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FROM THE EDITORS

Some of the most perceptive accounts of American society have come from foreign observers. Travellers from abroad have depicted life in the United States with both admiration and criticism. Journeying from countries with deeply entrenched institutions and traditions, foreign commentators have been fascinated by the qualities of boundless energy, sense of destiny, and optimism mingled with naiveté, materialism, and ruthless competition that have characterized this relatively young nation. Our understanding of the American character has been enhanced through Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's glowing description of the colonies on the eve of the American Revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville's penetrating analysis of the Jacksonian Era, Lord James Bryce's critical commentary on the Gilded Age, and Alistair Cooke's insights into the contemporary political and social scenes.

This issue and succeeding ones will carry articles by foreigners touching on aspects of the Tampa Bay region. We are starting off with a study tracing the development and underlying meaning of Tampa's best known cultural tradition: the legend and celebration of Gasparilla. Authored by André-Marcel d'Ans, a French Professor of Anthropology who recently taught at the University of South Florida, this article is a condensation of a longer work that he has written in French. The journal also includes a diary of an Englishman who visited St. Petersburg around the turn of the twentieth century and recorded his memories of the leisurely sailing trip he took to Manatee County.

The remainder of this issue contains our regular features. A photo essay recalls the exciting years of the 1920s when boom times hit the Sunshine State. About the same period, E. A. "Frog" Smith was working on railroads and in sawmills along Florida's west coast, and this prominent Fort Myers folklorist recounts his experiences in an interview. For those who began to explore their roots after reading the last issue, we offer some more hints in the genealogy section.

With this edition, *Tampa Bay History* completes its second year and embarks on a few changes. While the journal will continue to be based in the Department of History and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, we will finance publishing costs out of funds derived from the sale of subscriptions. Thus, it becomes more important than ever for our friends along the Suncoast and elsewhere to rally behind *TBH*. Spread the word about us, and remember that gift subscriptions make wonderful Christmas, birthday, anniversary, and graduation presents.

As we look forward to our third year, we would like to welcome to our editorial staff Lou Pérez, who previously served on the advisory board, and Cathy Bayless, a 1980 graduate of Furman University in South Carolina, who is presently working toward a Masters Degree in History at USF. All of us will strive to keep *Tampa Bay History* flourishing for the future.
COMMUNICATIONS

Any correspondence pertaining to the articles, reviews and other material contained in the journal may be sent to the Managing Editor.

Dear Editors:

On page 36 of the Spring/Summer 1980 issue you identified an automobile in the Hernando County Court House as a Model “T” Ford.

Please note that it is a model “A” Ford. The “A” had wire spoke wheels and a split front bumper, whereas the “T” had wooden spoke wheels and no bumper because of a crank start.

Old, old man
John Friend
Tampa, Florida
THE LEGEND OF GASPARILLA:
MYTH AND HISTORY ON FLORIDA’S WEST COAST

by André-Marcel d’Ans
Translated by Marie-Joèle Ingalls

In Tampa, Florida, the legend of the Spanish pirate José Gaspar is the basis of a colorful festival every February. Members of the local business elite, disguised as pirates, arrive on a galleon, land, and take the city to sack it. The festival ends with a parade in which all the authorities of the city escort King Gasparilla and his Queen. The royal couple is elected for the occasion by members of “Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla,” a very exclusive club which organizes the festival and the social activities that revolve around it. On the route of the pageant, the pirates of Gasparilla’s crew, cigars in mouth, openly drinking and firing thousands of blank shots in the air, throw handfuls of fake gold coins, plastic pearl necklaces, and empty cartridge shells among the spectators at the parade. Children and adults alike jostle each other to get hold of these mementoes. Behind the festival lies a recurring debate about the historical authenticity of the pirate José Gaspar.
Condensed to its most simple outline, the legend of José Gaspar can be briefly summarized. José Gaspar was born in Spain in 1756. Intelligent and brave, cultured and gallant, he became a naval officer. He enjoyed a brilliant career until the day when, taken with hatred for Spain, he mutinied, stole a ship, and left for the Gulf of Mexico to become a pirate in 1783.

Two different versions accounted for the sudden disenchantment of José Gaspar with Spain. In a first “historical” interpretation, Gaspar, at the age of twenty-seven, served as a lieutenant on the Floridablanca (named after the prime minister of the time) and narrowly escaped from a defeat inflicted on the Spanish fleet by the English. Mortified by the defeat, disappointed by his decadent motherland and weaned of his ambition to build his personal glory in its service, Gaspar decided to seek his own wealth and fame in piracy. He convinced most of the crew to share his destiny and ordered the death of the ship's captain and of others who refused to enter his plot.

A second, more “romantic” version, gave José Gaspar a troubled childhood and a much more precocious officer’s career. At the early age of twelve, he kidnapped a young girl for ransom. He was caught, but since the judge gave him a choice between going to prison and entering the Naval Academy, he naturally chose the latter. At the academy, his intelligence and his skill with weapons were a marvel. At age eighteen (in 1776), he became a midshipman in spite of the fact that he had previously seduced the niece of the academy’s commander. Shortly thereafter, he accomplished fabulous feats against the Barbary pirates of Tripoli. Soon a captain, he fought victoriously against the pirates of the Caribbean, captured many, and had them hanged in Havana. He became admiral of the Atlantic Fleet and then in 1782, naval attaché at the Court of
Charles III. The king’s daughter-in-law, the Sicilian Maria-Luisa, fell madly in love with him, but he rejected her for a beautiful lady of the Court. Full of spite, the princess formed an alliance with the prime minister, Manuel Godoy, and accused Gaspar of the theft of the crown jewels. Charles III, misled by false evidence, was about the have the handsome officer arrested when Gaspar heard about it, escaped, took charge of a band of escaped convicts, stole a ship and entered piracy, driven by the dream of taking revenge on the Spain that had so unjustly treated him.²

In all versions of the legend, this marked the turning point. In 1783, having become a traitor and a pirate, José Gaspar gave the name of “Gasparilla” to himself as well as to his ship and the island in Charlotte Harbor, on the west coast of Florida near Fort Myers, where he established his den.

For thirty-eight years, from 1783 to 1821, Gasparilla and his crew scoured the seas around their hideaway. They attacked merchant ships, accumulated a fabulous treasure and killed without mercy all the crews, with the exception of a few sailors, whom the pirates drafted to replace their dead. The passengers of the captured ships were all put to death, except for young and beautiful women who were taken to the pirates’ den and kept as slaves and concubines until the time when, having ceased to please or having been replaced by a fresher catch, they were beheaded. Occasionally, other women passengers of high rank and wealth were spared and held for ransom on a nearby island, later named Captiva Island for that reason.

Following this general outline many tales have been told about Gasparilla’s numerous exploits, but a constant thread runs through the various stories. Despite his bloodthirsty deeds, this ferocious pirate did not cease to display qualities reminiscent of his other nature, that of a gallant, cultured gentleman who admired beauty. Although manifested in all the versions of his exploits, this feature stands out in one episode where Gasparilla captured a princess, fell in love with her, was rejected by her, and in the end put her to death.

This particular episode also has two versions. In the first one, Gasparilla captured on a Spanish vessel the illegitimate daughter of Queen Maria-Luisa of Bourbon and of her lover, Minister Manuel Godoy.³ Haughtily scorned by the daughter of his Queen, Gasparilla killed her in a moment of ferocious spite. But immediately overwhelmed by a sweet and remorseful melancholy, he took her in his arms and buried her with his own hands in the sand of the beach.

In the other version, the daughter of a Mexican Viceroy, Josefa de Mayorga, assumed the role of the captured princess. With the same haughty contempt, she rejected the courteous advances of the pirate even though he treated her royally and put all his treasures at her feet. Finally, Gasparilla was convinced by his men to order her death, but he remained inconsolable. Useppa Island, in the vicinity of Gasparilla Island, perpetuates the memory of the princess under a phonetically altered name.
The legend concludes with a second turning point. In 1821, at the age of sixty-five, Gasparilla decided to end his life as a pirate. “Gasparilla is no more,” he declared to his men. He then ordered them to disband after promising to divide all the accumulated treasure equitably. As for himself, he intended to finish his days in opulence and honor, probably somewhere in South America.

On the morning of the day fixed for the division of the spoils, what appeared to be a rich British merchant ship loomed across from the pirates’ hide-out. Gasparilla, perhaps under pressure from his men, could not resist the temptation to seize it. Alas, at the very point of engagement, when it was too late to retreat, the attacked vessel lowered the English flag and unmasked its batteries. It was not a merchant ship but the warship, USS Enterprise, which un
furled its American flag and fired with deadly accuracy on the pirates’ ship. Victim of the trick that he himself had used so many times, Gasparilla decided to die without surrendering. He climbed to the bow of the sinking ship, wrapped the anchor’s chain around his body, and threw himself into the sea as he cried out: “Gasparilla dies by his own hand not the enemy’s.” Most of the pirate’s crew either perished on the spot or surrendered to be subsequently hanged in New Orleans. Just a few managed to escape. Among them was John Gómez, an eyewitness to the pirate’s extraordinary death and supposedly the first narrator of the Gasparilla legend.

II

It would be difficult to find anyone in Tampa unfamiliar with the name of Gasparilla. Yet the names of the genuine founders of the city remain relatively unknown to a large number of people. In short, in perhaps his most successful conquest, Gasparilla has overwhelmed the frontiers of historical knowledge to become in the public’s mind the main cultural identity-factor for Tampans. This despite the fact that the pirate José gaspar, alias Gasparilla, never existed. This fact is proven both by the absence of his name in the Spanish and American archives and by the total absence of any material trace of his presence in Florida. There are no ruins that might be attributed to him and not a single coin from his fabulous treasure has ever been found.

However, any historian determined to destroy the legend would be wrong to interpret the lack of evidence as a victory. In fact, the absence of historical authenticity simply verifies that it is indeed a legend. The historical truth of the legend of Gasparilla is its very existence and the annual celebration of its hero by a whole city for three-quarters of a century, which is to say practically since its beginning as a city.

In a more general way, one can say that the birth and perpetuation of a legend are not only historical facts but constitute also an important key to unlock the meaning of history. A legend has nothing to tell us about the period where it places it episodes, but it talks to us like an open book of the society that has given birth to it and keeps it alive.

Nevertheless, to relate the content of a legend to the historical framework of the society that produces it accomplishes only half of the task. In fact, not only is the legend the product of an epoch, but, by becoming part of its context, it also acts upon this very epoch. In a first phase, the legend emanates from the ethos of the society that creates it; in a second one, the legend has a conservative influence upon that ethos with which it becomes intimately intertwined.

This study examines the genesis and structure of the urban myth of Tampa to attempt to understand why, among so many possible and imaginable heroes, this Spanish pirate had the good fortune to become the legendary patron of the city. Such a choice can be explained inasmuch as the myth of Gasparilla:

1. expresses some striking features of the ethos of the social class that adopted the legend and that initiated the festival in 1904;
2. contains the characteristics necessary to sustain the participation of the other social classes that share the belief in the myth and voluntarily take a part in the festival.

III

Tampa’s history was shaped by events in Cuba, still a Spanish colony at the time. There, in 1868, started the deadly War of Independence, that ultimately lasted ten years and ended in defeat. The immediate repercussions of the uprising were tragically impressive. As early as 1869, 100,000 Cuban refugees fled to foreign countries, their exodus leading them to the republics of Latin America, to Europe (this destination was chosen mostly by rich separatist patricians) and above all to the United States, where Cuban immigration was divided into two branches. The refugees from the middle class went to northern cities (New York, Philadelphia, Boston), whereas workers opted for the closest possible exile – Key West, only ninety miles from Cuba.

Most of the Cuban workers who went into exile were cigar makers who had made the glory of Havana. The Cuban cigar industry, badly hurt by the Panic of 1857 in the United States, had been in economic trouble for several years. The workers who suffered the consequences of these financial difficulties had developed great solidarity and militancy. As early as 1860, a few Cuban manufacturers had moved to Key West, where they were so close to Havana that the importation of the precious leaves of Cuban tobacco did not cause many problems. In 1869, after the start of the Cuban Independence War, the factories in Cuba closed down and the cigar industry was transplanted to Key West. At the head of one important factory was a Spanish businessman from Havana, Vincente Martinez Ybor. The immigrant Cuban workers looked forward to the day that their homeland would become an independent country so that they could return to Cuba. Alas, the reverse was true. Spain surpressed the insurrection, and at the end of the war in 1878, the Cuban exodus increased.

In Key West and Havana frustrated cigar workers turned from the struggle for independence to trade-union militancy. The workers of both urban centers exchanged information, solidified ties, and planned common strategies. The easy communications between Key West and Havana presented problems for the cigar manufacturers who had to fight many strikes. Therefore, the Key West owners began to think about relocating their factories. Ideally, they needed a place close enough to Cuba to import easily the raw material, but also far enough from the island to break the trade-unionist link between the exiled Cuban workers in America and their counterparts in Cuba.

This situation in the cigar industry soon led to the rapid development of Tampa. In 1876 Tampa was only a struggling village of “crackers” producing oranges, vegetables, and a little sugar, occasionally exported by sea towards New Orleans or Key West and Cuba. By land, Tampa was connected to Gainesville only by a road that one could travel in two-and-a-half days. After the last garrison of Fort Brooke left in 1882, Tampa opened itself to the world. The first bank was opened in 1883, just before the arrival of the first railroad in 1884 that Henry B. Plant built from Jacksonville.
Meanwhile, labor upheavals continued to shake Key West. In the wake of new strikes and a fire – possibly arson – that devastated his workshops, Vincente Martinez Ybor decided to transfer his business, including 2,000 workers, to the growing city of Tampa that had already jumped in population from 720 in 1880 to 2,376 in 1885.

Under the energetic leadership of the Board of Trade (predecessor of the Chamber of Commerce), Tampa quickly became more of an urban center. The city soon had running water, an ice cream factory, a bridge over the river, a telephone network, electricity and an opera. The harbor also grew. The discovery of phosphate in Polk County increased Tampa’s importance as a port. In 1888, Henry B. Plant extended his railroad to the harbor, and he started a line of steamships that began to shuttle regularly between Tampa and Havana with a stop in Key West.

In the meantime, the railroad magnate had broadened his network southward to the next natural harbor in Charlotte Bay. There, ignoring the pleas of the village located near the old Fort Myers, Plant chose to end his railroad in a deserted village, Punta Gorda, where a new center was created around the luxury hotel built by Plant in the image of his elaborate Tampa Bay Hotel.

The method of Henry B. Plant, pioneer and capitalist, was brilliantly simple. His railroads brought cities to life, and he speculated on the ensuing real estate boom. His goal was to attract not only industries to these new cities but also the rich clientele of the North drawn by the southern climate. The opulent palaces that Plant constructed on the west coast of Florida awaited those first winter vacationers. In addition, joining the useful to the pleasant, he organized in Tampa the first industrial fair, which took place annually until the promoter’s death in 1899.

While Plant amassed his colossal fortune, prosperity did not elude Vincente Martinez Ybor and the other cigar manufacturers who had moved their factories from Key West to Tampa. The cigar industry was centered in neighboring Ybor City, named for Vincente Martinez Ybor, the very prototype of the paternalistic and good-natured Latin American boss who reigned over this growing mixture of cigar workers made up of Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians.

Unexpectedly, this apparently explosive mixture entertained good relations with the cigar bosses in the 1890s. There was a good reason for this. In the beginning of that decade the dreams of Cuban independence were born again, and social conflicts moved to the background. The factory workers helped finance the Cuban revolution, to which they gave one day of their weekly salary. Of course their union militancy was dampened by this. Consequently, the cigar owners prospered, and they openly supported Cuban independence, defended also by the U.S. government.

Once this independence was achieved, its consequences betrayed the hopes of workers and owners alike. The workers could not go back to Cuba’s ruined fields and cities plagued by unemployment, and the owners had difficulty facing the post-war situation. Martinez Ybor died in 1896 and did not see how victorious American capital came to dominate the cigar industry not only in Cuba but also in Tampa, where as early as 1899 the cigar factories were bought up one by one by the American Cigar Company. This marked the end of the era of the pre-industrial, good-natured, and personalized capitalism and the beginning of an industrial era dominated by the drive for efficiency and the rationalization of work. For the Latin workers of Ybor City thirty
years of bitter social conflict were about to start against the American businessmen who controlled Tampa. 7

Riding a Cadillac in the original Gasparilla Parade in 1904.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

The first coronation ball of Gasparilla in 1904.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
With the turn of the century, the last of the pioneer promoters left the stage with the deaths of Henry B. Plant in 1899, and Martinez Ybor three years earlier. In 1902, Plant’s empire was dismantled and sold. The Atlantic Coastline Railroad gained control of his railroads, and in 1905, the City of Tampa bought the proud Tampa Bay Hotel. This was more than a symbol. The days of the founding fathers were gone, as was personal capitalism. The era of trusts and social conflicts was arriving. In Tampa a business class had consolidated itself as a caste and ruled the city. At this time the festival of Gasparilla started in 1904.

