, the cattle "King" of DeSoto owns at least 50,000 heads. Judge King also has one of the prettiest and finest residences in Arcadia. He is also a large land owner and has two or three flue orange groves.

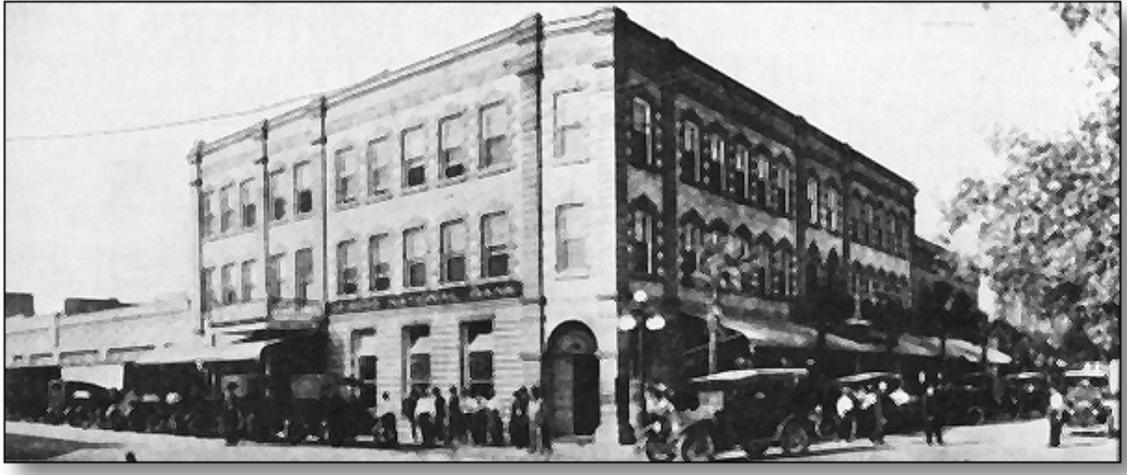
Mr. T. J. Sparkman is one of the old land-marks of DeSoto county, he having resided near Arcadia for the past twenty years. He declares he never saw so severe a freeze as the one which visited the county in '95, nor does he expect another such a severe frost in the next fifty years. Mr. Sparkman is proprietor of one of the largest and most substantial general merchandise businesses in the county. His building is 90x40 feet, in which he carries a \$20,000 stock of dry goods, grain and general merchandise. He also owns three or four large bearing groves near Arcadia, besides a large stock of cattle.

Other extensive orange-growers, who own groves near Arcadia are: Judge King, L. H. and Mrs. Newton and Thomas Parker, Col. Watkins, whose grove will yield about 5,000 boxes of oranges this year, James McBride, R. C. Hendry, Joe Mizell, J. L. Jones, W. H. Sharpe, C. C. Pearce, W. E. Carlton, H. E. Carlton, J. J. Singletary, Dr. B. B. Blount, Dr. Ed. Green, and Dr. C. H. Smith, the latter three being, also prominent practicing physicians, W. H. Seward, S. L. Swindall, F. Marquis, J. G. Slaven, L. L. Morgan, and others too numerous to mention.

The DeSoto Abstract Company, under the efficient management of Mr. J. L. Jones, is one of the solid institutions of the town.

The Peace River Phosphate Mining Company, is on the town line of Arcadia, about one mile from the court house, and is operating in full blast day and night, and is one of the best paying phosphate mines in the state. The Peace River Phosphate Mining Company owns its own railroad from the mines to Liverpool, Fla., on Charlotte Harbor, at the mouth of the Peace River. The road is well equipped with first-class engines and rolling stock.

The DeSoto Real Estate Agency, managed by Mr. J. L. Jones, is doing a prosperous and growing business. Mr. Jones has for sale some of the finest improved and wild lands, orange groves, truck farms, etc., to be found in South Florida. The prices are reasonable, considering the desirability of the property offered.



**Downtown Arcadia**

(courtesy of USF Special Collections).

The Arcadia Wagon Works are owned and managed by Mr. L. L. Morgan, who ships the vehicles of his make to all points in South Florida.

Messrs. R. Whidden, S. E. Whidden, C. Y. Crawford, T. O. Parker, L. H. Parker, J. J. N. Parker, W. W. Langford, W. H. Hooker, and others have fine bearing groves within a radius of a few miles of Arcadia.

The principal merchants of the city are: T. J. Sparkman, Joe Mizell, C. J. Miller, general merchandise; E. T. Smith, hardware; S. L. Swindall, general merchandise; R. L. Holzendorf, groceries; F. S. Gore, groceries; W. H. Seward, general merchandise; G. A. Nash. & Co., dry goods; Mr. Miller, general merchandise; F. Marquis, harness, shoes, cutlery, etc.; T. Gaskins, racket store and confectionery; H. L. Timmerman, racket store; W. H. Ford, groceries and confectionery; T. O. Grant, livery stable; W. F. Espnenlaub, city market.

The leading attorneys-at-law are: C. W. Forrester, J. H. Treadwell, W. H. Cobb, O. T. Stanford, C. C. Morgan, S. F. Fletcher, etc.

The principal hotels are: The Cottage, Mrs. H. Patterson proprietress. This house is pleasantly and conveniently situated, near the passenger depot, post office and court house; and is one, of the best kept hotels in South Florida. The rates are reasonable, being only \$1 per day or \$5 per week, and the table is supplied with every luxury that can be procured. The rooms are large and cool, and the beds clean. The cuisine is first class. The Arcadia House, Mrs. L. V. Craig, proprietress, offers rates of \$2 per day. The Oak Street boarding house, kept by Mrs. J. E. Pucket, is also a very pleasant place to stop at.

Mr. W. H. Seward, dealer in general merchandise is comparatively a newcomer here, having removed from Brooksville two years ago, but he has succeeded in building up a large and rapidly increasing business.

The dry goods and grocery house of S. L. Swindall was only established in Arcadia about one year ago, but he has resided in the county about nine years, and has won the confidence and respect of the entire community.

Mr. J. J. Singleton, the popular and efficient county surveyor, is a brother of Maj. M. T. Singleton, the original phosphate miner of DeSoto county and former superintendent of the Peace River Phosphate Mining Company. Mr. J. J. Singleton was at a time assistant superintendent of the company, and has succeeded in winning the confidence and respect of all with whom he came in contact.

Mr. W. H. Sharpe conducts a first-class tonsorial parlor, and numbers among his friends and patrons all of the leading citizens of the town and county.