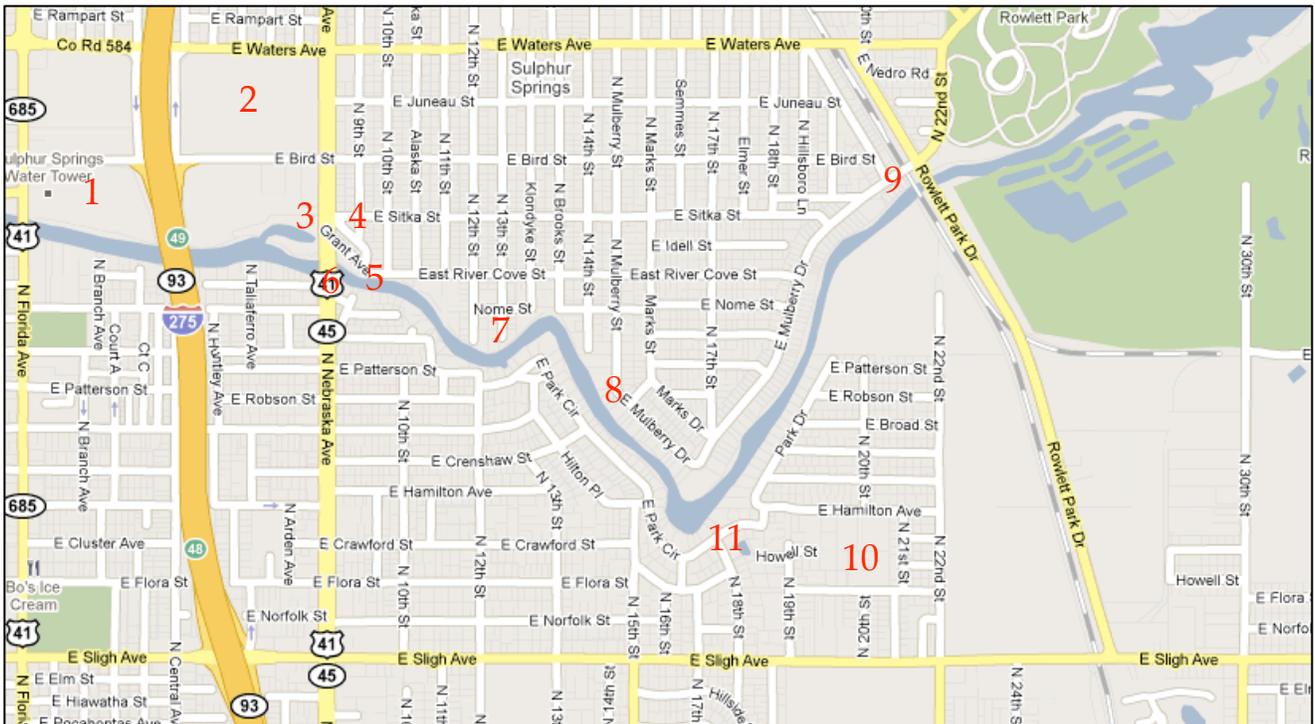


Sulphur Springs

MUSEUM AND HERITAGE CENTER

Sulphur Springs Heritage Trail Self-Guided Tour



Refer to this map to help you find your way as you tour through historic Sulphur Springs. Each number noted on the map corresponds to the stop number in the list of sites. The route we laid out for you is just a suggestion for how to easily navigate the community, but feel free to explore Sulphur Springs in your own way! Many more structures than the ones listed here are historic in nature. This heritage trail represents only a small sample of the unique flavor of the neighborhood. Enjoy your trip through history, and happy exploring!