IV

Turning from the early history of Tampa to the history of the Gasparilla legend, it is necessary to trace the various ways the myth spread. Initially, the legend of Gasparilla must have been transmitted solely by word of mouth. This oral tradition still predominates today since most of the people who know the legend have never read any of the literature on the subject. However, there are a number of important written versions. Among the various historical “proofs” asserted by the different versions of the legend, all find their origin in an eyewitness – John (or Juan) Gómez. Naturally, this initial narrator of the legendary exploits of Gasparilla possessed himself all the traits of a mythical character. According to one account, John Gómez was supposedly a
pirate’s son born on Gasparilla Island in 1805 and in view of his young age he was not
condemned to hanging but to ten years in prison after his capture by sailors of the USS
Enterprise in 1821. Having returned to his birthplace, he died there in 1875, according to this
version, after having related the details of the events surrounding his childhood.⁸

In a second version, the role of John Gómez became more important, to the point where he
played a major part in the story he was supposed to transmit. Born in 1778, this Gómez was said
to have been a sailor on the vessel captured by Gasparilla in 1801 that carried the Mexican
princess. Spared by the pirates, he soon became Gasparilla’s protégé. In 1805, he was given a
secret mission to return to Spain and kill the pirate’s personal enemy, Prime Minister Manuel
Godoy. But Gómez failed in his mission because, once in Spain, he was forced into Napoleon’s
army. The ex-pirate fought so brilliantly that Napoleon congratulated him in person.
Nevertheless, Gómez deserted and returned to his adventurous life on the sea. In 1818, the slave
ship he was traveling on was captured by none other than Gasparilla. Gómez rejoined his old
companions and shared their life until the fatal day of defeat in 1821.

That day, having stayed ashore, John Gómez escaped inland with a few other pirates, who took
along the captive women. This last detail was most opportune because the conclusion of the
legend would otherwise have been encumbered by the presence of the pirates' concubines who
conveniently disappeared in this version. The subsequent deeds of Gómez included diverse
adventures that saw him intervene successively in the slave trade, Seminole Wars, and even a
rebellion against Spanish authority in Cuba. Finally, the life of the old sailor ended with an
accidental drowning in 1900 in the same waters where Gasparilla had drowned years earlier. Had
this actually occurred, Gómez would have been 122 years old.⁹

Although linked to the legend of Gasparilla and subordinated to it, the exploits of John Gómez
finally acquired an independent quality. Through the use of the same literary techniques, the
popular literature gave a cohesive set of adventures to this minor hero. However, in connection
with the main legend of Gasparilla, this narrator-hero, witness and participant in key episodes
fulfilled a fundamental necessity. Whatever the historical “proofs” invoked or fabricated by the
modern narrators, they could not be detailed enough to give to Gasparilla the sweeping romantic
scope that made his legend attractive. Therefore, it was necessary to elaborate a secondary myth
that provided this colorful witness and made him disappear as well.

The very first written version of the legend came in an advertising brochure of the Charlotte
Harbor and Northern Railroad Company. The leaflet was given to visitors who used the Plant
System and the Boca Grande Hotel. Boca Grande is the principal town of Gasparilla Island, and
therefore, in theory it was the old haunt of the king of the pirates. “Taking the best of everything
when a capture was made, he chose the best of the islands in Charlotte Harbor, for his own secret
haunts,” declared the leaflet.¹⁰ In fact, at the beginning of the twentieth century Gasparilla Island
became “the winter home of the bluebloods.”¹¹

As early as its first transcription, the legend took its basic form. However, around the core of
the story swirled a variety of episodes that were not always compatible with each other. Indeed,
the anonymous author of the original written account admitted this. “While it is almost
impossible to obtain exact information concerning this outlaw, owing to the numerous and

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol2/iss2/1
conflicting accounts, the writer has tried to put into readable form a few of these stories concerning Gasparilla, and has only used such accounts where two or more sources agreed."

In any case, the deeper meaning of the myth was already clear. The legend declared that the epoch of uncontrolled piracy was over and that since the peace necessary to business and tourism had been established “in the good American way,” the memory of past massacres served only to give the area “the spice of romantic adventure.”

The railroad brochure does not bear any date. However, since its author mentioned the old John Gómez and his death in 1900, publication obviously occurred after that date. Everything else indicates that the leaflet circulated a little after 1900 and that it provided the inspiration for the promoters of Tampa’s first Gasparilla festival in 1904.

The transfer of the legend from Charlotte Harbor to Tampa came at the very moment of the collapse of the Plant System that connected Charlotte Harbor to Tampa. After Henry B. Plant's death in 1899, his team managed the Plant System for three years. Then after 1902 his empire was broken up and sold. Meanwhile, with the end of the pioneer era, the class of businessmen located in Tampa strengthened itself, becoming the city's new elite.

With Tampa’s appropriation of the Gasparilla legend, the myth lost somewhat the strong territorial character that had tied it to Charlotte Harbor. Away from the area where the legendary story occurred, the main emphasis shifted to a symbolic interpretation of the mythical facts that impressed the Tampa group which adopted the legend. Without losing too much of the romantic dimension of its episodes, the legend gradually hid its fictional character behind an apparatus of fabricated evidence proving its authenticity. This was a slow process.

In 1923, a local historian from Salem, Massachusetts, Francis B. C. Bradlee, great grandson of an American privateer in the War of 1812, published a well documented book on the last years of piracy. Having received from Robert S. Bradley, Esq., of Boston, President of the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway Company of Florida the brochure relating to the legend of Gasparilla, Bradlee clearly accepted its historical authenticity on the basis of the honor of man who gave it to him. Bradlee not only reproduced the legend in its entirety, but he also added a few episodes that should be attributed to another pirate named “Richard Coeur de Lion.” From then on, that nickname would follow the name of Gasparilla in a few versions of the legend.

The following year, in 1924, Philip Gosse published a more popular book, *The Pirates’ Who’s Who*. He included in it, leaning obviously on the authority of Bradlee, a concise version of Gasparilla’s exploits. The book was successfully reissued in 1968, and its condensed version is in a way the one commonly accepted today.

Finally, in 1936, Gasparilla escaped from the pages of piracy to enter the pages of the history of Florida for the first time. In *Florida Old and New*, the historian Frederick W. Dau wrote a few paragraphs about Gasparilla, placing him in a very convincing manner (and undoubtedly in good faith) among real historical figures. From that moment on, there were authoritative books to which one could send the persons who had the nerve to doubt the historic reality of Gasparilla.
In the meantime, the Gasparilla festival had taken place every year with but two interruptions, directly related to financial and political crises. The festival was not organized from 1907 to 1909 as a result of “the Rich Man’s Panic” which brought a downturn in the nation’s economy. During 1918-19, following American entry into World War I, the festival was also not celebrated.

In spite of these two lapses, the Gasparilla celebration became more elaborate every year. The public show had started in 1904 with pirates mounted on horses invading the city. In 1905, there was a triumphant parade of all the city's automobiles – all sixty of them! In 1911, for the first time, a ship was used – just as in the modern version – to invade the city. Very quickly, the celebrations, which were initially an entertainment for the city’s elite, evolved to become grandiose festivities for popular consumption. Nevertheless, the festival did not lose its initial character since ordinary townspeople were but spectators in a show given by Tampa’s elite. “Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla,” the quasi-religious society that organized the annual celebration, symbolized the social division that separated the festival’s participants from spectators. Only members of Tampa’s elite were selected to join the exclusive society.

The Krewe created for its own use a magisterial version of the legend which became a sort of Gasparilla Bible. This task was undertaken by Edwin D. Lambright, a professional writer, editor of the Tampa Tribune and himself a pirate who had participated in the festival since 1904. In 1936, Lambright published a luxurious 221-page volume, richly bound, financed by the members of the Krewe, stamped with the approval of the reigning Gasparilla King and adorned with a certificate guaranteeing that “The History of Gasparilla and Ye Mystic Krewe” was a limited member’s edition, every copy numbered by hand and inscribed with the name of one of the Krewe’s members. Since this book was never commercially marketed, it is difficult to find. The only copies that are available for consultation have been given by Krewe members or their heirs to public institutions.

In this sumptuous album, the text of the legend took only thirty-five pages. Most of the rest of the book was filled with biographies and portraits of the most illustrious Krewe members. Nevertheless, these thirty-five pages provided the first version of the legend that was at the same time extensive and critical. Lambright’s narrative followed the familiar lines, but he also selected the episodes that seemed to him the most orthodox and placed them, with a certain erudition, in a more authentic historical setting. First of all, the Queen Maria-Luisa and the Spanish Prime Ministers Godoy and Floridablanca regained the real dates of their existence. In addition, Lambright had the officer José Gaspar follow a more reasonable advancement in his career. He was a lieutenant at twenty-two years of age and was still in that grade at the time of his mutiny five years later. Lambright refuted explicitly Gaspar’s presence in the Spanish Court and, therefore, the very possibility that he might have been accused of the theft of the crown jewels.

Written for Tampa’s Court of Gasparilla, Lambright’s version was obviously designed to make the legendary episodes more believable by giving them all the appearances of historical reality. “His actual existence, many of his depredations, are authenticated by unquestionable records,” Lambright affirmed. He added, “We know that many of the tales which have come down to us are mere fiction, including the fanciful recital of his execution by hanging, from a Tampa tree.”16
Lambright emphasized as much as possible the respectability of Gasparilla. The pranks of his childhood were omitted. The very possibility that he might have been accused of a jewelry theft in Spain was refuted, as well as the fact that he might have abandoned a wife and two children in his native country. Although the author granted that Gasparilla captured women prisoners, he specified that the pirate gave them in matrimony to his men, a priest being kept prisoner to perform this sacramental service.17

Lambright also added new episodes that showed Gasparilla capable of pure generosity in love and of disinterested friendship. Thus, even though he fell madly in love with an English captive, Ann Geoffrey, Gasparilla stepped aside finally in favor of one of his men that she was in love with, and he gave them back their freedom by capturing a vessel whose crew and cargo he spared in exchange for transportation of the young couple to England.

Another time, on a Spanish ship that he stopped Gasparilla found a very dear friend, Arturo Menéndez, who had been with him at the Naval Academy. He spared him and kept him at his palace on Gasparilla Island, even though the friend in question refused to become a pirate and did not cease to reproach Gasparilla for his treason. This story once more had a touching ending:
Arturo Menéndez died, sacrificing his life to save Gasparilla who was attacked by a mutinous crew member.

Thousands of details were added by Lambright so that in his courtly version Gasparilla appeared like the most gallant, the most correct, and the most tender of men, except that he was a pirate. Overall, the only violence he committed was that which was absolutely necessary for him to establish his power base before he finally confronted the USS Enterprise (which should be read “American Enterprise”). The defeat and suicide of the pirate marked the mythical transfer of his royal power to the new establishment of American business, controlled by a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant elite.

In Tampa this social class adhered with all its strength to the ideal of American respectability and placed its values (in addition to money and religion) in romantic love, manly friendships and a peaceful society. These values were latent in the deeds of Gasparilla, according to Lambright’s version, but they were inhibited by his violence when he turned to piracy with the declaration, “We declare war on the commerce of the world.”

Even though Gasparilla’s violence had gained some legitimacy by his fighting the old colonial powers of Spain and England, it nevertheless had to disappear to let the new order establish itself.
with its ideal of democratic harmony. What better end could the legend have than by abolishing violence through violence to oneself, that is, through suicide?

Thanks to the legend, the undistinguished arrival of American authority in Florida (not won from England through the War of Independence but simply bought from Spain in 1819) was exalted by a grandiose staging, worthy of an opera or an epic movie. The fake British merchant ship became the *USS Enterprise* flying the stars and stripes, and immediately the king of the west coast, the ferocious Spaniard who had killed his own princess, jumped in the ocean and disappeared brandishing his sword. The elusive hero vanished more than he was defeated. Under the new American order, Gasparilla’s power could be reborn and legitimized, cleansed of its violent and sensuous faults. Piracy thus became a mystique in the hands of the Mystic Krewe. The continuity between the power of piracy and the American power that replaced it was not only suggested by the legendary tale, but it was also explicitly expressed in a letter attributed to Gasparilla and addressed in 1821 to an American officer. “We run the same fortune,” declared the Spanish pirate, “and our maxim is that ‘The goods of the world belong to the strong and the valiant.’ The occupation of the Floridas is a pledge that the course I follow is conformable to the policy pursued by the United States.”

The other document cited by Lambright to establish the authenticity of Gasparilla was a diary that the pirate supposedly kept from 1783 to 1795. However, to explain how such a document had survived, Lambright invented a new secondary character, Roderigo Lopez, said to have been Gasparilla’s second. After twelve years of piracy, this Roderigo was still lovesick for his beautiful friend Sanibel who lived in Spain, and Gasparilla authorized him to rejoin her. As Roderigo departed, Gasparilla supposedly entrusted him with the diary and expressly advised him to keep it secret. Roderigo turned the document over to the beautiful Sanibel, who could not avoid talking about it, so that it fell into the hands of the Spanish authorities. Kept in the archives of that country, it was later found and passed to Lambright by “an American, resident in Madrid, who wishes his name withheld,” but who was rumored to be the Naval Attaché of the United States! The memory of the indiscreet Sanibel was supposedly perpetuated by Sanibel Island, close to Gasparilla Island. As shown by this example, Lambright's work relied just as heavily as other versions on place names for “evidence.”

The seductive argument based on place names in fact undermines the historic reality of Gasparilla. The islands called Gasparilla, Captiva, and Sanibel were all listed under those same names on maps that predated the supposed arrival of the legendary pirate. Apparently the first person to bring this fact to light was the historian Karl Bickel. The documents that he presented in his 1942 book strongly suggest that Gasparilla Island got its name from a Spanish missionary named Gaspar or Gasparillo. In his chapter about the mythical pirate, Bickel made an exhaustive list of all the arguments against the historical reality of Gasparilla. On this question, nothing essential has been subsequently added, except for the confirmation by Charles W. Arnade and James W. Covington in 1966 of the absence of any historical evidence about the existence of a José Gaspar in either Spanish or American archives. Finally, Bickel showed himself well informed about John Gómez and about the first written version of the legend under the auspices of the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railway. Hence his chapter on Gasparilla carried the title, “Pirate, Padre, or Press Agent?”
Bickel’s negative findings about the existence of Gasparilla had no influence on Tampa’s celebration of the legend. Indeed, the suspension of festival activities from 1942 to 1947 was only due to the war.

In 1946, a writer of some reputation, James B. Cabell, attempted to produce a literary and popularized account of the legend. In a novel entitled *There Were Two Pirates, A Comedy of Division*, Cabell loosely followed the Gasparilla legend, but in the process he gravely distorted certain aspects. Most important, he found his narrator in Gasparilla himself who, according to the novel, survived the 1821 defeat to die seven years later in St. Augustine.23

In its own way as heretical as the work of Bickel, this little known novel had no impact on Tampa’s popular memory. Local press coverage of the festival since its revival in 1947 has relied heavily on Lambright’s official version and never mentioned the conflicting version of Bickel or Cabell, not even to refute them. However, these two treatments demonstrate the selectivity (in part spontaneous, in part directed by the media) with which Tampans accept or reject new information about the subject of Gasparilla.

Thus, in 1950 nothing prevented Karl Grismer from publishing a history of Tampa that included a most orthodox chapter on Gasparilla. Grismer did not even question the authenticity of the legendary figure because it was as obvious to him as to his readers. Indeed, his abridged version was no different from Lambright’s rendering of the legend or his history of the Krewe and its activities.24

Jack Beater, however, represented an entirely new phenomenon. He wrote the definitive popularized version of Gasparilla that escaped control of the Gasparilla “church” in Tampa, but in a way that was not totally unacceptable. Beater’s independence was the result of a certain distance that set him apart in a double sense from the orthodoxy of Tampa’s Gasparilla. First, his style, in both form and content, was far removed from the pseudo-scientific tone adopted by the Krewe in its version. Second, Beater was literally an outsider in that he lived in Fort Myers and focused on the legend’s specific locations around Charlotte Harbor, showing a general indifference to Tampa’s Gasparilla celebrations.
From a stylistic standpoint, the legend found a true popularizer in Jack Beater. Thanks to him, Gasparilla left the intimidating pages of hardcover books and entered the field of cheap paperbacks. From 1949 on, this author printed and reprinted copies of his paperback, which by its style, appearance, price (initially $1, and now $1.95) and means of distribution, could reach a wide audience. In this form, the legend of Gasparilla achieved all the characteristics of popular literature for the masses of people. Beater’s presentation avoided anything that resembled a ponderous book. The soft cover is illustrated and brightly colored. The type is very plain, well-spaced, and easy to read. The volume is also filled with black and white drawings by the author that give the work a simple dramatic vigor and make it all the more appealing for a mass audience.

Clearly, except for the topic, there is no common ground between this and Lambright’s luxurious album. The contrast is just as striking in the respective treatments of the subject. Whereas Lambright offered an historical and rationalized version, Beater gave a highly romantic account. In Beater, the historical chronology was sometimes confused, but the story itself was told with a charming flow which was missing in the more scientific version.

Beater’s use of “evidence” showed how much he differed in his approach. Not only did he employ the usual mythical story tellers (in addition to John Gómez the old, he used another survivor, Leon Gaspar, cousin of Gasparilla), but he also relied upon a contemporary oral tradition that he was recording. Moreover, Beater invoked a number of written sources: a dusty Cuban manuscript half-eaten by mice which has mysteriously disappeared since then; an ancient map found by the author in the back of a second-hand bookshop; and finally, the writings of different “historians” whose statements were sometimes put in quotation marks but whose names were never mentioned.

