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## Tampa Historical Society Annual Report

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# *Tampa Historical Society*

## ANNUAL REPORT

November 76 ANNUAL DINNER  
NOV. 30: Mr. James A. Williams, internationally known interior designer and antique dealer, owner of Mercer House in Savannah, gave a talk and slide demonstration on restored historic houses. Tony Pizzo presented our D. B. McKay Award for distinguished contribution to Florida history to Mr. Harris Mullen, owner of the renovated Ybor Square. The dinner was held at the Palma Ceia Golf and Country Club.

SAVANNAH'S 3rd NATIONAL LANDMARK: THS President Bettie Nelson and husband Burt, attended the gala opening of Scarborough House, completed in 1819 by William Jay, famous English architect, now the new headquarters for Historic Savannah Foundation. Tours of historic houses, sites and structures were on their agenda, plus meetings with Historic Savannah Foundation members to learn ways and means of their success. Tampa has no historic house museum.



**MRS. BETTIE NELSON**  
President, Tampa Historical Society

FRANCIS BELLAMY POSTAL COMMEMORATIVE STAMP: THS set up a booth at FLOREX 76, Nov. 5-7, at the 27th annual exhibition-convention of the Florida Federation of Stamp Clubs, gaining signatures to renew a 36 year old request (our Bicentennial request) to honor this little noted national hero who wrote an original American Doctrine, the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. Chairman Martha Turner and many THS volunteers helped. Many outstanding community and government leaders have written letters of support and inquiry as to why the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee has consistently refused to honor Francis Bellamy, and Channel 8 granted us an interview. THS is still hopeful that his house in Tampa will be, named to the National Register of Historic Places as we have requested.

PRESERVATION OF OLD FLORIDA STATE CAPITOL: THS documented public support for its preservation and use by mailing questionnaires to our membership who sent them to Tallahassee. THS Chairman Victor Yates spoke for its at a Tallahassee public forum, and Hampton Dunn spoke on Channel 13 for it.

December 76 WARD/TALIAFERRO HOUSE: Preliminary exploration of ideas with people and organizations continued. The Board of Directors of the Junior League of Tampa, Inc., expressed interest in our project, with further recommendations presented to their membership for approval.

BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND FIREARMS: THS, contributed old photographs and artifacts to the opening of their national Bicentennial Museum in Washington, D.C., Dec. 17, 1976.

January 77 BURDINE'S EXHIBIT: THS participated in their antique sports display with the loan of our Tampa Tarpon Tournament oil painting.

GALA RE-OPENING OF THE HISTORIC TAMPA THEATRE: THS served on the Renovation Sub-Committee, and also our members helped mend the beautiful old tapestries for re-hanging on the walls.

FLORIDA STATE FAIR: Chairman Lois Latimer solicited and collected rural and agricultural historical artifacts for THS, to loan to the Fair Authority for opening of the brand new location. Thousands of people viewed them in the reconstructed pioneer farm room at Old MacDonald's Farm Building, and THS members were guides.

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January 77 SULPHUR, SPRINGS: After the demolition of their historic arcade, THS supported the plan for a paved walkway, small brick retaining wall, restored gazebo, native plantings and a strolling, picknicking area, and requested some of the artifacts from the demolished arcade be used in the little park as a token of past heritage.

TAMPA BAY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL; ANNUAL MEETING: THS requested top priority for passage of protective legislation for historic areas, structures, or sites that will stand up in court, and legislation designed to make it desirable for citizens to invest their time and money into recycling, revitalizing areas or structures that represent our historical heritage. This issue paper was presented to our legislators.

February 77 THS INAUGURAL HISTORIC BUS TOUR: THS, members researched, documented facts, compiled our first Historic Bus Tour in conjunction with the opening of the Junior League of Tampa, Inc. Decorators' Showhouse II at the historic Stovall Lee House, Bayshore Blvd. Tour Chairman was Leslie Osterweil.

PROGRAM AT JUNIOR LEAGUE OF TAMPA, INC.: Glenn Westfall, historian, author, lecturer, THS Board member, gave slides and a talk on West Tampa historical heritage and architecture, while Bettie talked on purposes in our charter and THS accomplishments.

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK: Dr. David G. Wright, representing the Director of the National Park Service and the Secretary of the Interior, presented the official certificate and bronze plaque formally recognizing the old Tampa Bay Hotel as a National Historic Landmark at a dedicatory ceremony and reception. THS officers were invited.

March '77 MANATEE HISTORICAL SOCIETY: Tony Pizzo, THS Board member, spoke before this group on the early history of Tampa, and received for the THS a beautiful cobalt blue and gold hand painted plate of the old Tampa Bay Hotel.

April '77 TAMPA BOARD OF REALTORS Asked THS to participate in their contest "Rewards for Restoration" in connection with Private Property Week using qualifying structures built before 1927, partially or completely restored, and in current use.

NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Florida members of this national organization chartered by Congress met in Tampa to hear Mr. James Biddle, President, speak at the restored Tampa Theatre. THS participated in "Show and Tell: What's happening in Florida", a slide presentation of current activities, and as tour guides for the restored Anderson Frank House.

THE MUSICALE AND FEDERATED CLUBS BUILDING, THS was invited to the 50th Anniversary reception honoring dedicated women who built this grand old structure at 809 Horatio St. For better culture and training of youth, as well as adults, and for the betterment of their community.