Stop #1

Sulphur Springs Water Tower and Park 401 East Bird Street

Background:

Easily seen from Interstate 275, this tower you see here is arguably the most recognizable landmark in the community. Built in 1927 by Grover Poole, the tower was originally designed to supply water to the tourist resort that Josiah Richardson built around the natural springs of the area. Richardson built a pool complex and arcade all designed to attract visitors to the area. The tower, designed in a Mediterranean style, stands at 225 feet and is resting on a foundation of solid rock that extends 45 feet underground. Rather than building the tower of blocks of concrete, the Sulphur Springs Tower was made of concrete that was poured into the form of the tower, so the tower is one large piece of continuous concrete! The upper portion of the tower houses the water tanks, which could hold around 125,000 gallons of water, while the bottom portion housed a series of seven floors, each with a room for entertaining visitors. A local legend tells that the Sulphur Springs Water Tower stands on the site that housed a nautical lighthouse in the 1600s that served to guide mariners up the Hillsborough River in search of natural springs with which to refill their supply of fresh water. In the 1970s, the site was home to the Tower Drive-In Theater, and its accessibility led to a great deal of graffiti and vandalism. The tower was pressure washed and painted with graffiti-proof paint in 1989. Though no longer in use, the tower stands as a reminder of the historic tourist industry in the area and as a symbol for the entire community. The City of Tampa now owns the Sulphur Springs Tower and the 13 acres surrounding it, and renamed the area River Tower Park.

Stop #2

Former Site of the Sulphur Springs Arcade (Now the Tampa Greyhound Track) 8300 N. Nebraska Avenue

Background:

Originally built between 1925 and 1927, the Sulphur Springs Arcade was once dubbed by Ripley's Believe it or Not as the nation's first mini-mall. Financed by Josiah Richardson and fashioned in a Mediterranean style, the Arcade boasted a bakery, barbershop, pool hall, liquor store, grocery, two pharmacies, a furniture and appliance store, jeweler, a five and dime store, post office, sheriff's office, jailhouse, bank, lawyers' offices, and a loan officer. In addition, the second story housed 39 hotel rooms, 14 apartments, and office space. This multi-use building was a great tourist and community resource until the 1930s, when a terrible flood and the effects of the Great Depression proved too large a financial obstacle for Richardson to overcome, and he was forced to sell the Arcade. J.T Hendrick Estates bought the Arcade, and it continued to be a useful and convenient resource until the 1970s. In 1974 J.T Hendrick Estates sold the Arcade to the Tampa Greyhound Track, and despite community outcry for its preservation the Arcade was demolished in 1976 to make way for the track you now see before you.

Stop #3

Sulphur Springs Pool Complex 713 East Bird Street

Background:

Sulphur Springs is named after a natural spring, and the Sulphur Springs pool complex was fed by that natural spring. Long before the pool complex was built, Native Americans used the spring as a healing site. In the mid-1800s the spring gained in popularity as a healing site for tourists. The perceived healing capabilities of the waters stemmed from the strong sulphur smell that naturally rose from the spring. In 1906, Josiah Richardson purchased the area that would become known as Sulphur Springs, and he built a toboggan slide, high dive, bathhouse, and gazebo in the hopes of attracting tourists. He even brought in sand to make a fake beach along the water to make the site more appealing. In 1916, admission to the pool was only a nickel, and as you can see from the photograph of the pool taken in the early 1900s, the pool was a very popular destination. It was also the site of a great deal of civil disobedience, as African Americans from the Springhill neighborhood often snuck into the pool, which was not open to them during segregation. After segregation, the entire community enjoyed the pool complex until it was closed in 1986 due to contamination of the natural spring from sinkholes and storm water runoff. A new pool complex was built around the original pool site in 2000, but community residents still look back with fondness on the place where many spent their formative years playing and swimming. The pool is now owned and operated by Tampa Parks and Recreation.

Stop #4

Springs Theater 8029 N. Nebraska Avenue (Corner of Nebraska and Sitka)

Background:

Built in 1938, the 300-seat Springs Theater is a wonderful example of art deco-style architecture. Built as part of the larger tourist complex that included the pool complex, the arcade, and the hotel, the Springs Theater functioned originally as a theater space for live plays, and later as a movie house. During segregation the theater was not open to the African American portion of the community. After its run as a movie house, the Springs Theater has served a number of functions, including an auction house, a venue for adult movies, and the home of Beacon Press. The theater is currently privately owned and houses an audio and graphic design firm, and the owners allow the theater to be used as a church on Sundays.

