

moving into the Joshua Creek area, they became members of Mt. Moriah Baptist Church. J. W. Whidden was a delegate from Mt. Moriah to the South Florida Baptist Association meeting at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Hernando County in 1875. At the fifth annual session of the Manatee Missionary Baptist Association, convened at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church in November 1880, J. W. Whidden, R. C. Hendry, I. A. Redd, Maxwell Whidden and Henry Langford were appointed an executive committee.

John W. Whidden took an active interest in politics. In 1876 he was Representative from Manatee County. On June 15, 1878 Governor Drew appointed him Lieutenant Colonel of the 6th Regiment of the 5th Brigade of the State Militia. A Democrat, he served in the Assembly (the name given the House of Representatives under the old constitution) from Manatee County 1881 and 1883. He was a member of the Senate from Manatee County in 1885 and 1887. He represented the 27th District in 1893, 1895, 1901 & 1903. On December 12, 1888 he was appointed by Governor Perry as a delegate to represent Florida at the Southern Interstate Immigration Convention held at Montgomery, Alabama. From Tallahassee, May 9, 1887, Senator Whidden wired his wife's cousin, Capt. Francis A. Hendry, in Fort Myers: "Your county bill has just passed the House of Representatives. You now live in the county of Lee." Senator Whidden sponsored the bill which created DeSoto County from Manatee County on May 19, 1887.

On Dec. 6, 1886 at the time Arcadia was incorporated, J. W. Whidden, James D. Haygood and T. J. Herndon were chosen by the 31 qualified voters, present, as the managers of the election. Previously, a meeting at the Whidden store had decided at the suggestion of Col. C. D. Douglas to rename Tater Hill as Arcadia, which Rev. James M. Hendry had in the summer of 1884 unofficially named the area in honor of Arcadia (Albritton) Coker, daughter of Thomas H. & Frances (Waldron) Albritton. The legalization of Arcadia was necessary as the town had been promised a post office and postal officials had written to ask that a name be sent.

After the formation of DeSoto County, most of the people felt a new county seat should be chosen in place of Pine Level. J. W. Whidden, L. Parker, J. N. Parker and W. E. Daniels on July 7, 1888 gave bond to the county commissioners for the completion of a courthouse at Arcadia, according to plans to cost not less than \$3,000 provided Arcadia be elected as the permanent county seat. After Arcadia was selected in the October 1888 election, the county commissioners in Dec. 1888 appropriated an additional \$3,000 and awarded a contract to Peyton A. Read to construct a courthouse. J. W. Whidden was a member of the building committee which accepted the completed courthouse on June 5, 1889.

After his retirement from cattle ranching, John put in most of his time in his bay head garden (now Lake Katherine), near the river. He walked to town to get his mail, and when he would get to town he would take a seat under the "Tree of Knowledge" and discuss the topics of the day. He remained a live factor in politics and betterment in the county in the way of Churches, schools, good roads & other improvements.

Capt. John Whidden was commander of DeSoto Camp 1403, United Confederate Veterans. Other members included: M. R. W. (Judd) Albritton, Sam Avant, Tom Bates, Everett Barnhill, Ed Carney, Frank Cooper, Math Giddens, Frank Hagan, Jim Hampton, Britt Keen, Humphrey Keen,