

## THE HISTORY OF THE NATURAL MINERAL SPRINGS SAFETY HARBOR RESORT AND SPA

***Safety Harbor Resort and Spa*** is one of America's oldest and finest spa resorts. Guests have been enjoying the curative mineral waters and tranquil waterfront location on Old Tampa Bay since the turn of the century.

Through the years Safety Harbor has been known as the Florida destination where *"healing waters flow."* Indian shell mound builders inhabited what is now the Safety Harbor area almost 2,000 years ago, followed by the Tocobaga Indians and eventually the Seminoles. These early residents believed the mineral springs held mystical powers to help perpetuate youth and heal the sick.

In **1539** Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto reached the shores of what is now Old Tampa Bay, and discovered five natural springs. Believing he had found the legendary "Fountain of Youth" somehow missed by Ponce de Leon, De Soto established a camp here, naming Safety Harbor's mineral springs Espiritu Santo Springs, or "Springs of the Holy Spirit."

Around **1855** Colonel William J. Bailey, who had been stationed in the area during the Second Seminole War, purchased the springs and the surrounding land from the government, becoming the first person to own the springs after the U.S. bought Florida from Spain. He named the land "Bailey by the Sea," but visitors called the natural springs "Worth's Harbor" or "Green Springs." The name Green Springs evolved thanks to crippled farmer Jesse Green, who was able to "throw away his crutches and resume plowing his fields" after taking the waters over the course of a year.

In the **early 1900's** Safety Harbor became known as the *"Health Giving City"* and five different springs were identified for specific healing properties (Beauty Springs, Stomach Springs, Liver Springs, Kidney Springs and Pure Water Springs). The legendary curative powers of the springs began attracting health-conscious travelers, and the Water Tower Pavilion and other wooden structures at the end of what is now Safety Harbor's Main Street became local landmarks. Locals and out-of-town visitors alike helped themselves to the springs, and the water itself was bottled in five-gallon jugs and shipped around the world.

The "Great Florida Land Boom" of the **early 1920s** found Captain James F. Tucker and his wife Virginia, prominent local entrepreneurs who had taken over the mineral springs, promoting the Safety Harbor community's well-situated and undeveloped lands. The pair formed the Espiritu Santo Springs Corporation and began developing the springs area in the eastern section of town, constructing The Safety Harbor Sanitorium (also called Espiritu Santo Springs), two pavilion buildings to replace the wooden structures destroyed by a 1921 hurricane. They also built the Espiritu Santo Springs Hotel located directly across the street (later known as the St. James and today the Harbor House), providing overnight accommodations for guests traveling to "take the waters" at the sanitorium.

Barth's Baths also provided sleeping rooms, and was located on what is now the resort's parking lot. Promotional pieces encouraged guests to "visit several times a year, to relieve nervous hypotention, irritability and sleeplessness, to forestall the onset of colds, flu and body aches...to visit the Sanatorium is to bestow upon yourself the gift of health brewed by the Great Chemist."

**In 1936**, the Tuckers sold the springs and sanatorium for back taxes to Dr. and Mrs. Alben Jansik. Under his personal supervision, Dr. Jansik restored the resort to a new glory, building a 45-foot by 95 foot swimming pool through which 8,000 gallons of spring water flowed daily. Tourist literature of the time highlighted the resort as "a Florida haven for those in search of health, recreation and rest." Soon wealthy families and celebrities including the Great Houdini, department store founders F.W. Grant and Russ Kresge, the Seagrams of Canada, and the Ebbets (Ebbets Field) family of New York, began to visit from around the globe.

**In 1945**, Dr. Salem H. Baranoff bought the springs and sanitorium, turning it into a health spa and opening accommodations directly connected to the spa to overnight visitors. Dr. Baranoff extolled the benefits of naturopathic medicine combined with the therapeutic properties of the mineral water. His partnership with two other physicians in 1950 turned the resort, known then as The Safety Harbor Spa, into a modern health center offering massages, mineral and steam baths, health foods and hot packs.

**In 1952**, Dr. Baranoff's interest in the Spa was purchased by Dr. Richard Gubner. A wide array of improvements was made to the Spa over the next forty years, including fully-equipped diagnostic facilities, full medical staff, baths, hydrotherapy and massage staff, solaria and an art studio.

Recognized as a historical landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior in **1964** and a Florida Heritage Landmark in **1997**, Safety Harbor Resort and Spa remains one of the most comprehensive spa and fitness centers in the country. Today the springs serve as the primary source of water for the resort, used in the pools, restaurant, and, of course, the spa.

***As we celebrate over 60 years as a resort spa, we invite you to rejuvenate yourselves in the waters of Safety Harbor Resort and Spa.***