Stop #5

Former Site of the Bank of Sulphur Springs
8003 N. 9th Street

Background:

This small brown and blue building was once the site of the Bank of Sulphur Springs. The history of this bank can be seen as paralleling the history of Sulphur Springs as a whole. Built in 1923, around the same time the Arcade was also built, the bank was established during what can be seen as a period of rapid growth in Sulphur Springs. However, the rapid growth was cut short by the combined effects of a terrible flood of the Hillsborough River in 1933 and the Great Depression. Sadly, the bank closed a short 10 years after it opened, and those who had invested money with the bank lost all their holdings when it closed.

Stop #6

Harbor Club
915 East Grant Street (corner of Grant and Nebraska)

Background:

The building now known as the Harbor Club was once the clubhouse for the Tourist Club. The Tourist Club was founded in 1937 by a group of Michigan and Ohio tourists. The building served as the group's clubhouse until 1984, when the group's membership dropped too low to maintain the clubhouse. The building was renamed the Historic Harbor Club, and was opened as a restaurant.

Stop #7

Carriage House and Hotel
7801 N. 13th Street (right at Hillsborough River)

Background:

Though portions of this building have been changed over the years, and a few additions have been made, most of this building's exterior was built in 1928 by the Whitley family. The family lived downstairs and rented out the second floor on a daily or weekly basis to visitors to Sulphur Springs who were here to take in the healing waters of the spring. The second story boasted 6 rooms and a communal bathroom, and the rear of the house offered guests a wonderful view of the Hillsborough River.

Stop #8

Sulphur Springs Log Cabin

1617 East Mulberry Drive (right along river)

Background:

Built in 1924, this building displays some of the creative and arguably whimsical architecture to be found throughout Sulphur Springs. Be on the lookout for other creative buildings as you travel along the Hillsborough River!

Stop #9

Sulphur Springs Railroad Bridge

Train Tracks going over Hillsborough River where Rowlett Park Drive crosses river

Background:

This bridge was built around 1912 by the Seaboard Airline Railway, which is now CSX Construction. The bridge is still in use as a railway, and for any bridge enthusiasts, this bridge is a riveted 5-panel Pratt truss

Stop #10

Robles Family House

2604 East Hanna Avenue

Background:

Horace Theodore Robles (1860 - 1935) was the seventh of ten children born to Joseph and Mary Ann Robles, early pioneers of Hillsborough County who came to Florida in 1832. Horace built the house you see before you in 1888 with the help of his father. He was a dairy farmer and cattle rancher, and his products sold under the brand 32 Robles. Many descendants of the Robles have played important roles in the development of Hillsborough County. This house remained in the Robles family until March 2000 when it was sold to the Grand Oaks Apartment Complex, and the building now serves as their leasing office. It is for the Robles family that Tampa's Robles Park is named.

Stop #11

Tolle Parsonage-Coombs Log Cabin

Stop #11

Tolle Parsonage Log Cabin
1822 East Park Circle

Background:

Built in 1925 by Dr. D.F. Tolle, the Tolle Parsonage Cabin is the only known historical structure to be constructed of wood framing with an exterior material of seasoned Cypress logs and a roof designed to mimic old-time thatching (you'll notice that the shingles wrap around the eaves to cover the edge of the roof). Dr. Tolle was a pastor who ministered in several different Tampa churches throughout his career. Many Sulphur Springs resident recall Dr. Tolle using the cabin and grounds as for local church gatherings, weddings, and as an outing for Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops. The grand live oak in the front yard is known as Tolle's Tree, and it has served as a directional marker for those navigating the river for years.

We hope that you have enjoyed your trip down the Hillsborough River
to see some of the historic sites of Sulphur Springs!

Please visit us on the web often! We are always adding new and exciting information
and community resources.

www.sulphurspringsmuseum.org