HISTORIC GORRIE SCHOOL: THS supported the renovation of this, 1899 Tampa landmark elementary school with letters and speakers. (On Aug. 16, 1977 the School Board voted to go ahead with renovation plans.)

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC ZONING: THS served on this committee whose purpose besides preservation is to provide enhancement and adaptive re-use of structures and areas having historical significance. Tampa, for the first time, will soon have Historic Zoning which has long been-needed.

April '77 MAJOR ITEMS PURCHASED AND DONATED TO THS: Emily Moody purchased a Victorian sofa and Nonita Henson purchased the matching chair at the Chiseler's Annual Thieves Market held at the University of Tampa.

"CHINA FOR THE WEST": Mr. David Sanctuary Howard, internationally known lecturer and author on Chinese porcelain, was sponsored for the University of Tampa and THS through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert G. McKay.

**TAMPA CIGAR INDUSTRY APPRECIATION LUNCHEON:** THS President was invited to attend this event sponsored by the Cigar Manufacturers Assoc. of Tampa because industry is closely connected with the economic, social, and political history and growth of Tampa. The Honorable Sam Gibbons was guest speaker.

**WARD/TALIAFERRO HOUSE:** Since June, 1976, THS tried to lay groundwork for the acquisition, restoration, and preservation of this beautiful house, listed on the National Register for Historic Places. On Dec. 28, 1976, the Board of Directors of the Junior League of Tampa, Inc., directed the Community Research/ Project Development Committee to develop a project which would assist THS realize its goal, the acquisition and utilization of the Ward/Taliaferro House. We documented community support with letters from leading Tampa citizens and spent hours talking with others, applied for a grant from Community Development Funds 111, appeared before City Council several times. Our grant was defeated 4-3 because it was not considered "endangered". The Board of THS agreed to turn its attention elsewhere for the time being because THS alone could not shoulder total financial responsibility for Tampa's first public historic house museum. Many THS volunteers devoted much of their time on this project.

**May '77 HISTORIC OAKLAWN CEMETERY RAMBLE:** \$15,000 had been allocated by the City of Tampa to restore old brick wall around the cemetery. Celebrating National Historic Preservation Week, Theodore Lesley, County Historian and THS, Board member, compiled facts on Tampa families and historical figures buried there for THS volunteer tour guides to give the public who came to tour this Historic Site. A plat of the 1850 cemetery was on display, the Florida Light Guard performed a drill, refreshments were served, oral history tapes were made, and donations were accepted to purchase a bronze historical marker to be erected there on Morgan Street. Also on display was the first brick made from an exact duplicate mold that the City of Tampa is restoring the old brick wall with.

**MANATEE VILLAGE HISTORICAL PARK:** THS President attended a May 18th meeting of the Manatee County Historical Society held at the restored Old Church which was the Meeting House of the oldest Christian Congregation south of Tampa. She saw a slide presentation of how this church, and the Old Courthouse (oldest standing original county courthouse building in the State as per State Archives) were moved to the site to begin their Historic Park. Tampa has no such historic park.

**June '77 YBOR CITY STATE MUSEUM:** THS President, working as a member of this Board of Advisors, attended the June 28th ground breaking ceremonies for the area's first state museum at the old Ferlita Bakery in Ybor City.

**July '77 HERITAGE PARK:** Located at 125th St. and Walsingham Road, Pinellas County. The St. Petersburg Times reported in their Nov. 14, 1976 issue about Heritage Park where preservation of a generous slice of area history for this and future generations is underway. On Sept. 11, 1977, THS President attended a special Preview Reception of its opening. Four historic structures were moved to the site (two houses, a log cabin, a barn) by the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Pinellas County Historical Society,

and numerous private individuals, businesses, organizations, government, by their generous donations. Tampa has no such historic park.

August '77 THS HISTORIC BUS TOUR: This August 13th tour was to provide a public service, with any proceeds going to THS to carry on its activities for the community since we have not engaged in fund raising. Our tour includes historic sites in Hyde Park, University of Tampa, Downtown Tampa, Ybor City, Davis Islands, Bayshore Blvd., Ballast Point. The tour was very well received, even receiving reservations from Bradenton and Lake Wales. Tour Chairman was Dot Jeffery. We made a lunch stop Dutch Treat at the newly opened Rough Riders Upstairs Dining Room at Ybor Square.

Sept. '77 "YOUR PROPERTY \_ MY HERITAGE": Producer Gary Englehardt fulfilled the terms of his grant and we received this audio-visual slide presentation for THS library. THS President was asked to speak before the Pinellas County Historical Society on Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> and show this informative slide program.

October '77 THS MUSEUM COMMITTEE: Leslie McClain, Chairman, met with THS Museum Committee for several field trips to observe appropriate sites and structures for our museum /headquarters.

November '77 THS HISTORIC PARK: THS Board of Directors voted to try to acquire a smaller architecturally significant house in Hyde Park as the beginning of our museum/headquarters, with the long range view of an Historic Park in a larger area.

## **MRS. BETTIE NELSON WINS BURDINE'S VOLUNTEER AWARD**

Bettie Nelson, energetic president of the Tampa Historical Society, continues to get widespread recognition for her community work.

Latest honor comes from Burdine's who presented her the 1977 Volunteer Activist Award on behalf of the National Center for Voluntary Action and Germaine Moneil which sponsor the Volunteer Activist program.