In addition, Beater appealed to something unique – the message of the legendary landscape. The author not only used the familiar evidence of place names, but he also expressed the wonderful confidence that the sky, the sea, and islands of Charlotte Harbor could inspire the storyteller to recapture the mythical facts still embedded in the landscape. “On a day not long ago, I sprawled lazily on a bed of needles under an Australian pine, and watched a changing pattern of billowy clouds floating over Captiva Island. My eyes closed and slowly a picture came,” reported the author who, at the end of a description of the past recorded directly from his vision, was brought back to reality by the horn of a car passing on the bridge that connects the islands of Captiva and Sanibel.25

This raises the question of the geographical distance that separated Beater from the Gasparilla center of Tampa. Living in Fort Myers in the vicinity of the islands of the legend, Beater gave life to the original setting, and he showed little concern with Tampa’s Gasparilla ceremonies. However, the return of the legend to its birthplace was clearly inspired by economic as well as literary considerations. Proof of this can be found at the end of Beater’s first edition which contained a good many advertisements for hotels and real estate. All invited visitors to share the ecstasy of these “Isles of Enchantment,” where for example, they could “Make [their] conquest of Sanibel and Captiva Islands . . . in the manner of the buccaneers!”26
Historians of the islands of Charlotte Harbor note that “during the Second World War years, and for some time afterwards, the real estate business was in the doldrums. . . . By the early fifties, the area had ‘caught on’ and we were beginning to burst at the seams.”

Beater’s first edition appeared at the time of this real estate boom and clearly related to it.

Although Jack Beater is dead, re-issues of his paperback have made his popularized version of the Gasparilla legend readily available in the Tampa area. Several other mutations of the legend have also appeared in print. L. Frank Hudson and Gordon R. Prescott in 1973 and most recently F. J. Hagan in 1979 have contributed to keeping the memory of Gasparilla before the public. This last author revealed in his book (self-funded and in a format directly inspired by Beater) that he is a real estate agent in St. Petersburg Beach and interested in the Treasure Island Corporation. It becomes always more evident that the real estate sellers were not the last ones to realize that buyers like to receive a dream as a bonus – the hope that Gasparilla's or some other buccaneer’s treasure might be buried under the foundation of their bungalow!

Despite this ulterior motive, the appearance of these works along with Beater’s book has contributed to preserving Gasparilla’s adventures in the collective memory of Tampans. This version of the legend remains considerably more rich and vivid than the pseudo-historical chronical that is kept alive by the Mystic Krewe.

V

Through the use of history, it is possible not only to trace the origins of the Gasparilla legend, but also to recreate in detail the social contexts in which it was born – and later evolved. This coexistence of history and myth seriously limited the independence of the legend because it was constantly forced to adopt the trappings of historical reality if it were to survive. In fact, there is not a single version of the Gasparilla legend that did not in some way make a claim to historical truth. Thus, the relation of myth to history is crucial for an understanding of the role of Gasparilla in Tampa.

Before summarizing the role of myth, it is necessary to separate out the factual historical truths embedded in the central structure of the Gasparilla legend. The lack of any historical basis for the main character, Gasparilla himself, requires no further proof. Secondary historical figures, such as Queen Maria-Luisa and the pirate Laffite, can be ignored because they only appeared in later versions designed to prove the authenticity of Gasparilla. This leaves only two remaining objective historical truths. First, the sloop USS Enterprise was actually engaged in the fight against the last pirates. Second, the dates of Gasparilla’s reign on the west coast of Florida, 1783-1821, mark in fact the period between the recognition of American independence by the Treaty of Paris and the effective takeover of Florida by the American government at the end of Spain’s second occupation of the peninsula. Gasparilla, traitor to his Spanish homeland and absolute ruler over the west coast of Florida, mythically filled the awkward gap that separated American independence from the belated inclusion of Florida into the new country.

In effect, Gasparilla served to date the “Americanization” of the west coast back to the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Moreover, he was a European immigrant deprived by his
treason of any hope of returning to his motherland. He also fought victoriously against the
remaining colonial powers, just like the heroes of the Revolutionary War, and he built his
immense fortune on violence and plundering, just like the American pioneers who conquered the
frontier. Through these mythical deeds, Gasparilla acquired all the qualities of a founding hero.
The only features that had to go in order to perfect Gasparilla’s image were his Latin character
and his most outrageous acts of piracy. Both vanished at the very moment when the USS
Enterprisraised the American flag. (Surely it was not coincidence that the name USS
Enterprise was picked from the long list of American ships that fought against pirates.) The rest
of the legend’s chronology was clearly determined by the key date of 1821. By giving the pirate
the traditional retirement age of sixty-five, the same account fixed his birthdate in 1756, which
also made him old enough to become a pirate in 1783 after having had a naval career in Spain.

Although the original significance of the legend was that it established Gasparilla as the
founding father of American authority on Florida’s west coast, people later added to the
Gasparilla tradition, splitting it into two directions. One, an elitist version, developed a rational
and supposedly historical character which the local establishment used to glorify its power and
wealth. The other, a popular version, was passionately romantic, using the legend to brighten the
Florida landscape. The popular myth swept away the historical reality of a few hundred forlorn
settlers (mostly unknown Cubans and halfbreed Indians) who inhabited the west coast in the
early nineteenth century and replaced it with an exciting story of fabulous exploits filled with
sound and fury. Feverish imaginations could conjure visions of sailing ships, buccaneers,
harems, and dark-haired Latin lovers who buried their treasure along the coast, perhaps right
beneath their own feet. All this is also more thrilling than the contemporary reality of suburban
tract houses and mobile homes that have invaded the coasts of Florida. In the end, the myth has
made life for everyone more pleasant than the facts of history.

The relationship between myth and history was especially tense in Tampa, which gave birth to
the annual ritual celebrating the legend of Gasparilla. Still today, the social circles close to the
Krewe and the media that express its opinion show an aggressive hostility toward “the malicious
statements [of] some unkind persons [who] have said that Gasparilla was only a legendary pirate
– that he never existed in real life.”39 Against whom is this outcry directed? Certainly not against
purveyors of the popular version of the Gasparilla tradition who have complicated the story with
conflicting episodes, but who nevertheless have shown a naive faith in the historical reality of the
legend’s hero. No, the “unkind persons with no romance in their souls” are simply the scholars,
particularly the social scientists and historians, who have established undeniably the
worthlessness of the “evidence” cited to prove the legend’s historical basis. Moreover, scholars
have the bad taste to examine the Gasparilla phenomenon as something other than a normal
outgrowth of authentic historical events.

Fully aware of risking the charge of poor taste, the author will conclude this study with an
explanation of the deeper meaning of Tampa’s Gasparilla festival. Once a year, the celebration
gives new life to downtown streets that are normally deserted except for people going to or from
work. Gasparilla draws a lively crowd of spectators who for once abandon the windowless
bunkers of shopping malls, the neon-lit supermarkets, and the clubs and recreational centers that
keep the different social classes confined to their own neighborhoods. Once a year these people
go out in the open, to downtown Tampa, to celebrate Gasparilla and his legend. Why go there? What do they do?

All the historical evidence clearly shows that the legend of Gasparilla was essentially the product and property of Tampa’s Anglo establishment. The study of proper names, which supporters of the legend used incorrectly, helps prove the Anglo origins of the supposedly Latin figures. The very name “Gasparilla” is effeminate and totally ridiculous in Spanish. It is hard to believe that a ferocious Spaniard, a Latin lover, would have chosen such a nickname. His first officer, Roderigo Lopez, should have been called “Rodrigo” in correct Spanish. In the same vein, the name of Captiva Island looks more like the English word “captive” than the Spanish word for captive, “cautiva.” Finally, “Sanibel” might seem to an American like a suitable Spanish woman’s name, but in Spanish it brings to mind a brand name for sanitary appliances. Thus, an examination of leading names in the legend again reveals that under the Latin mask looms an Anglo-Saxon myth.

Nevertheless, it was not by chance that the myth makers adopted Latin characters. At the beginning of the century, Tampa was clearly divided into downtown and Ybor City, the
respective headquarters of capital and labor. The American businessmen living downtown founded their prosperity on the labor of the Latin population in Ybor City.

Recognizing this ethnic and social division, one aspect of the Gasparilla celebration becomes clear. Disguised as Latin pirates, members of the Anglo establishment invaded the city, acting out violence that was as much a part of themselves as the pirates they played. However, as soon as they landed, the violence disappeared in two ways. The social violence vanished through an apparent redistribution of wealth, and the ethnic tensions faded away as the Anglo businessmen adopted Latin disguises. Through this dramatization of very real violence that pitted the repressive Anglo establishment against restless Latin workers, the ritual celebration of Gasparilla became a fraternal festival that attempted to bridge the social and ethnic gap that split the city.

However, there must have been more to Gasparilla than this symbolic effort to restore the unequal social balance in Tampa. Indeed, how could any equality be achieved in a ritual where only one side had an active role and it redistributed purely fake treasure to the passive party? This suggests that the street spectacle with its obvious purpose of conciliation was only the visible part of a phenomenon whose primary function lay elsewhere.
At first glance, the Gasparilla festival resembles the Indian ritual known as “potlatch.” This was a ceremony in which the hosts gave lavish gifts and even destroyed property as a display of wealth that the guests were later expected to surpass. The celebration of Gasparilla certainly cost its organizers plenty of money, but they always distributed totally worthless fake coins and junk jewelry to the spectators. Thus, the essential ingredient of potlatch, which often stripped the benefactors of their wealth, was never part of Gasparilla.

However, viewed from a different angle, Gasparilla did have a parallel with the potlatch. Gasparilla week was coupled with a big commercial fair that attracted businessmen from other cities. For those rival leaders, the Gasparilla festival demonstrated the power and authority of Tampa’s elite. Under these conditions, the question of whether or not the redistributed goods had any value was secondary, as long as the ritual was a convincing display of power. Thus, the true audience was not the one gathered along the parade route. Indeed, they were actors in the grand spectacle staged for outside businessmen who were the real guests. They were invited to witness a happy city cheer its elite which flaunted its wealth and its power to control the society. However, the ritual was also intended to undercut outside businessmen by creating the publicity that would attract new customers to Tampa.

The legend and ritual of Gasparilla played an important role in Tampa’s history. Born at a time when the adventurous plundering of pioneers had just given way to a system that necessitated the peaceful cooperation of all social classes, the Gasparilla festival drew on a legend that expressed the abolition of piracy by the new order of American enterprise. The ritual of the festival tried to open a safety valve to release the ethnic and social tensions in a city where the relations between the different classes and the different ethnic groups were marked by repressive violence in which a largely Anglo elite confronted mostly Latin and particularly militant workers. From its very origin, the festival had its roots in the establishment. “After their fortunes had become more secure, the capitalist upper class resorted to grand-scale conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste in order to impress their rivals,” noted one observer of this phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the non-elitist crowd always played an important role in the spectacle of empty “redistribution” that marked Gasparilla. It is difficult on the basis of existing evidence to measure the importance, the spontaneity, and fervor of popular participation in the early years of the festival when Tampa's social situation was especially tense. However, current participation is extensive, joyful, and unreserved.

Since the troubled days of strikes and violence, Tampa has questionably moved toward an abundance that may not be more equally shared, but is more widely distributed. Ethnic conflicts have also clearly diminished. The Latin population, composed of Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians, has become increasingly integrated into Tampa society.

Even though the festival still provides the elite with the opportunity to display its wealth and its self-assurance, some efforts have been made to include wider popular participation in Gasparilla week. Thus, for example, the Gasparilla run combines the fad of jogging with the myth, and it recently attracted 7,500 runners, drawn from all classes, races, and age brackets.
In such popular Gasparilla events, the non-elite participants and spectators seem less and less trapped by a ritual designed as a safety valve. Indeed, through their acceptance of an empty “redistribution” and their lack of opposition to the successful festival, the people of Tampa show their trust in the elite that uses the celebration for its own self-glorification. No one expects a real redistribution of wealth from the elite because people generally assume that the system itself will provide its own rewards. In short, symbolic gifts are enough, and as such, they illustrate cooperation of the different classes.

The 1980 parade program was correct in celebrating Gasparilla as “the pirate who became a civic legend.” The widespread acceptance of the festival testifies to the good citizenship of Tampans and their commitment to the existing system.

1 Edwin D. Lambright, The Life and Exploits of Gasparilla, Last of the Buccaneers, with the History of Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla (Tampa: Hillsboro Printing Co., 1936), p. 9. (Copy number 217, registered in the name of Henry H. Cole, can be found in the Florida Collection, University of South Florida Library, Tampa.)

Maria-Luisa of Bourbon (1751-1819) was in fact the wife of Charles III (1716-1788) and not of his son, Charles IV (1748-1808). Manuel Godoy (1767-1851) was barely sixteen years old in 1783 and, therefore, was neither prime minister nor the queen’s lover. However, he later assumed both of the positions in 1792, at the precocious age of twenty-five.

Lambright, The Life of Gasparilla, p. 35.

Ibid., p. 39.

During the years 1783-1821, there was in fact no pirate activity on Florida’s west coast. The period was marked by the successive convulsions of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, and sea-going traffic between the harbors of the Gulf of Mexico was reduced to practically nothing. This helps explain why there were no pirates in these parts. Specifically, there is no trace of any buccaneers on the islands of Charlotte Harbor that already bore the names Gasparilla, Sanibel, and Captiva on maps of the eighteenth century, long before the alleged arrival of the legendary pirate. However, it is quite true that at that same time pirates swarmed along the northern coast of Cuba and the eastern coast of Florida. That is, they massed along the sea route going from Vera Cruz and Havana to Europe. The damage caused by these outlaws ultimately resulted in a vigorous American response that brought forth the warship USS Enterprise, among many others. However, the elimination of piracy by the American navy was actually undertaken after 1821, in the years following the U. S. takeover of Florida. Karl A. Bickel, The Mangrove Coast: The Story of the West Coast of Florida (New York: Coward-McCann, 1942), pp. 108-17.


Beater, Pirates and Buried Treasure, pp. 17-22.

Francis B. C. Bradlee, Piracy in the West Indies and its Suppression (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1923), p. 52.


Bradlee, Piracy, p. 52.

Ibid., pp. 51-52.


It is curious to note that these pirates who kept a harem of captive women were able to stay childless for almost forty years. Not a single account of the Gasparilla legend gave them any descendants except for John Gómez in one version. This remarkable lack of children is the same as with cartoon figures such as Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse.

Ibid., p. 34.

Ibid., p. 2.

Bickel, The Mangrove Coast, pp. 99-118.


Grismer, Tampa, p. 294.

This analysis of potlatch relies on that of Marvin Harris which, as he has acknowledged, is quite different than that of Ruth Benedict. Marvin Harris, Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 111-30.

Ibid., p. 129.
The Roaring Twenties: A Photo Essay

Bruce Catton has written that the “decade of the nineteen twenties was at one and the same time the gaudiest, the saddest, and the most misinterpreted era in modern American history.”1 Perhaps the 1960s, the period in which Catton penned these words, qualifies for this evaluation even more, but the “Roaring Twenties” still ranks today as a fascinating and baffling era.

In retrospect there were two sides of the twenties. The popular image was projected by the three “f’s”: flappers, flivvers, and flasks. According to this version, the emancipated woman bobbed her hair, applied cosmetics to her face, and donned a revealing outfit exposing plenty of skin on top and bottom. “As hemlines went up, morals went down,” or so someone harrumphed. Liberated sexually, the flapper joined her boyfriend for a joy ride in his Model T, and later hopped into the backseat while parked in lovers lane. To get in the mood, the young couple swigged down some prohibited gin from their flask and proceeded to make love for recreation rather than procreation. Those who missed out on such romantic opportunities could live vicariously through the motion pictures. Hollywood’s Golden Age of screen stars featured an array of sex symbols who participated in wild “champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp.”2

In contrast there was another side, an underside, of life in the “Jazz Age.” Not everyone was frivolously having fun, necking or doing the Charleston in speakeasies. Indeed, most Americans were barely managing to eke out a living. For the majority, wages hovered around or dropped below the subsistence level. Immigrants crammed into big city tenements and small farmers of the South and West lived with the most meager of necessities, working hard in pursuit of the American Dream while struggling to maintain their dignity. Many of these forgotten people were enduring a depression prior to 1929, when the rest of the nation collapsed economically. The Stock Market Crash in the last year of the decade was the final, dramatic demonstration of what William E. Leuchtenburg called the “perils of prosperity.”3

Between the glamour and despair, the 1920s represented a pivotal phase in American history. The transformation of the United States from a predominantly rural to an urban nation accounted for much of the character of the decade. Although the 1920 census announced that for the first time a majority of Americans resided in cities, those living in the countryside tried to hold onto their considerable influence. A heated struggle ensued between defenders of traditional lifestyles usually associated with small towns and supporters of modern values identified with big cities. For a while, the apostles of the past succeeded in keeping alive the spirit of the “good old days” through Prohibition, immigration restriction, the mobilization of the Ku Klux Klan into a nationwide organization of five million members, and the passage of laws banning the teaching of Darwin’s theory of evolution in public schools. However, the symbol of the age was Charles A. Lindbergh’s heroic solo flight across the Atlantic aboard the “Spirit of St. Louis.” The harmony of man and machine, the adjustment of the individual to modern technology, the preservation of the old culture amidst the new constituted the most significant legacy of the 1920s.

The twenties were also a watershed in the history of the Tampa Bay region. Florida experienced a frantic real estate boom which caved in several years before hard times fell on the
rest of the nation. Promoters in central and south Florida lured tourists and investors with tales of riches to be gained under the warm sunshine. Typical of many hopeful towns, Sebring billed itself as the “hub of South Florida and affords more opportunities for business development . . . and for the establishment of homes in beautiful surroundings, healthful climate and superb educational facilities than any part of Florida.”

Ironically, businessmen made their fortunes in cities, but, as Frederick Lewis Allen noted, they desired to spend it in the pastoral setting of “a Venice equipped with bathtubs and electric ice boxes, a Seville provided with three eighteen hole golf courses.” Too many bad deals and several hurricanes put an end to many of these dreams, but when the bubble burst the Florida landscape had permanently changed. Led by Tampa and St. Petersburg, the bay area by 1930 ranked sixth in the nation in its rate of growth. (Miami was first.)

The following photographs portray the area of central and southwest Florida from a variety of perspectives during the twenties.

Champion Golfers, Walter Hagen and Bobby Jones, at Pasadena Country Club, St. Petersburg, in 1926.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Interior of Maas Brothers, Tampa on Opening Day, October 18, 1928.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Looking east on Main Street across the railroad tracks at Lemon Avenue, Sarasota, circa 1923.

Photograph courtesy of the Sarasota County Historical Archives.

Ringling Causeway under construction, Sarasota, circa 1925.

Photograph courtesy of the Sarasota County Historical Archives.
Aerial view of Davis Islands in Tampa from the north in 1927.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Main Gate of the South Florida Fair in Tampa, 1920.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
A dozen high-stepping “bathing beauties” pose at Fort Myers Beach in the 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of Marian B. Godown.

The Business and Professional Womens Club of Fort Myers parade for equality in 1922.

Photograph courtesy of Marian B. Godown.
Cartoon from Suniland, January, 1926.
Photograph courtesy of the University of South Florida Library.

Advertisement from Suniland, April, 1925.
Photograph courtesy of the University of South Florida Library.

Photograph courtesy of the University of South Florida Library.
View South on Main Street from Fourth Avenue West in Bradenton.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

Waterfront along the Pier in St. Petersburg in 1926.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Hillsborough County Sheriffs battle moonshiners.

Photograph courtesy of Hampton Dunn.

Hurricane damage on Gulf Stream Avenue, Sarasota, 1921.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.
Dog Racing at “Derby Lane” in 1926.
Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Pavilion at Clearwater Beach in 1921.
Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Coca-Cola Delivery Truck in Bradenton, 1921.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Wooden Victory Bridge across the Manatee River looking south to Bradenton from Palmetto.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.


5 Ibid., 79.
E. A. (“Frog”) Smith prides himself on being a cracker. Born in Pinebloom, Georgia, in 1896, Smith has spent most of his life in Florida. (He got the nickname “Frog” in 1936, after he “caught a barrel of frogs’ legs.”) His formal education consisted largely of half a dozen short terms in various schools, and he never went past the eighth grade. (“I scraped up my own education,” he once observed.) Beginning at the age of twelve, he worked around sawmills, firing boilers, operating various machines and running locomotives. Although his skill as a machinist often kept him in machine shops, he thinks of himself as “an oldtime steam engineer.”

“Frog” Smith has devoted much of the last thirty years to writing about his memories of cracker life before the post-World War II invasion of retirees and tourists. In addition to a regular newspaper column and a number of magazine articles, he has written two paperbacks, *From Monkey to Cracker* and *Frog Smith’s Scrapbook #1*, that are collections of “Frog Tales” and folklore. They also feature his poetry and drawings. The cover of the *Scrapbook* bears the warning: “If’n You Don’t Like Florida Cracker History Don’t Buy It.” (For a copy of his *Scrapbook #1*, send $6.00 to “Frog” Smith, 99 Mariana Avenue, North Fort Myers, Florida, 33903.) Smith now spends his time doing primitive paintings of cracker life. Two of his primitives hang in the Smithsonian Museum.

As one of Florida’s real treasures, “Frog” Smith recently appeared on *CBS Evening News* in a segment of “On the Road with Charles Kuralt.” He presently lives in North Fort Myers (“When you pass 80 you are glad to be anywhere”), where he was interviewed by *Tampa Bay History*.

**Interview with E. A. “Frog” Smith**

*TBH:* How did you get started railroading?

Smith: Well, I was born to it. My father was a railroad engineer in southern Georgia, but he wouldn’t run on a mainline.

*TBH:* A mainline is a regular one?

Smith: Yeah, and the logging roads were out in the woods off the mainline. He didn’t want the mainline. He wanted the logging road where he could get out and play around in the woods and fish and hunt. That’s what he wanted.

*TBH:* Did you ever ride with him?

Smith: Oh yeah. I must have ridden 50,000 miles with him.

*TBH:* You rode with him as a young boy, did you?
Smith: Oh yeah. He died before I was nine. When I was eight, he let me run his engine six miles one day. Now you talk about a kid with a big head – now that was me.

**TBH:** What kind of engine was it?

Smith: It was something about like this right here. That’d be an eight wheeler. See it had four pilot wheels and four drivers with no trailer. That's the “Texas,” the one that outran the “General” backing up. She’s now in Grant Park in Atlanta.

**TBH:** When would a train like this date from?

Smith: That was built sometime in the 1850s.

**TBH:** So it was really your father that got it into your blood then?

Smith: Oh yeah. It just grew up in my blood. At fourteen I was at a sawmill on the west coast of Florida and just happened to fall heir when the engineer got fired. Him and the woods’
boss had the same girlfriend, and when they found it out they had a row. I got the engine, and I was only fourteen years old.

TBH: *Whereabouts was this?*

Smith: Up there in Levy County, Otter Creek, Florida.

TBH: *So you took over as an engineer at fourteen then?*

Smith: At fourteen years old. Never had any trouble at all, whatever. But I didn’t run but just a short time. We went to Georgia then on a vacation trip. When I returned I became an oiler at one of the biggest mills in south Florida. I was an oiler there, and one day a revenue man came there and arrested the fireman, led him out of the boiler room so the engineer put me in the boiler room. There I was, a fifteen-year-old kid, barefooted, wearing fifty-cent overalls, thirty-cent shirt and no underwear, and I was firing three big boilers. I carried that big mill right on. We were cutting 60 to 65,000 feet of lumber a day.

TBH: *How did you get back on the railroad?*

Smith: Well, go to other sawmills. I’d run them here and yonder. I ran one out here at the old Slater mill. I ran one in Melbourne. I never did run regular though.

Here’s a picture of me around 1917. I was just on my way to work in the afternoon. I was running the powerhouse at night.

TBH: *Were these wood-burning or coal engines?*

Smith: Wood. We’d burn slabs from the mill.

TBH: *So it was just you, as engineer, and a fireman on it.*

Smith: Yeah, but when I was running I was doing my own firing. Because what we were doing was picking up crossties out there in the woods. We’d carry out four or five crosstie cars
in the morning, and I’d just do my own fire and start in. The ties were loaded on cars for shipping out. Seaboard Line bought them.

**TBH:** Did you have to gather your own wood to fire the boilers?

Smith: No, we picked that up at the mill. We’d go to the mill at night. We’d load the tender with wood and get a tank of water, and there we went. Most of the time we picked up our water in the woods from a pond. That’s the best water.

**TBH:** How long a run would you make?

Smith: We only had an eleven mile run at Otter Creek.

**TBH:** The mill was on the coast?

Smith: No, the mill was twenty miles from the city keys. I remember one of the biggest laughs I ever got. I was standing up in the sawmill, and a fellow named John Dawson – he came to Otter Creek in 1912, and he landed that job pulling the log train. He was coming around the curve at a pretty good clip, and he hit the mill while he was heading south. (Whenever we came into Otter Creek, we made a complete circle, and it was hard to get a train around that curve.) Well, he was coming around there at a pretty good clip, hit the leading car, the train jumped track and eighty-foot-long logs turning crossways hit the outhouse of a shanty, knocked it in at the kitchen door and then turned the shanty over. That was one of the best shows I ever saw.

**TBH:** Did you ever have any accidents?

Smith: Had one right out here at Slater one time; the worst accident I ever had. I've had minor accidents. Worse one I ever had out here I had to leave my engine sitting out there in the woods all night on a New Year’s night. They’d repaired the track and put a bad switch part in it, and when I got there my tender split it. My tender split that switch and jumped the track and that held the points open. Two carloads of lumber went in the hole behind me, and I couldn't move it with that little engine. I couldn't move it so I just had to leave my engine, and they had to go out there with a bigger engine.

**TBH:** Where else on the west coast did you work? You were at Otter Creek.

Smith: At Slater, here just north of Fort Myers, and at Willow, just below Tampa. But I was in the shop at Willow, and part of the time I had to run the engines out of the mill there. I was a sawyer in Georgia and a sawyer in north Florida.

**TBH:** In the shops down here you were usually a machinist?

Smith: Yeah.

**TBH:** Did you work on the engines then?
Smith: Well yeah, I worked on anything that broke down, and then I had to make parts for them.

TBH: Locomotives, too?

Smith: Locomotives and all. If a piston rod let go, I’d have to make one.

TBH: How old were these engines that you were running at Slater and Otter Creek?

Smith: That one must have been built about 1875. Something like that. She’s a Rogers built.

TBH: And were all the engines you drove about the same?

Smith: Some of them were built different. Some of them had six drivers. We had one out here at Slater with eight drivers.

TBH: But most of them date back to the 1870s and 1880s?

Smith: Something like that. Back to 1910 or a little older.

TBH: What did you do besides engineer?
Smith: I've done repair work. I could service track, line track. I could hold a section foreman's job.

TBH: How many cars would an eight wheeler pull?

Smith: Well, we pulled eight and ten cars along with it. Top loaded – that means they were piled up as high as they could pile them without chains.

TBH: How fast would they go?

Smith: Our speed limit on that road was eight miles an hour. We didn’t dare go over that because the track was just thrown down. There were crossties but no grading whatever.

TBH: No ballast?

Smith: No we didn't know what ballast was. Even the Seaboard going through town didn’t have ballast.

TBH: Was it bumpy?

Smith: Well, she really rocked like a ship at sea. One time we got a new engineer out there. He told the company he was an engineer and he had papers, so they were pleased at that. He didn’t tell them he was a marine engineer on a boat. So he looked the engine over, and he decided he could run it. When he started, they waved him on back and gave him a go-ahead. When he picked up the empty train, he just let her have full speed astern. One of the Negroes that jumped out of the way swore he was making sixty. I don't think he was doing that, but was making time all right.

TBH: When did you come down to the sawmill at Slater?

Smith: I came to Slater in 1942. I was disgusted with the sugarmill over at Clewiston. I just got disgusted with the personnel. I begged them for five years to let me get on the railroad of the mill. Well, they didn't think you knew anything except what you learned right there so they didn’t have it that I could hold a railroad job. I told them that I wasn’t worried about that because I'd been running trains before that foreman was ever born, as far as that goes.

TBH: You liked railroading best, did you?

Smith: Yes. I wanted to get on the railroad line, and they wouldn’t let me.

TBH: So that’s when you came to Slater?
Smith: Yes, to the Dowling and Camp sawmill in Slater. Dowling and Camp was the last big sawmill on the west coast of Florida. Camp was president of a bank in Tampa. I ran an engine like this. That’s what you call a 2-6-2. We had lots of them down here in the logging woods, and they’d run just as fast backwards as ahead.

TBH: When did a locomotive like this date from?

Smith: That was built in 1920.

TBH: That’s still wood-burning, right?

Smith: Oh yeah, wood-burning. We’d burn the slabs from the mill. That’s the mill in the background.

TBH: That’s not you standing there, is it?

Smith: No, that was taken before I went there. Now here’s a picture of another one. That one used to sit in the woods down there below Immokolee, but today she’s in the park at St. Augustine.

TBH: Was it used at one of the mills?
Smith: Yeah, that was one of Cummer’s engines. The Cummer Sons Cypress Company at
Lacoochee, Florida.


TBH: So you never worked on a mainline railroad?

Smith: Except on the section, keeping up track back about 1912. Here’s a picture of me and my sister and brothers in 1910. My sister is still living. I was the oldest boy.

TBH: After this you went to work in the sawmill?

Smith: I was thirteen then, and I was already working in the saw mill.

TBH: You ran your first train the year after that.

Smith: Yeah, year after that.

TBH: You don’t look old enough to ride a train, let alone run one.

Smith: When I was only eight years old, Dad set me up on his seat and said, “All right Bud, let’s go to town.” He let me work the steam for six miles up and down those Georgia hills, and I never had a bit of trouble in the world.
TBH: They couldn’t have been that easy to run.

Smith: Well, I wasn’t man enough to handle the reverse lever on it, so Dad did that for me. But he dropped about half-way down the quadrant, put me on his seat, and said, “All right Bud, let’s go to town.” He took my BB gun – a .22 rifle – he got back out on the tender and was standing back there shooting cows. Believe me, the fireman kept an eye on me.

TBH: Did you ever hit a cow?

Smith: I never did hit a cow. But I did put six box cars in the ditch at one time out here at Slater. I went to making a flying switch which is supposed to put some cars in a switch the same way you're going. You get up the speed and then the flagman will cut you loose. You run out of the way with the engine, and you let the cars run by you. But we were so close that we didn't have enough room, and my tank truck jerked the lever out of the switchman's hand. He had the switch just about half thrown when those cars hit it, and six of them just piled into the ditch.

TBH: Were they loaded?
Smith: No they were empty.

TBH: Did all these railroads for sawmills have runs of only ten to twenty miles?

Smith: No, they hauled logs from Big Cypress Swamp 300 miles into Perry, Florida. The Lee Cypress Company ran their engines out eight, ten miles into the Everglades and then shipped them by Coast Line. They would take cars from the Coast Line there in the woods and load them. Then they would ship them over to the Coast Line from the Big Cypress and into Perry, Florida.

TBH: How long a run were you doing when you were at Slater?

Smith: At Slater I was just in the yards on a switch engine, having more fun than I’d had in the woods. We had forty miles of rail on the logging train in Melbourne, but they didn’t let me run them much. They kept me in the machine shop all the time. Here’s a picture of one I was repairing. I put new tubes in that boiler.

TBH: What kind of smokestack is this?

Smith: It’s called a cabbage smokestack. It had something like a water wheel turbine. It threw the smoke around the outside rim, and it beat the cinders up so they didn't go out the top.

TBH: So you couldn’t get parts for these old engines?

Smith: We had to make what we wanted. Those old engines should have been saved because they would run today. We could use them with the energy shortage.

TBH: What was the oldest engine you ever ran?

Smith: I ran one so old one time that I just guess she dated back to 1860 or something like that. She was so old she had a brass nameplate right alongside the boiler.

TBH: You never ran a diesel, did you?

Smith: No, I never did. I never had any use at all for a diesel. No sir, no diesel for me. I'm against those things.

TBH: You could never race logging trains, could you?
Smith: No, the track wouldn’t stand it. My Dad did one time with a little Mogul about like the one I was running in Slater. About like that, except she didn't have any trailer wheels. He ran nine miles in nine minutes with it one day. The mill was burning; he had just left the mill with a little short line passenger train. They called ahead and caught him nine miles out at Hinsonton, Georgia. He had the superintendent on the train with him. So he just cut loose and left that passenger train right there. Him and his superintendent had about two box cars behind them to steady the engine, and he made nine miles in nine minutes.

TBH: Did you ever have a chance to race one yourself?

Smith: No. I never did try. I was always like my Dad – he was careful. And he made six miles in six minutes from Cotton to Pelham, Georgia, with that same little engine one night. That night some convicts got loose, and he was hurrying out there with the dogs. He made it O. K. though. But he wasn’t wild. He was a very careful engineer, and he was in demand everywhere to run engines.

TBH: On a good day how fast did you drive? Eight miles per hour or something like that?
Smith: Well, with the logging trains we’d run around eight to ten miles an hour, sometimes fifteen or twenty. You see, what counts for speed on a locomotive is how high the wheels are. Engines with the higher wheels and short stroke could run eighty miles an hour. You take an engine with a short stroke and high wheel, and it can turn those wheels over so much faster. But they don’t have the power that a low wheel engine has. In a low wheel engine the pressure from the piston is closer to the rim of the wheel and that makes a difference.

Now here’s a picture of one of the logging engines up at Arcadia. She doesn’t have any truck under the front at all, nor under the back either. That’s what you call a 0-6-0. It’s a switcher type. It was dangerous to run them fast because they’d jump the track since they didn’t have any lead-in truck under the front. It was built for a switcher, but they were hauling logs with it. One fellow turned it over. I don’t know where it was.

TBH: When would this be, back in the 1940s?

Smith: Yeah, that mill shut down about ’45 or ’50. They wanted to buy that little engine from Slater, but Mrs. Dowling wanted too much for it.

TBH: Do you have any idea what happened to these old engines like the one from Dowling?

Smith: Cut up for scrap. They were all cut up for scrap, except this one. This one is in Rossville, Georgia, that’s up in northwest Georgia, at a park called “Whistles in the Woods.” A man up there bought that one, and last word I heard he still had that engine. But when she went from Slater down to the Lee Cypress Company down in the Big Cypress Swamp, she ran down there for quite awhile.

TBH: What kind of hours did you work in the ’20s and ’30s in the sawmills?

Smith: The mills usually ran ten hours a day in Florida. But the mechanics there who had to keep up the machinery usually worked long and didn’t get any overtime pay. Once when I was just getting straight $125 a month, I worked one week till ten or eleven every night except Thursday night when I worked all night. On Friday night I went home at ten because I gave out. So Saturday night I didn’t mean to work. I meant to take that off. I’d already turned in my resignation, and the woodsman came in there and wanted a shaft made, a travelling shaft they called it, for skidding logs out of the swamp. He wanted that travelling shaft made Saturday night. I said, “I can't do it. I worked every night this week and all night Thursday night, and I’m tired out.”

Well, he says, “We got to have it, and you’ve got to make it because you’ve too much to do tomorrow.”

I said, “No I'll make it for you tomorrow.”

“No,” he says, “You’ll have too much to do tomorrow.”
I said, “I’m not doing it, and furthermore my resignation is already in the office; I just been catching up here.” Oh, he was mad, and he went on about it.

TBH: When was this?

Smith: 1929.

TBH: So they would just pay $125 a month and expect you to work until the work was done?

Smith: Yes, that’s right. So I went down the next morning, and I made the shaft for him. I got him ready to go all right, but I had a row with the millwright and the engineer because I wouldn’t quit that job and go ahead and test some bolts or lay special bolts. I left the shop, and I told them I had enough of overtime.

Well, Mr. Will Forcey, president of the company, came by and said, “Is there anything else you want on the job?” I told him I didn’t think there was because I was just disgusted, and he said, “I know how you feel, you’re a good man.” He said, “A fellow got his hand cut off in the planing mill just awhile ago. The fellow that moved in there between midnight and day on Monday morning went on to work at 7:00 and cut his left hand off.”

Then he told me that he had fired the haulup man. That’s the man who brings the logs up into the mill, and you have to know the same thing that the sawyer knows. You have to know what the log will make and cut it to fit the orders on the board.

Well, I asked him, “What’s the matter with that job?”

He said, “Well, I don’t know but I’ve fired six men off that now and I just gave the last man his discharge.” They come from Mississippi and Alabama, where there’s good timber, and they don’t know how to cut this Florida timber. The wind down here has twisted these trees until they have wind shakes straight across the log. We have heart shakes. (That’s a hollow within the log.) He said, “We have wind shakes and heart shakes down here, and we have a lot of spiked knots. (They’re hollow.) The fellows from up there don’t know how to do it. Furthermore, if I can't get a man who can cut logs to fit the bill, he can’t keep the mill going. He lets the mill run out of logs. If he keeps logs in the mill, he just pulls them up and chops them, and if it doesn't fit the bill, we’re losing money.”

I said, “I know that, and I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll take that job on one condition.”

He said, “How’s that? Can you do it?”

I said, “Yeah, I can take it and hold it to your satisfaction on condition that I don’t do any overtime work or any Sunday. I’m tired of it.”
He said, “All right, you take it and hold it, and you can cuss out anybody that mentions overtime.”

Well, I had to do that the next Sunday. The engineer, the millwright and the foreman all put in hours for me. Even went to the boss, but he told them to get out of there and let me alone. He said that I was holding the job I was on, and I stayed there long as the mill ran.

TBH: You talked about someone losing his hand. Did you ever have any accidents? Were you ever hurt bad?

Smith: Not too bad. That’s about the worst accident I’ve ever had right there on my hand. I stuck that in a 120-volt switch in 1918, and the blast blew the hide and hair off my hand half-way to my elbow. But I was on a dry floor, and my feet were dry. We used to have what we called a wood system switch that had four plugs about a foot long, and they stuck in the switch board at four different points. The one that got me was for the street lights in Shipley, Florida, and I was standing close to the board one night. I’d just run the voltage back when the picture machine went off at the theatre and the packing house had called in that they were going to shut down. Well, there was a storm outside, and I guess a street light line must have blown against a wet limb because the street light fuse blew out, and there came a roll of fire out from under the switch board as big as a barrel. I jumped and struck one of the switches that the handle was off, and it almost blew my hand off. That was about my closest call right there.

TBH: In talking about the shops, were there any unions back then?

Smith: No. In the 1940’s, when I was working in a shop here in Fort Myers, a union man came in the shop one day, and he almost had a fit because I had four machines going. I had two lathes, a big radial drill press and a milling machine all going at one time. He came in there, and he almost had a fit. He said that I wasn’t supposed to run but one machine at a time. I said, “I’m not after union rules now; I’m trying to keep the job going.” It was during the war, and we couldn’t get machinists. We had a few from the big airfield out at Page Field. A lot of those fellows wanted to moonlight and work in the machine shop. They’d come in and call themselves machinists. Well, they really weren’t the way the government trained those fellows. If he was a lathe man, he was a good one, but he couldn’t run anything else in the shop. If he was a milling machine man, he was lost on the lathe. So they knew how to run one machine, but in a job shop you’ve got to run everything. If it becomes necessary, you’ve got to go in the blacksmith shop and do that, too. Also I had to weld. I was doing everything there. So this union man just about had a fit. He got a job there, but he didn’t stay long. He jumped on me again about running more than one machine. Then the man who ran the shop let him go.

TBH: Even without unions did you ever find workers got fed up with company rules?

Smith: Oh yeah! They’d just walk off and leave their jobs. I saw one of the funniest things that happened up here at Wausaw, Florida, one time. It kind of suprised everybody at the sawmill. We were cutting logs when the saw threw a log out into the millhouse. Well, it
broke a joist, swung it around and took off half of the gable end of the millhouse. The sawyer wanted to stop and change saws. The superintendent there was one of these fellows that knew everything, and he said, “No, the saw’s all right and I can saw with it if you can’t.”

It made the sawyer mad, and he said, “All right, you go ahead and saw.”

The superintendent couldn’t cut a straight line with that saw to save his neck because the saw was bent. This old sawyer backed off, and as he walked out to the edge of the millhouse, he caught a rat. Well, the superintendent was wearing a big overcoat, and the sawyer walked over and put that rat in the superintendent’s pocket. The superintendent ran his hand in the sidepocket for something, and when he did, that rat bit him and business picked up. He gave a big sling and slung the rat, glove and all. They just shut the mill down. They didn’t know what to do.

So finally the foreman who happened to know the old engineer down under the mill, he went down and got him, and he agreed to saw. But he was a seventy-five-year-old Negro who was so crosseyed he could look two ways at once. He came up in the mill and tried out the twin engine levers to get the feel of it. He was ready to go, and they didn’t know what he was going to do. But he did so well they tried hiring him. They even offered him a raise if he’d take it.

“No sir,” he said, “this is not a black man’s job. This is a white man’s job, and I don’t want it. I'll go back under the mill just as soon as you can find somebody.” That old Negro was one of the best sawyers I ever saw in my life. He handled that thing like just like he born to it.

TBH: So whites and blacks worked in the mill but they had black jobs and white jobs?

Smith: Yeah. Those were the Jim Crow days. Such jobs as sawyer and millwright were usually a white man’s job. Also lumber inspector and foreman because a white man wouldn’t work under a black man in those days. Well, I got to give credit to a black man. He taught me to run one of those big steam loaders in the woods, and it was a black man that taught me most of what I know about running an ice plant.

TBH: What would blacks do in the sawmills?

Smith: Handle lumber mostly, and do the less skilled labor. Usually the head block setter was a white man. But we had colored block setters in the Everglades, and they were good, just as good.

That reminds me of a Negro millwright up in Sibley, Georgia, who worked with my Dad. Once a Negro hobo threatened to beat up the fireman, who was a crippled man. Well, Dad turned the fire hose on him.

The hobo then told the Negro millwright, “I’m gonna get that man who wet me.”
Well, the millwright said, “You better let him alone and get on out of town.”

Well, here’s what happened. The Negro millwright instead of sticking up for the black hobo came and told Dad, “You watch him.”

Dad said, “I won’t wait to watch it.”

He went through the mill and picked up a bolt about two inches square and four feet long. Next day that fellow was found dead up the railroad tracks. Show you how the law was then. The law never heard about it. The section men dug a hole like they were burying a hog, rolled him into it, and that was the last of it.

In Moultrie, Georgia, a Negro raped and killed a twelve-year-old girl in 1920. As soon as they caught the Negro, the judge sentenced him to hang as quick as he could, but that wasn’t quick enough to suit the mob. They took him from the courthouse, and everybody that could went down to Autreyville where they took him. A lot of people didn’t have a car, and they would hang on to anything going. There were four or five cars broken down
between Moultrie, Georgia, and Autreyville, where they burned this black man at the stake. Well, I had just loaded 2000 feet of dress siding for a house on a big truck. I couldn’t go with that, but I ran out about a mile across the river, got my motorcycle and side car and went with a friend. The governor wired down there that he was going to hold this whole mob for murder. They just broke off some of the ribs where the flesh had burned away, shipped them to the governor and wired him what they had done. When those ribs got to Atlanta, the governor wasn’t there. He was gone.

TBH: When you lived in St. Petersburg in the 1920s, you built an old locomotive on an automobile frame. What kind of car was it?

Smith: It was an Oakland car, a 1922 Oakland car that had wire wheels. I just took the body off the car and built a locomotive and tender on it. It was twenty-two feet long and had a homemade cab on it just like a regular cab. I had a ten gallon milk can for the dome, and the cylinders were five gallon cans. The smokestack was built out of tin stove pipe.

TBH: What kind of locomotive was it?

Smith: An old timer with high wheels like the one in this picture. From the wheels up it was a regular little engine. Of course, it had the car wheels. It had a gauge board or instrument board right up over the boiler head. I drove it out to the airport, and I blocked traffic out there. In 1928 I drove it in downtown St. Pete on 4th Street and on Central Avenue. I started up at 9th Street and went on down to 4th Street where I was blocked in completely. A cop came and looked at me and that thing and said, “Pull that thing off to one side. I want to see it myself.” Everywhere I went it was a sensation. Noel Mitchell, the auctioneer and one-time mayor of St. Pete, was in real estate, and he wanted to buy if from me to advertise. He thought he would stand in the tender and advertise his lots for sale. It was an attraction all right. I was working for the Marine Wave Machine Company, and I drove it to work for a long time.

TBH: If I found a picture of it, how would I recognize it?

Smith: Well, it’s got wire wheels on it, and they called her “old ’97.” Some of the bunch put “97” right on the front end of it on the badge plate. The St. Pete Times ran a story about it. It was in several parades. It was in the Festival of States parade in ’29 and ’30. It was also in the ’29 and ’30 Gasparilla parade in Tampa.

TBH: Compared to a real locomotive, was it about half size?

Smith: Not even that big. The diameter of the boiler was twenty-eight inches.

TBH: What was the last run you made? Was it at Slater?

Smith: You mean the last real locomotive?

TBH: Ye s.
Smith: That was at the Slater sawmill in ’42 or ’43. Of course, I ran every engine out there. They had seven engines out there, and I ran all of them. They all handled just alike.

TBH: How did you get started writing for “Railroad Magazine”? Was it much later?

Smith: No, I was writing for the Tampa Tribune for D. B. McKay, and then the News-Press editor here in Fort Myers asked me how about writing for him. Well, I’d written several railroad stories. Do you remember seeing Street and Smith novels in the libraries? Well, there’s a lady, Vivian Grey, who lives just up the river here. She has written forty novels, under that pen name, and she was still writing for Street and Smith. She was a well known novelist in her day. Her name is Ruth D’Agostino now. She must be a year and a hundred because I read her stuff when I was young. I just happened to meet her and her husband down here at a store, and I asked her where she would recommend me trying to sell stories. She wrote a letter to the editor of Railroad Magazine and told him that I’d written several good railroad stories and asked him to give me a try. So he wrote back to me then. Come to find out he’d already published one article by me, but he didn’t give me any credit for it. He got me to write for him.

TBH: When was this?

Smith: I started writing for them about ’59. I wrote a number of stories for Railroad Magazine. It went out of business about four or five years ago. One story I wrote for Railroad Magazine was about wild hoggers. The engineer is called a hogger, you see. It told about a time a fellow got drunk, cut loose from the train and left it standing on the main line at Wausaw, Florida, twenty-five miles above Southport. It was a log train. He was running a Mogul engine with four-foot drivers.

TBH: What’s a Mogul engine?

Smith: That’s one that’s got one pair of pilot wheels up front, and six driver wheels and no trailer wheels under the cab. Well, this engineer was drunk. He got hold of some moonshine. He cut loose from his log train and left it standing on the little mainline of the Birmingham, Columbus and St. Andrew. He pulled his gun on the fireman and told him to keep her hot. Well, the fireman was scared of course, and he kept her hot all right. The engineer pulled that throttle all the way out. I was standing at Cedar Creek when he passed, and how she took that curve I don’t know. The smoke was just flattened out. He ran wide open into Southport, twenty-five miles away. Just him and the fireman on the engine with no train. So the depot man, Curtis Jones, was supposed to give him orders where to meet the passenger train that was coming. Jones was standing on the platform with his orders, but the drunken engineer just waved at him as the engine went by. He was standing on the tender in a cloud of smoke and cinders, waving his gun.

Jones ran back in and rang Southport and asked the agent there, “Where’s the passenger train?”
He said, “Just pulling out.”

Jones hollered, “Stop him.”

He heard the receiver fall and heard footsteps as the agent ran out. The passenger train was just clearing the yard, and he just gave the conductor standing on the back a stop sign – what we call a “wash-out.” The conductor couldn’t figure out what in the world was wrong. He waved the engineer to come back. They put the passenger train on the sidetrack. They figured this fellow would go right on into the bay by the way he was coming. But instead of that he pulled up and made a perfect stop. He stepped down right into the sheriff’s arms. The sheriff collared him right there and locked him up. Then they had to send another man out there to get the log train.

TBH:  How fast was he going?

Smith: He was making at least fifty when he passed me, and I never will forget that.

TBH:  I saw a poem you wrote in your “Scrapbook #1” about your father railroading.

Smith: When I get lonesome. I like to write poems like this.

Dad’s Graveyard Run,
(To My Father)

Alone at night beside the railroad,
I watched the evening shadows fall
When I dozed in peaceful slumber
    I heard a familiar whistle call

It was the whistle of my father
Blowing the call of the whippoorwill
I saw his face framed in the window
Of a Mogul high on Dead Man’s Hill

I tried to tell myself “I am dreaming”
I tried to rouse my sleeping mind
Dad’s long buried on a hill-side and
There is not a Mogul on the line

Still, although the road is now all Diesel
A steamer is pounding over the Hill
Throwing black smoke to the Heavens
While Dad is reaching for the “Quill”

Then once more over the sleeping country
I heard that old steam whistle wail
Calling to the long-dead trainmen
Who used to ride the “Mid-night Mail”

Whistling through some forgotten station
Answering a Phantom’s Ghostly Wave
 I knew it was Dad and a Spirit Crew
On a mid-night run outside their graves

With side rods flashing in the moon-light
 Dark Tender rocking to and fro
 The Mogul roared on through the night
  Wheeling her train from long ago
 Then just before my dream was ended
 The marker lights grew pale and dim
 I heard Dad whistle for the Pearly Gate
 And answer St. Peter’s “Come On In”
CAMPING AND CRUISING ALONG THE SUNCOAST IN 1899

By Kay Tapley

During the mid-nineteenth century, the Pinellas peninsula was a sparsely settled appendage of Hillsborough County. The 1880s brought a slow increase in the peninsula’s population, largely through the efforts of land speculator and developer Hamilton Disston. Disston’s holdings on the Pinellas peninsula totaled over 150,000 acres. His land company was responsible for extensive advertising campaigns in the northern United States and in England that persuaded many people to invest in lands on “the sun-kissed Pinellas Peninsula.”

Many who bought land from Disston viewed their property, acquired at from two to five dollars an acre, as an investment only, and they had no thought of actually settling there. Real pioneer spirit was necessary for those who decided to make the long journey to Tampa and across the bay to carve a home out of their isolated property. By 1885 the population of the entire Pinellas peninsula was still averaging less than 150 persons, with the majority of the native-born American settlers coming not from the North, but from northern Florida and neighboring southern states.

The English response to Disston’s siren song was a bit more enthusiastic than that of the “Yankee.” In fact, there were already several English settlers scattered through the district in October, 1885, when young David Watt arrived on the peninsula with his sister and parents to homestead the 100 acre tract the elder Watt had acquired from Disston’s British agents the preceding year.

Most of the Watts’ new neighbors were farmers, who could testify that Disston’s advertisements had not exaggerated claims of balmy weather and an almost year-round growing season. Unfortunately, they could also add something that the land company’s advertisements had failed to mention – the peninsula lacked good markets for its crops. However, Reverend Watt, a retired Congregational minister, and his family fared somewhat better than many newcomers to the area, because they were able to draw on financial reserves in England. In 1886 they built a new house of “the finest yellow pine from the still-virgin forests of the South” to replace the three-room log cabin which had originally stood on their Pinellas homesite.

Transportation to and from the Pinellas region was difficult and remained so for many years. As late as 1911 it required a 160 mile train trip by way of Trilby and Lakeland to reach Tampa from St. Petersburg. Water transportation was both faster and cheaper, and early Pinellas settlers like young David Watt frequently crossed the gulf and bay. The difficulty of land transport also limited the recreational options of most Pinellas citizens. Amateur theatrical productions, such as one held during the winter of 1886 in which David and his sister acted, were popular diversions, as were picnics, oyster roasts and overnight outings.
Among the favorite amusements of native Floridians and northern visitors alike during the latter years of the nineteenth century was the camping and fishing cruise. With bays and sheltered coastal waters teeming with fish and rimmed by romantic semi-tropical wilderness, Florida’s southwestern coast provided endless opportunities for sport and recreation. Florida coastal cruising inspired scores of popular books, from travel accounts to the adventure novels of writers like Kirk Monroe and St. George Rathborne. In his youth on the Pinellas peninsula, David Watt and his friends frequently went on such outings. Their voyages took them sometimes as far south as Marco Island, cruising and fishing by day, and camping ashore or afloat by night.

Just why such outings were so popular, David was not quite sure. In a 1901 letter written from St. Petersburg, he commented “I have been speculating recently as to the curious kink in the nature of some men which drives them periodically to seek discomfort and danger in boats . . . I have found no answer to my queries. I simply know that . . . [we] will slave to have a few days’ cruising, and are never sorry to make port again.”

David’s fascination with Florida cruising continued even after he left Florida early in 1889 to pursue a civil engineering career in Kentucky. He maintained his contacts with his friends on the Pinellas peninsula, returning at intervals for visits. While visiting the peninsula in the 1890s, he wrote a series of long-hand accounts of his cruising activities, apparently to be circulated to his friends and family. Mr. Watt retired to St. Petersburg in the 1920s and late in 1939 presented the manuscript accounts of his youthful adventures to the Florida Historical Society. These interesting and colorful narratives, of which the following document is typical, are located in the Society’s library at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

St. Petersburg, Florida, January 2, 1899

Last Tuesday I spent with Harry, looking for a boat, and seeing the rest of the town unvisited the day before, when I arrived from Louisville. At the depot I stumbled on Susie and Nell, the latter with her husband, a very pleasant young man of five or six and twenty, lieutenant on a revenue cutter. This position he intends to resign, to practise insurance, and later to enter a law office in New York. Sue looked about as usual, as did the rest, except Bess, who has grown very frail.

Well, we got a boat at last – a cat boat with a huge sail and good beam, but cumbersome and with no cabin. The latter we will improvise from an army tent, brought with other trophies of the late war by enterprising sailors, from Santiago wharf where they had been unloaded. In this one house alone I have come across two rifles and over 500 rounds of ammunition, besides smaller mementoes.

Next day we hoisted sail after waiting two hours for Keddie, who, being told to come to Mrs. Stanton’s, went straight to St. Petersburg and only appeared as I was casting loose our moorings. There were Harry Stanton, Keddie, myself, and Butler’s brother-in-law Myers in the party. So we sailed about 2 p.m. with a light head wind, reaching Pt. Pinellas at sundown, and from there, after twice stranding on the clam bar, we found a fair wind and a full moon to take us to Pass-a-Grille. It was a bit chilly on the water, so three of us sat astern with a blanket over our
knees, while Keddie lay up forward and smoked his pipe. Myers passed a bottle of chill Tonic around now and again, which the others seemed to like, but I confined my attention to bread and cheese.

Illustration of Tampa Bay and vicinity. Lines show routes followed by David Watt’s 1899 cruises.

Map by David L. Lawrence.
Late at night we made the wharf on Long Key, where Myers had rented a cottage, and there we camped for the three days we stayed there. We had beds and modern comforts, but little fishing, as bait was scarce. Twice I went after crabs, but the water was precious cold, and crabs were small, as they have been pretty well cleaned out.

Long Key has changed but little, but off the mouth, and ranging towards Egmont, lies a long low key, thrown up by the waves where ten years ago I used to sail a boat. It looks curious, for it lies exposed to all the winds & waves, and yet it is slowly and surely growing. Far out to sea there lie the ribs of a three masted schooner which went ashore on the southern edge of the shoal – stuck in clear weather, and there she lay till she went to pieces.

Nothing much took place during our stay. We had the island to ourselves, as the weather was cool, and I spent my time in doing nothing in particular. Myers had to go north on the Monday, so on Saturday we packed up and hoisted sail again, and made for the Bayou, where we anchored.

On Sunday I went roaming along the lake, which looks as it always did, except for a clearing or two on the north shore. Our old house has been renovated and looks gaudy, and Mr. Lewis has evidently spent much time & money on the place.

Since then the weather has been cool and windy, but we will make a line for Sara Sota [sic] as soon as it calms down.

Off Pass-a-Grille
Thursday, Jan. 4, 99.

I have at last found time for a few lines, but the struggles of the last few days have left their stamp on my shaking hand. We left the Bayou on Tuesday last, after dinner. As there was much to do to get the boat in order, such as putting up the tent, the sails, etc., Harry generously offered to go down and do it all the day preceding. So I let him go, and after a neighborly visit to John Bethell, he went aboard & fell asleep till supper time. This he denies, but results showed he could have done nothing else. So, I all unsuspecting, sail was made about 2 p.m. Keddie had been requested to come directly after dinner, but no sign of him was seen, and, not knowing what idea might have seized him, we put to sea alone. This was perhaps as well, for Heaven only knows where he could have slept.
Our destination was somewhere to the south, tho’ nobody knew where, and we sailed on in a light head wind, and to keep up Harry’s courage I talked of reaching Manatee that night. But when night came we were a few hundred yards off Tarpon Key, so I threw out the anchor and we started to get supper. I first discovered that Harry had left all things scattered in the lockers; this was a painful shock, as he had assured me all was in order. I admit the fault was mine, as I ought to have acted on my knowledge of human nature, in a matter such as that. So I left him to find them out, while I started to put up the tent, which Harry had also assured me – but I needn’t repeat. Both of us were thus busy, I at one end of the boat, he at the other. Between us lay sacks of bedding, cooking pots, fishing tackle, blankets, crab hooks, cans of provisions, boxes of provisions, bags of provisions, coats, hats, water bottles, forty other articles, and a mince pie. The mince pie was the worst of all. I had bought it that day in St. Petersburg, thinking it would be something out of our usual course, and so it was. When Harry wasn’t standing on it it got mixed up with me, and when I had found it under the cooking furnace and kicked it to the stern, Harry would promptly set a saucepan down on top of it. So each of us toiled on, Harry trying to disinter something for supper, I battling with the army tent that came from Santiago. (Later on I found the owner’s name upon it in several places. Guileless man! I suppose he thought that would make it sacred.) Between us, back and forth, went that mince pie, and above it all was a gigantic hat of Harry’s which he put away in the stern locker three times, only to find it had crawled on deck again, and was climbing over the things. However, I paid little attention to Harry, and after removing all I could to get room for action, I fell upon the tent, and in less than ten seconds I had it spread over the whole boat. I had no idea what an army tent was like, nor had Harry. He has none yet. It seemed to me to have no end, and when I gave up one side hopelessly and commenced another I found flaps & flies and cords and tent guards till I stood alone engulfed in a sea of ducking [canvas]. I dared not move. From the bow to the stern the boat lay under a wild confusion – the tent gleaming white and ghostly under the soft starlight, while I shuddered to think of what lay underneath. Even if an end was found there was no clue nor means as to how to put it up. For some seconds I stood silent, till I heard from the darkness where Harry stood a smothered exclamation: “Good God! Here’s that hat again!” I looked at him for a few moments without speaking and then I said gently: “Harry, that mince pie won’t be improved by your sitting on it.” Harry got up, and the pie fell off him on the floor. When it came to light next time someone had put a bag of onions on its top.

It seemed hours later when I at last got a pup tent flap fastened to the boom, hanging in graceful folds to gather the rain and dew, with the rest of the tent rammed into dark holes and corners. Harry had by that time got the hat under control by piling firewood on it, and we sat down to a frugal meal of fried pork and bread, graced with reflections on the pleasures of camping out. The mince pie – or rather its shattered remnants – was kept until the morrow, and we turned in about 8 p.m., after which a rat on board (Harry had faithfully promised to bring a trap for it, but etc.) went over our stock of provisions from the salt pork to the self-raising flour. I hope he liked the latter.

Next morning I was up as usual just before dawn, and cooked Harry some delicious oatmeal a la sea-water, which he dutifully ate. I cooked nothing else except coffee, so we made an early start, and by afternoon, in spite of light winds, we had made Longboat Inlet. Why we went there nobody seemed to know, but I thought Harry might like to try the fishing in the Pass. So we went
to a dock half a mile away, and when I left, Harry had two lines in the water which he kept there till I waked him up an hour later. Then we decided we would get better fishing at Blind Pass, thirty miles away, so in half an hour we were sailing north again over the same course we had come that morning. Harry seemed happy that afternoon – I found out later he had been looking forward to a stew for supper, and as we ran northward in the rays of the setting sun he got out the materials and worked with a glad light on his face, framed in with a handkerchief of aggressive scarlet, tied round his neck. It was a touching sight. When twilight came we were riding at anchor; the breeze had died away; a crimson glow of sunset lay far off behind the keys, and the soft murmur of the surf was borne across the sea. The tent, cowed and conquered, was draped across the boat; Harry’s hat was safe from harming us, in the stern locker; and the mince pie was no more. We sat in silence for a long time till the stew was done, and then we sat in silence longer still, until we had eaten it and scraped out the pot. Then, soon after, we went to bed.

Next day I was up with the morning star; it must have been about 3 a.m. – too soon for breakfast, so I turned in again, getting up just before the dawn. Our frugal meal over, we hoisted sail and ran north till Egmont lay off our beam and we were well across the bay. Then the wind fell light, and for some hours we lay in a scorching sun, making only a mile or two an hour till we came abreast of Pass-a-Grille. It was during this time that I put on my full war paint; a red handkerchief knotted round my neck, a crush hat with rim turned down and pulled close over my eyes, no shave for several days, and a pair of goggles. I did this in the gloom under the forward
deck; then, suddenly, I thrust my head out into the full blaze of sunlight, opposite to where Harry sat. His eyes fell on me; a spasm shook his frame, and his face twitched convulsively, while a smothered moan escaped him: “Oh my God!” I drew back in shadow once more, and then bit by bit I came out till he got accustomed to the vision, and at last he came to look on it with delight.

Late that afternoon we tied up near Blind Pass, and after walking two miles to find a place to fish, I came to the conclusion that all the places were on the other side of the Pass, and I went back to the boat. There we found on enquiry that nobody knew just what we came for, as Harry fervently denied he had ever told me the fishing in Blind Pass was good. In fact he denied it so strenuously that I could tell at once that – but politeness forbids me to say more. So we decided we had intended to go somewhere else, we couldn’t say where, but as it was then supper time the question was laid aside. We had more stew that night, but merely a plateful each, and we had to fill up as best we could. As a result we slept badly, and I didn’t get up til near sunrise. A stiff south wind was blowing, and there was plainly a norther not far off, so I called up the crew and told him we would go home.

As it was to be our last breakfast I cooked Harry some delicious sliced sweet potatoes fried a la smoke de lightwood. By some happy chance I had caught sight of a frying-pan handle far in the recesses of the boat, and on drawing it out I found a frying pan at the other end, in a fairly clean
condition, and with some lard already in it. I cleaned the top off the latter – enough to remove all traces of the rat – and then put in the potatoes to fry. Unluckily the fire burned out just as they were getting well warmed, so the dish lacked the piquant flavor I had intended it to have, and we had to eat it in a lukewarm state. Soon after I tried to take a snap-shot of us in our regimentals. The camera was set up in the bows; Harry sat expectant in the stem, and after getting the rubber tube all ready I left the camera and went aft. It was too much. I had done my best to steady it, but when my controlling influence was removed and it was left alone face to face with Harry it fell flat over on its side and nearly went into the sea. I said nothing as I could see poor Harry’s feelings were hurt, so I got him to photograph me, and then the camera came out all right.

A couple of hours later we were scudding along off Maximo under a double reef, and the boat staggering sometimes even then. Spray flew across her decks and stung our bronzed and smoke-grimed faces, and when we swung round Point Pinellas and met the seas from Tampa Bay I had to drop the peak to get her to steer at all. The wind was heavy from the south, and we ran up the coast with the big waves surging and swinging past our stern, driving us sometimes till the boat swung half around. But we reached the Bayou safely and cast anchor – our work for the time was over, and we could look forward to a few days’ rest and recreation. That night (it was Friday afternoon when we got in) a squall of rain came up, and on the Saturday a heavy nor-easter had set in.

Jan. 19

The Keddie mystery has not yet been cleared up. I made several good resolutions to investigate, but they were always side-tracked, so why he never came with us on that trip is still a fearsome and unknown thing. To drive away the recollection I organised [sic] an oyster roast on the old-fashioned lines. I spent a day looking for a good place, collecting a few oysters, and issuing invitations, and when all was done I resigned myself to fate. It happened that I found Joe in town that morning – he had just come from New York – so I brought him down as the principal attraction, after the oysters. We were delayed some time and the others became hungry and – no, not illtempered – we will call it impatient. However, we had the coffee, so we didn’t mind. Besides, I had had a few mouthfuls at Mrs. Stanton’s on the way down, so I could direct operations with a calm & tranquil mind. There were six of the Abercrombie clan, with Mr. Mann, Nell’s latest capture, four of the Stanton household, and those two Watt boys. It was very decorous – four married people and one husband – so we all enjoyed it immensely; and Bob and Joe covered themselves with soot and glory, and then filled up on coffee and oysters. We had only a hundred of the latter left over.

Next day Joe & I and our crew sailed to Pass-a-Grille for crabs, but we found only a few, as Bob Stanton had been over not long before.

After a few days of much needed rest I decided I ought to pay a last visit to the keys, taking along a few others to help to do the housework. I’ll know better next time. Two days were spent in getting up the party and when all was ready I found out the night before that all but a few choice souls had fallen back and said they couldn’t go. I mention no names; time will deal with them.
Sadly I gathered up the wreck of a noble enterprise next day – I say wreck, not wrecks, for that would be a gross misnomer – and in the middle of the morning Gertie11 and Susie and Lettie were sent to Maximo, and Joe, Bob, Harry, and I sailed the boat round there from the Bayou.

As we reached Maximo wharf a rain-squall beat up from the south, and made things lively, so much so that as we brought down our five tons of bedding and provisions the sugar and beans and peas fell into the water, and for the first time in more than a quarter of a century I went camping without beans. Then we set sail in a stiff breeze which fell in half an hour to the flat calm, and we didn’t reach our house at Pass-a-Grille till sunset. A good supper set us all in a proper humor again – I forget what we had, as I never pay much attention to food – and then we sat on the veranda and listened to Bob discoursing on art and politics and philosophy. Time passed with winged feet as the night came on, and we turned in late, about a quarter before nine. Next day we (that is the boys) were up before sunrise, to get coffee for the girls, and to catch fish for breakfast. The coffee had a bad effect on Susie, for after it she couldn't see straight. At least, that was the only reason I could give for her being half an hour longer than the others over her hair, unless she had mislaid some of it. The result, however, was fetching, for Bob remarked she looked awful sweet. I told him the remark had pleased her, whereupon he said he didn’t give a durn if she was pleased or not. The day passed very quietly. It was Sunday, and a holy Sabbath
peace lay over earth and sea. We sat on the veranda nearly all afternoon, saying little and happy in our own company. Above us the soft blue sky; around us the rippling of the sea; no sound to break the stillness but the murmur of the surf, and the whispering of the palm trees in the stream of the soft south wind. So time passed till sunset, and after supper we all sat out upon the wharf, and watched the stars rising above Pine Key.

The girls waited till we were about asleep, and then began to talk to us and sing and plague us as girls have ever delighted to do since the dawn of time. Outside the wind and rain were storming; inside, in one room, were curses and horrid blasphemy; in the other three evil spirits seemed to hold sway. They began with the Doxology, for Bob’s benefit. Bob had no idea what a doxology was, but the word sounded large and ominous, and he soon began to rail and curse and swear till the rest of us stopped our ears with blankets. Then he got out of bed and loosed the weighted cord before alluded to, and it fell on Susie’s head, without of course doing any harm. She said she was at her prayers, or devotions, I forget which. Susie’s a rum girl [good sport]. All three of them caught the cord and broke it, and we were left defenceless. They then began to call out “good-night”, counting one, two, three, and then letting her go. First it was David, then Joe, then Harry, then Bob. Bob by that time was speechless, only an inarticulate moan escaping from
time to time. A volley of shoes followed, hitting the door just above my head; one of Gertie’s shoes was among them. Our appeals for silence were replied to with mocking laughter, and the silvery “good-nights” were hurled at us again. Bob, choking, found his voice; Joe was furious; Harry was exasperated. Strange, weird, grotesque was the language we gave way to; oaths in divers [sic] tongues, uncouth words, wild declamations found only among those that go down to the sea in ships. It was all useless, and the last thing I heard before I fainted from weariness was a chorus of “Twenty one blue-bottles hanging on the wall.” The girls got no morning coffee next day.

We had to leave on the Wednesday; provisions were out (my sainted country, how those girls did eat!); our friends were supposed to be getting anxious about us; and we had a chance of taking back with us an old lady living next door. So we left at one o’clock, with the old lady, to whom Bob sang a song; while he and Joe made faces and threw eggs at each other and at my passenger. No tears were shed at leaving – our grief was too deep for that; we merely clasped hands as we said goodbye when we left the Bayou (I found it advisable to disengage Bob’s and Susie’s hands after a few moments, when he whispered to me confidentially that “Susie was a blamed old goat”). The trip was over, and has passed into the memories of each one of us. (Slow music.)

1 Hamilton Disston, a wealthy Philadelphia manufacturer and at one time Florida’s largest land owner, also figured prominently in bringing the much needed Orange Belt Railway to the Pinellas Peninsula. For a more complete account of Disston’s Florida enterprises, see Karl H. Grismer’s The Story of St. Petersburg (St. Petersburg: P. K. Smith & Co., 1924), pp. 47-57.

2 Information on the Watt family’s homestead and experiences in the Pinellas area is taken from an unpublished letter to Watt Marchman, Executive Secretary of the Florida Historical Society, dated December 12, 1939. This letter also provides considerable information relative to the persons mentioned in the Watt document reprinted here. The letter forms part of the Watt Papers housed in the Society’s Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection.

3 Harry Stanton. The Stanton family came to the area in 1886 from Sandingham, England, where they had been tenants on the estate of the then Prince of Wales. Watt to Marchman, December 12, 1939.

4 Susie and Nell Abercrombie. The Abercrombies were an impoverished southern family whose plantation had been lost during the Civil War. Their arrival had preceded the Watts’ by several years. Members of the family included eighty-year-old Dr. Charles Abercrombie, his son, Dr. John B. Abercrombie, John’s wife Susan Cary and their six daughters – Lettie, Josie, Nell, Susie, Bess and Mary. Watt to Marchman, December 12, 1939.

5 David Keddie. A Scotsman, Keddie was the ex-manager of a branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Down on his luck when Watt knew him, he earned a living in the St. Petersburg area as a day laborer. Watt to Marchman, December 12, 1939.

6 Cyrus Butler. Butler was a young bachelor and the Watts’ next-door neighbor. A graduate in civil engineering from the University of Illinois, he was one of the residents who managed to make a substantial success of his orange grove. Watt to Marchman, December 12, 1939.

7 Mr. Myers was a lawyer from Waycross, Georgia, who built up a thriving practice in the Tampa Bay area. His inordinate love of fishing and camping, according to David Watt, led to his downfall, as he pursued these pleasures to such excess that his clients eventually deserted him. Watt to Marchman, December 12, 1939.

8 According to an annotated map accompanying the Watt Papers, “the Bayou” was Big Bayou near St. Petersburg.

9 Tarpon Key also appears on contemporary maps as Cabbage Key and Bird Key.
Joe Watt. David mentions having two brothers, Joe and John, both former stockbrokers’ clerks in London. From the Watt Papers one gathers that the family included additional brothers, but only these two are named. Watt to Marchman, December 12, 1939.

Gertie Stanton.

Scrawled on the margin of the original letter were the following words: “I hereby wish to state that Mr. D. Watt has feloniously used my name without my consent and I do hereby state that I did not use the curse words that are ascribed to me. Yours sincerely, Bob.”
WHERE TO FIND YOUR ROOTS IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA (PART 2)
By Marjorie E. Hazel

In the last issue of the *Tampa Bay History*, Phyllis Belnap gave a factual accounting of the Latter-Day Saint Branch Genealogical Library in Tampa. When the article was written, the Tampa Branch was the only one available in the Tampa Bay area. Since then several changes have taken place which precipitate this article.

The St. Petersburg Branch Genealogical Library became the 341st branch to join the ever-increasing network of Mormon Genealogical Libraries throughout the world. The St. Petersburg Branch Library is located in the church at 570 62nd Avenue North, St. Petersburg, but all mail should be addressed to: P. O. Box 20962, Gateway Mall Station, St. Petersburg, FL 33742. This library like all others belonging to the Mormon Church is open to the public. Library hours are: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Thursdays 9 a.m.-9 p.m., closed Fridays; Saturdays 9 a.m.-noon except on the fourth Saturday when the Florida Society for Genealogical Research holds its meeting at the church from 2 to 4 p.m. You can call (813) 525-9351 for an appointment. Dorothy Boyer is at the library on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to help check DAR, Mayflower, and lineages for other organizations.

The new branch library held a free seminar on April 26 when approximately 250 people showed up to learn how to use the facilities and tour the library. Since then 270 patrons have taken advantage of the six microfilm and three microfiche readers. The 1978 updated Computer File Index was purchased prior to the library’s opening and has been one of the library’s most popular assets. By the end of July, the microfilm cabinet held about 120 films which were placed there on indefinite loan and another 40 films on a six month loan. Here on a two week loan are over 100 films which can be obtained by anyone using the library even though they were ordered for another patron. Cherry colored cards in the card catalog indicate a microfilm which has been placed in the library on an indefinite loan. These are mostly indexes to probate records, grantee and grantor indexes, vital records and other primary source records. Six month loans are denoted with a red dot on the film box and a red date indicating when the film is to be returned to Salt Lake.

The indefinite loans are mainly from Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Iowa with a few from New York, Virginia, North and South Carolina, Vermont, Maine, Illinois. These also include a few family histories. In addition to the English speaking countries listed in the card catalog, you will find Germany, Hungary, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Austria, Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cypress, Gilbraltar, Greece, Greenland and Iceland. Records from other countries can be ordered if needed by a patron.

The St. Petersburg branch has a card catalog file of other Florida libraries and their genealogical holdings which was started by the Florida Society for Genealogical Research. We try to keep up to date on the changes of address and library hours, and we have a notebook with the current changes in state law that affect the opening or closing of public records to the genealogist. We are keeping a card file on vital records that appear in periodicals in our library.
Due to limited book space, we are trying not to duplicate books that are available in nearby libraries. Along with the genealogical materials that belong to the branch library, you will find many books and periodicals belonging to the Florida Society for Genealogical Research whose board of directors voted to house permanently its collection in the branch library. The Society, too, has many donations from its membership which help in researching your family tree.

The library sells duplicate copies of periodicals and books which have been donated and purchases other materials it does not have with the proceeds. At present there are for sale several years of Genealogical Helper, National Genealogical Society Quarterly, New England Historical and Genealogical Quarterly, DAR Magazine, Maryland Genealogical Society Quarterly and a great many Florida city directories all published in the 1970s. Prices vary according to the condition of the material.

As a learning experience for patrons, the St. Petersburg Branch Library holds an annual Genealogy Seminar. This year’s seminar was held at the church on October 25th. It was an all-day affair and participants had a choice of five class periods and a selection of over thirty different subjects. The nominal fee this year included a genealogical packet for all who attended and contained all of the hand-outs from each instructor. Every year capacity crowds have attended.

The branch library provides free consultation on research problems but only to the extent of the knowledge of the personnel in that branch. We can ask for a limited amount of help from the main library in Salt Lake City through a Library Reference Questionnaire. As with all branch libraries, our librarians are volunteers and do not do your research for you, but they will try to guide you to do it yourself. The fun of tracing your family tree is doing it yourself anyway!

In the Spring/Summer 1980 issue of Tampa Bay History, we stated that the Tampa Branch Library had printouts of English Parish Registers. Because of shelf space, its librarian, Barbara Dalby, chose to give these printouts to the St. Petersburg Branch Library. Other recent acquisitions include several years of three Ohio quarterlies, as well as some from Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Virginia and Indiana. The library through a memorial gift has purchased the five volumes of Local Histories in the Library of Congress. This is a bibliography of county and state histories arranged by geographical location. These volumes are a companion piece to the Tampa Branch’s Family Histories in the Library of Congress. These reference works let you know a book exists even though you cannot (except in very rare circumstances) borrow it from the Library of Congress on international library loan. However, if you cannot locate another copy anywhere and it is beyond the copyright date (or you can get written permission from the publisher or author), you can have it photocopied or microfilmed at the U. S. Government’s prevailing prices for photoduplicating.

The microfilmed card catalog from the Genealogical Department of the Mormon Church has a set of fifty-two films that covers its vast collection of filmed family histories. The main library has thousands of family histories that are in book form only, and these are also listed in the card catalog; however, the latter cannot be borrowed. If a book was published before 1906, the branch library can request that it be microfilmed and sent to us at the usual fee. Family histories are not
kept in the branch library on an indefinite loan because of their limited usage, but a six month loan is available so you can make copies.

Here are some handy hints to use effectively the branch library. First, you should fill out your pedigree chart and then make a separate family group sheet for each couple on the pedigree chart. If you do not have forms, they can be purchased for a few cents at the library. A good supply of several sizes and types of genealogical forms are kept for the convenience of the patrons, as well as many good "How To" books. These forms make it easier to survey your problem so we can direct you to possible sources.

Next, check the C. F. L (Computer File Index - now called International Genealogical Index) to see if any of your progenitors have been submitted or extracted on this 64 million name file. To use this file, you need only know the name and in what state or country a person was born. An individual must be deceased to appear in this file. If you are fortunate enough to find a few names, you will want to send a photoduplication order for copies of the entries that were submitted by a member of the Mormon Church. If the reference number is preceded by a letter, this is a church extraction program, and there is no follow-up for the source. It is usually a book or microfilm from the main library. There is a small fee for this service. When you receive the photocopy, you then write to the person whose name and address appears in the upper left hand corner of the form. Since this computer file began in 1969, most of the people are still alive and will answer your request. They may have more information to share with you.

After you have determined what has or has not been put on the Computer File, you will then use the microfilmed card catalog for the states or countries where your ancestors lived. From this you will select records that might help you with your research problems. Many different genealogical records have been filmed, but one of the first categories you should check is "Vital Records." This will confirm birth dates, marriage dates and death or burial dates you may have gotten from other sources. In some localities it will be town records that need to be consulted, in other places the county will have jurisdiction over the records. Do not fail to check the state archives and local historical societies because many early records have been placed there after they were no longer required in the originating archives. Even if you think you know your information is correct, look at the official records - you may be surprised at what they reveal. How about a grandmother who died three months before she was born? Her death certificate says so! The one in the county did anyway, but the one in the state office showed the correct date. You may even find your own birth certificate is inaccurate - I did!

But what if the courthouse burned down? This happened not only in the South, courtesy of Sherman's march to the sea, but Yankee courthouses suffered the same fate. Do not believe it when you are told, "All our records burned in the fire." There must be some reconstructed records, otherwise the county could not operate. They could not even tax people without knowing who owns what. Do you think they are going to wait until the taxpayer brings the money in? Not likely! Sometimes through the vast microfilming program of the LDS Church, you can have access to the original records. One of our librarians was told in a New England town that the records did not exist - but they were on the Mormon list of microfilms - and they were microfilmed copies of the originals that were supposedly lost. Although the old handwritten ones are much harder to read than typed abstracts, nothing is better than the primary entry. After
finding the appropriate record on the film, send for a certified copy of it by citing the volume and page number.

Indexes to probates, estate records, land entries and vital records help you order the right rolls of film. Land records do not always give genealogical data, but they do confirm your ancestors living in a certain locality at a specific time period. Many "stone walls" in genealogy are errors of location and come tumbling down when you start looking in the right place at the right time. Do not be too narrow-minded in your search, because your ancestors moved around a great deal more than we give them credit for. A search of surrounding counties will many times turn up additional records you did not expect.

We have a great many patrons in our library who are doing foreign research. Before you are ready to cross the Atlantic, you need to search the records in the county where your ancestor lived AFTER he or she came over on the boat. These records will probably be more fruitful than passenger lists. If you are lucky enough to know exactly where your foreign ancestors were born, you can use the card catalog, remembering that when the records arrive they will be written in THEIR language and not English. You may have to purchase a dictionary in that language or have someone translate the records. Our library is keeping a file of persons who are able to read foreign languages. Remember, in many countries Latin was the language written in records, especially Catholic Church records.

In addition to vital records kept by the city and county, there are church baptism and burial records. Churches also record marriages performed, while marriage bonds, applications, and licenses remain in the county offices. Cemeteries’ and sextons’ records, morticians’ records and tombstone inscriptions can be used side by side. The key to successful research is to make a list of all those persons who would be interested in a certain event. They might include eye-witnesses, friends, family, and those responsible for keeping official records.

People in the Tampa Bay area who live part-time in the North can use a branch library while there. We have a list of libraries to consult. Patrons can order microfilms ahead of time by writing to our P. O. Box about a month before they return, and then their films will probably arrive at home soon after they do. It usually takes a month to receive a film from the main archives. However, to avail yourself of this service, you must consult the card catalog ahead of time and send us the film number, the film title and locality, along with a check for $2.10 for each film ordered. Even though the Mormon Church may not have microfilmed the records you need, it may have them scheduled for future copying. By using a Library Reference Questionnaire, you can see if there have been any added since the card catalog was filmed. Do not just visit the branch library once and then give up. Persistence pays off in the end.

One other word of advice. Not all the films that have been microfilmed are available for use in the branch library. Some are restricted by state laws, some are restricted by the archive where they were filmed, and some will be released for public use at a later time. The Genealogical Department in Salt Lake City keeps all contractual agreements and does not knowingly violate any restrictions or copyrights. So be patient if your area of research is restricted. Try to change the laws to make public records more accessible, and please do not gripe at those who are obeying the law.
Learn what records will or will not help you, what you can expect to get from various records, and where they might be located. Consult your local colleges for genealogy classes to help you learn effective research. Building a family tree requires certain skills, so the more prepared you are, the less likely your tree is to be uprooted by mistaken research.

We invite all readers to come visit our Branch Library and watch us grow!

EDITOR’S NOTE: The following facilities contain additional information for genealogical researchers.

CLEARWATER PUBLIC LIBRARY - 100 North Osceola Avenue (462-6800)
The library has a good card file selection on genealogy, and it houses substantial research material. Genealogy books are kept mainly in the reference section. Ample tables and chairs are provided for research. The library furnishes an interlibrary loan system to retrieve material from the State Library in Tallahassee and federal census data through NARS. There are two microfilm readers, one reader-printer, and a copying machine available.

DUNEDIN PUBLIC LIBRARY - 223 Douglas Avenue (733-4115)
Monday-Wednesday 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.; Thursday and Friday 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
The library has a good selection of "how-to-do-it" books, but is limited in research materials. Reference materials are to be used at the library and do not circulate. There is an excellent research area containing a microfiche reader, but there is no microfilm reader. A copying machine is available. Librarians have bibliographies and supplements, and they are most willing and helpful with research suggestions.

FORT MYERS PUBLIC LIBRARY - 2310 Edwards Drive (334-3992)
Monday and Thursday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
The genealogical section is very limited, but a grant will be spent to increase the collection. Books are gathered on the porch area with a microfilm reader readily accessible. The library has a loan arrangement with Tallahassee and with NARS at East Point, Georgia. Microfilm and books can be ordered for the cost of postage.

MANATEE PUBLIC LIBRARY - 1301 Baccarrota Blvd., Bradenton (748-5555)
Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Eaton Room: Tuesday-Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
This facility currently has varied but limited resources. In addition to genealogical lists in the card catalogue, there is a special file and an exchange file with the Sarasota Library. The Manatee County Genealogical Society meets at the library and has donated books. Librarians will furnish the names of Society members. Genealogical items are housed in the Eaton Room on the second floor.

NEW PORT RICHEY PUBLIC LIBRARY - 302 East Main Street (849-2179) Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m.; Thursday, Friday,
Saturday 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
The library has a very limited collection, but it does contain many books on Scottish ancestry. Genealogy books are kept in the reference section and do not circulate. There is an interlibrary loan service for residents of Pasco County with validated library cards. This facility has one microfilm and two microfiche readers. In addition a copying machine is available.

PINELLAS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Heritage Park, 11909 125th St. N., Largo, Florida 33540
In the fall of 1979, the Pinellas County Historical Society launched a project dealing with genealogy in Pinellas County. A committee was formed, headed by Leonard Smith, a professional, certified genealogist, to handle the authenticity of the research material collected. Bob Harris, Research Historian of the Pinellas County Historical Museum at Heritage Park, will be coordinating the project.

Any individual or couple who moved to Pinellas County and has lived here since 1930, or were born prior to 1930 and subsequently had a family is urged to participate in the project. When the information is verified, it goes on a computer with the print-outs going into the archives at the museum. As of October 1, 1980, 175 names have been computerized.

Instructions and forms are sent upon request by either calling or writing Bob Harris at Heritage Park, 448-2474. Packets can also be picked up at Heritage Park.

POLK COUNTY HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL LIBRARY - 495 North Hendry, Bartow (533-5146)
Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Closed last Friday of each month.
This is probably the best genealogical library of southern records in the southeastern United States. It has a huge number of sources on Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Florida. The holdings contain official records of the Civil War, DAR lineage books, magazines, and many family histories from various states. Books are arranged by state and location. The library has deeds, cemetery records, court records, parish records, newspaper clippings, and periodicals. In addition, it has early land records, wills and censuses. There are two microfilm readers available to researchers.

ST. PETERSBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY - 3745 9th Avenue North (893-7724)
Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 9:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
The card catalogue is extensive and large numbers of research materials are available. Genealogy records are on the second floor, and there are three desks to work at. The library has numerous periodicals and quarterlies, and will order items on loan, charging for postage only.

SELBY PUBLIC LIBRARY - 1001 Blvd. of the Arts, Sarasota (366-7303)
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 9:00 a.m. -9:00 p.m.; Wednesday and Saturday 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
This lovely new building has a card catalogue file box and many periodicals. The shelves are closed and access to them requires the assistance of a librarian. Volunteers are often available to
assist in research. The library will order books and microfilm on loan, and there are two microfilm and two microfiche readers available.

TAMPA PUBLIC LIBRARY - 900 North Ashley Street (223-8945)
Monday-Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.; Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
The genealogy section is on the second floor. The library has excellent "how-to-do-it" books as well as general and specific materials. The card catalogue is extensive. The library houses the holdings of the Florida Genealogical Society consisting of published data, books, and personal donations of family histories, journals, and genealogies. This facility has a loan service with Tallahassee, NARS, and the Ohio State University system. The library provides a large number of microfilm readers, and a copying machine is available for duplicating microfilm.
BOOK REVIEWS


This book is a compilation of papers presented at the Fifth Florida Bicentennial Symposium, held in Pensacola, 18-20 March 1976, and, as such, exhibits certain of the problems usually faced by such publications. Some of them could have been minimized by a more careful job of editing. An example is the excellent essay by Robert Rutland, professor of history at the University of Virginia and editor of The James Madison Papers. Rutland's contribution, entitled "The Southern Contribution: A Balance Sheet on the War for Independence," would have served the volume well if it had been placed as the initial essay, for it would have placed all that followed in some larger perspective. Instead, it is buried in the middle of this slim volume, without any introduction and without mention by the commentator for that section of the book. It is just there, for the reader to do with as he wills.

The two lead essays are well-written and worthwhile. "British East Florida: Loyalist Bastion," by J. Leitch Wright, professor of history at Florida State University, and "Left as a Gewgaw: The Impact of the American Revolution on British West Florida," by J. Barton Starr, professor of history at Troy State University, both serve the reader well in describing political life in the two Floridas and in identifying the major issues which settlers there faced. The kaleidoscopic changes of sovereignty and peripheral involvement in the American Revolution kept the small population of the Floridas in constant turmoil.

Thereafter, the quality of the essays declines. In his work on "The Problem of the Household in the Second Spanish Period," Theodore G. Corbett, history professor at Florida State University, states with arcane assurance that "Certain households ... like the plantation, the hacienda, the manor, or the factory were organized solely for the purpose of profit." (p. 49) This view, which he finds difficult to overlay upon the Florida social life of the eighteenth century, is later redefined to but two categories: plantation households and peasant households. "What role," he asks, "did these two forms of household play in the Second Spanish Period?" (p. 53) If I understand him correctly, he later admits that 130 of 167 families for which he has evidence lived in traditional households "consisting of the conjugal family unit: father, mother, and children."

Michael Gannon, professor of religion and history at the University of Florida, treats us to a disquisition on "Mitres and Flags: Colonial Religion in the British and Second Spanish Periods" that covers relatively well-ploughed ground. Albert Manucy, native of St. Augustine, restorationist and curator for the National Park Service and currently a historical consultant, free-lance writer and illustrator, provides a very interesting and informative essay on "Changing Traditions in St. Augustine Architecture." His work is well illustrated with pointed sketches and photographs. Only five pages of text, however,
out of thirty-three total pages, deal with the American Revolutionary period, the rest devoted to background treatment of Spanish and English architecture.

Thomas G. Ledford, restoration curator for Historic St. Augustine, delineates artifacts recovered from a well discovered in the city plaza in 1974 in his paper entitled "British Material Culture in St. Augustine: The Artifact as Social Commentary." It is instructive on the ways in which careful archaeological work can benefit historical knowledge.

The final essay is "What Our Southern Frontier Women Wore," by Anna C. Eberly, interpretive supervisor at Turkey Run Farm in McLean, Virginia. Six pages in length, it contains observations of some slight interest.

A closely knit book with a unified theme it is not. But for all those who desire to know more about several aspects of this state's history during the eighteenth century, it will prove to be a worthwhile acquisition.

Cecil B. Currey


To the student of Indian history in Florida, Tacachale is an outstanding book. The reader is brought up to date concerning recent research on such tribes as the Calusas, Tocobagas, the Western Timucua, Guales and the early Seminoles. The book is based upon papers presented at a symposium held as part of the 38th annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in San Francisco, May, 1973. In addition, the article by William C. Sturtevant entitled "The Last of the South Florida Aborigines" was written especially for the book. One apparent fault is seen in the fact that the papers read in 1973 were based on material assembled from 1970 to 1972, but the book was published in 1978. Since the fields of ethnology and archaeology are moving so rapidly, some of the evidence presented and conclusions reached are outmoded by date of publication. For example, the excavations at Fort Center by William Sears indicate that the Calusas were an agricultural people - not nonagricultural as indicated by Lewis. (p. 43) The research done by Eugene Lyon would have been helpful for accounts of Spanish settlements on the West Coast. It was good that none of the authors cited the Le Moyne engravings which have been somewhat discredited during the past five years.

Quality of the papers printed range from adequate to excellent. The first one, "Spanish-Indian Relationships: Synoptic History and Archaeological Evidence, 1500-1763" by Smith and Gottlob rehashes information that was written by Smith as long as twenty years ago. "The Calusas" by Lewis is excellent. The Jesuit priest makes good use of Latin by translating Zubillaga, and he did travel to Mound Key, the center of the Calusa kingdom. "Tocobaga Indians and the Safety Harbor Culture" by Bullen combines historical research and archaeological evidence. This reviewer does not agree that the
Tocobaga control extended as far south as Charlotte Harbor, and Bullen is forced to cite the not too reliable DeSoto accounts to prove other points. Still, Bullen presents us with the best account of Tocobaga. Milanich's "The Western Timucua" is a solid work by a specialist in the field. Likewise, Deagan's "Cultures in Transition: Fusion and Assimilation among the Eastern Timucua" is written by an active researcher in Timucuan culture. Larson, who has done extensive archaeological work in Georgia, has written a good account of the Guale Indians and the Spanish missions. Sturtevant, an authority on the Calusas and Seminoles, examines the disappearance of the last of the original Florida Indians by "exploiting" the details of the report made by a Jesuit mission to Florida in 1743. A copy of the report made by Father Alane published in Spanish is attached to the short article. Fairbank examines the Seminole background in "Ethno-archaeology of the Florida Seminole." It is a good résumé of his past research. The collection of articles is concluded with Proctor's "Taping the Indian Past: The University of Florida's Oral History Project." It is a survey of what the University of Florida has done with funds provided by the Doris Duke Oral History Project.

To some buffs of the history of Tampa Bay, there is information given within the various papers that is not exactly correct. DeSoto probably landed at Tampa Bay, but his chances of landing near Fort Myers are remote. There is no reliable proof that Robert Ambrister established a trading post in the Tampa Bay area. Altogether the collection of papers and articles is a must for those who assemble important books concerning Florida history.

James W. Covington


The life of adventurer, explorer, and author Kirk Monroe, at least up to age sixty in 1910 (he died in 1930), was remarkable, exciting and altogether pleasant. This writer of innumerable boys' books and articles for both young people and adults, based on his personal experiences from the post Civil War period to the early twentieth century, lived almost completely in accord with his own interests and desires.

Irving A. Leonard, the editor of this anthology, first depicts Monroe's early years in the raw and remote wild west of the Dakotas, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and other states. But it is the south Florida area, where Kirk Monroe made his permanent home, and where he experienced most of his adventurous treks, both on water and over land, that supplies the locale for most of the sketches in this volume. It is difficult for the south Florida reader of this volume to realize that barely one hundred years ago this area was remote, placid and inhabited by numerous Indian tribes. Yet such indeed was the case.

Monroe's description of Tampa in "A Gulf Coast City," written in 1882, is especially intriguing for today's resident of the Tampa Bay area. According to Monroe:
Tampa once reached is found to be a sleepy, shabby Southern town, with wide streets innocent of other pavement than that offered by the deep, loose, white sand of the country, wooden sidewalks, wooden houses and stores, some of which are painted and as many only tinted a delicate gray by the action of the weather, and seven or eight hundred inhabitants ... 

Monroe further pointed out that Tampa at the time had sandy streets with "no rattle of vehicles" but did have two small hotels and several small boarding houses. It also had two churches, one Methodist and one Roman Catholic; also, a rope ferry across the Hillsborough River and one stone house.

Monroe spoke of fruits that were grown in the Tampa area in early 1882, including oranges, lemons, limes, citron, guavas, the avocado or alligator pear and sugar apples. He pointed out that the average temperature of the west coast of Florida is "milder and more equable than that of the east." He foresaw that when Tampa's railroad and a first class hotel were completed, "there will be no more charming nor popular place on the west coast in which to pass the winter months" than Tampa.

Kirk Monroe was particularly fascinated by the Seminoles; he loved the children and was one of the few white men of the time whom the Indians trusted implicitly. He referred to Florida Seminoles as "as fine a specimen of American Indian as can be found." His black hair "is clipped as short as possible but for at the top of the head, where it grows to full length." The author pointed out that the Indians' great fear was that they would be removed to the Indian territory. This fear made them shy of all white men, especially of those whom they suspected of being connected with the government. But Monroe says that at the time Florida Indians were peaceful, industrious and self-supporting, that civilization had already influenced them, and that they were now living more and more like the white man. He strongly hoped that the government would recognize these Indians as people possessing human rights so that in some measure the "Century of Dishonor" would be ended.

Other topics depicted by Kirk Monroe include "Shad-Fishing in Florida," "Pineapple of the Florida Keys," "Cruising in Florida Waters," "Tarpon Days," and "Adventures with Alligators." Most are of interest to today's reader if only because of their colorful descriptions of how radically one century can change the life and physical appearance of a state like Florida.

Yet while intriguing and colorful in many instances, the sketches are not brilliant; they hardly compare with the writings of a Mark Twain or Thomas Wolfe. It is well that Irving A. Leonard has reprinted these adventures of a long forgotten writer. They are authentic and well worth reading. Monroe's writings should be read and appreciated, but they are not great literary works. They are most useful to people of Florida who have an interest in life as it was in this state a century ago. Their attraction for other readers may be limited, however.
A bibliography of Kirk Monroe’s books and articles is to be found in the volume’s final pages. The number of his writings is impressive indeed - over forty books and innumerable articles. Most are forgotten today, and it is not likely that the present day young people will be reading many of these. Still, Monroe’s writings will make a contribution to those who care to know Florida in its earlier days.

_Chester Handleman_

_History of Fort Myers Beach, Florida._ By Rolfe F. Schell. (Fort Myers Beach: Island Press, 1980, 96 pp. $3.95.)

A more apt title for this paperback, written by long-time Florida resident, Rolfe F. Schell, would have been "A Chronology of Fort Myers Beach" for that’s what it amounts to - not a history. In concise, chronological order, he traces the development of the popular beach (located on historic Estero Island about 15 miles southwest of Fort Myers) from prehistoric times to its present-day hustle.

The most interesting part of the 96-page book involves the Spanish explorations of the area surrounding Estero Island in the 1500s when the extinct Caloosas were the dominant Indians in Southwest Florida. This theme is dear to Schell’s heart, whose book, _De Soto Didn’t Land at Tampa_ claims the conquistador landed at the nearby mouth of the Caloosahatchee River (in Lee County) instead of at Tampa Bay.

For readers inquiring about names, dates and places, this book can be a handy reference. It describes the original homesteads and their present occupants. Although Southwest Florida was settled much later than other sections of the state, it’s hard to believe that Estero Island was still being homesteaded as late as 1914. In reviewing the settlement of the beach from the giddy days of the Florida boom to today, Schell tells where and when many of the now-landmark structures were built and how they changed hands through the years.

Schell writes of the background of events, businesses and civic groups from scanning area newspaper microfilms, interviews with old-timers and his own remembrances. But, while he writes from his years of intimate knowledge of Fort Myers Beach, he deliberately leaves out such doings as murders, bootleg and all-night beach parties and wild goings-on once part of the island’s colorful history.

Schell’s reportorial style lacks the dash of the late Florence Fritz whose out-of-print book, _Unknown Florida_, describes in some detail the early beginnings of Fort Myers Beach. The book also shows signs of publishing in haste, as exemplified by sloppy writing and careless editing.

It contains irksome, if minor, misspellings, such as Charleston for Carlstrom Field in Arcadia, typographical errors, especially in the names of persons, and misstatements of
historical facts. It is disappointing to find the author trotting out the same old tired story about the alleged pirate José Gaspar who never lived except in myth.

Included in the book are 28 nostalgic photographs, an index and a short bibliography.

Marian B. Godown
ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDITOR’S NOTE: The editors will gladly publish announcements of upcoming events related to local history, but these items must reach the editors at least two months before the publication dates of June 1st and December 1st.

The Florida Historical Society annually awards three literary prizes for original work done in Florida history. These awards were announced at the 1980 meeting held in Winter Park on May 2-3. The Arthur W. Thompson Memorial Prize in Florida History for 1979-1980 went to Dr. Jerrell H. Shofner of the University of Central Florida, Orlando for his article, "Mary Grace Quackenbos, A Visitor Florida Did Not Want," which appeared in the January 1980 number of the *Florida Historical Quarterly*.

The Rembert W. Patrick Memorial Book Award was presented to Mrs. Virginia Bergman Peters of Falls Church, Virginia, for her book, *The Florida Wars*. This volume was published by Linnet Books.

The Charlton W. Tebeau Junior Book Award went to *Time of the White Egret*, written by Natalie Savage Carlson. Mrs. Carlson’s book was published by Charles Scribner’s Sons.

The Florida Historical Confederation and the Florida Historical Society will hold their annual meetings at the Concourse Hotel in St. Petersburg. The Confederation will meet on April 30, 1981 and the Florida Historical Society will meet on May 1 and 2, 1981.

The Officers and Directors of the Florida Historical Society have accepted the invitation of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society and will hold their 1982 annual meeting in Fort Lauderdale.

The Manatee County Historical Society invites anyone interested in Manatee County history to attend their monthly luncheon meetings. These meetings are held at the Bradenton Country Club on the third Wednesday of each month. Luncheon reservations may be made by calling Mrs. Willis Hampton, 746-6521; Mrs. Henry McMurria, 748-2245; or Mrs. G. Warren Johnson, Jr., 747-2398, by noon on Monday prior to Wednesday meetings.

The Pinellas County Historical Society’s third annual Florida Cracker Festival will be held in March, 1981. This all day event will feature turn-of-the-century arts and crafts, games, and tournaments. Bluegrass and country bands will entertain with Florida folk songs, spirituals and other music heard in Florida in the early 1900s. For more information call Heritage Park, 448-2474.
The Hillsborough County Medical Society is preparing to begin work on a history of the Society since 1895. Anyone having information related to the Society or its members, please contact Amelia Hapke, Hillsborough County Medical Society, 606 South Boulevard, Tampa.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

ANDRÉ-MARCEL d'ANS is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Paris, VII. During 1980, he served as an exchange professor at the University of South Florida. His publications include *Le Créole Francais d'Haïti* and *Le Dit des Vrais Hommes*, a study of the myths and traditions of the Cashinahua Indians in Peru.

JAMES W. COVINGTON is Professor of History at the University of Tampa. He has written extensively on 19th Century Florida and is currently working on the history of Davis Islands.

CECIL B. CURREY is Professor of History at the University of South Florida. He is author of various books on colonial history, religion and philosophy. His published works include *Road to Revolution* and *Code 72*.

MARIAN B. GODOWN is a resident of Fort Myers and co-author of *Yesterday's Fort Myers*.

CHESTER HANDLEMAN is a professor in the Department of History and Political Science at Broward Community College.

MARJORIE HAZEL has been interested in genealogy for over twenty years, was the librarian at the Tampa Genealogical Library for seven years and is now the librarian for the St. Petersburg Branch Library. She has taught genealogy classes at the St. Petersburg Junior College, St. Petersburg Campus for the past four years.

MARIE-JOÈLE INGALLS graduated from the Sorbonne and currently teaches French at Jesuit High School in Tampa.

KAY TAPLEY is library technical assistant in the Special Collections Department of the University of South Florida Library. She is currently working toward a degree in English Literature at the University of South Florida.
Programs, activities, and facilities of the University of South Florida are available to all on a non-discriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, national origin, or handicap. The University is an affirmative action Equal Opportunity Employer.

**COVER:** Tin Can Tourists camping at De Soto Park, St. Petersburg in 1920. Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System. See accompanying article on page 30.
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HAMPTON DUNN ......................................................... Historian

MARIAN B. GODOWN ............................................... Historian

DONALD R. HARKNESS ...................................... American Studies,
                                      University of South Florida

ROBERT C. HARRIS .............................................. Pinellas County Historical Museum

LELAND HAWES ..................................................... Tampa Tribune

FRANK LAUMER ......................................................... Historian

MORRIS W. MILTON ................................................ Attorney

HARRIS H. MULLEN ........................................ Trend Publications

ANTHONY PIZZO ......................................................... Historian

SAM RAMPELLO ................................................ Hillsborough County School Board

TERRY A. SMILJANICH ............................................. Attorney

CHARLTON W. TEBEAU ......................................... University of Miami

ROBERT G. WATT .................................................. Sarasota Herald-Tribune
Sheet Music by Fred and Rudy Rudisill, 1926.

Photograph courtesy of the University of South Florida Library.
A WICKED CITY

"Tampa is establishing a reputation for being a very wicked city. She has surpassed all records for brutal fights, desperate deeds, ugly murders, burglars and factional fights. With all her show of prosperity, people will not be inclined to reside in a place where sensitive nerves are shocked and lives endangered every day." Ocala Mail and Express, October 10, 1897.
PET LOVERS TAKE NOTE

"Strychnine is often used in this neighborhood to poison raccoons and other depredating animals, and occasionally a valuable dog gets a dose that was not intended for him. One of our friends saved a dog that was so poisoned, by maceating [sic] about one ounce of plug tobacco in half a pint of sweet milk, to which he added one raw egg and two ounces of oil, giving it to the dog in one dose. This was given after the dog had convulsions, and yet a complete cure was effected." Clearwater Times, June 27, 1874.
GOOD OL’ SCHOOLDAYS

"Grouchy parents and poor attendance is the only reason to prevent Lee County from becoming a leading county in education." From Fort Myers Press, September 19, 1917.

"School is being held in Mrs. Cleveland’s tenement house at the foot of Towles and Hendry wharf. At recess, the children can catch crabs from the river and in school, it is hoped they catch everything that is useful." From Fort Myers Press, January, 7, 1887.
IRRESISTIBLE FORCE MEETS IMMOVABLE OBJECT

"It is only a question of time when the horses that habitually run loose in West Tampa, in the neighborhood of O'Halloran’s Factory, will come in open conflict with the electric cars, as hardly a day passes that the local Cuban population does not turn out en masse and fan the roaming animals away from the track with clubs." Tampa Morning Tribune, Dec. 24, 1895.
CLAWS

"The wild cat and bulldog fight advertised for Sportsman’s Park came off. About 200 people witnessed the wickedly vicious struggle for the mastery and yelled furiously by turns as their favorite seemed to have the best of the fight. Contest lasted 20 minutes when the cat was pronounced dead." *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 24, 1897.
Postcard from the Belleview-Biltmore Hotel, Clearwater, Florida.

Photograph courtesy of the University of South Florida Library.