James McKay, I, The Scottish Chief of Tampa Bay

Tony Pizzo

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In the closing days of July, 1846, an intrepid young Scottish sea captain, James McKay, with his pregnant wife Matilda, their four children, his spirited mother-in-law, Madam Sarah Call, their eleven slaves, and household goods, set sail on his schooner from Mobile, Alabama, toward the wild frontiers of Florida and the village of Tampa.

This was the beginning of the McKay heritage in Tampa, an illustrious family which has played a prominent part for more
than 130 years in the development of Tampa.

The indomitable character of the young sea captain was demonstrated early in life when, in Edinburgh, in 1835, he met and fell in love with a Scottish lass, Matilda Alexander. Matilda’s mother, a wealthy widow, disapproved of the match because of McKay’s hazardous occupation and because Matilda had just turned 15 years of age. To remove her daughter from temptation, Sarah Alexander emigrated to America, settling in St. Louis.

WEALTHY WIDOW

There Mrs. Alexander married a Mr. Call, an Englishman who had large investments in western lands. Mr. Call disappeared while exploring the western wilderness, and left
Madam Sarah a widow once again, but much richer.

In 1837, the persevering young McKay decided to follow the smiles of his pretty, blue-eyed sweetheart to America. Having accumulated a fortune in his own right, he left Thurso on the northern headland of Scotland, ancestral home of his clan, to visit his fiancée, and seek his future in America.

In St. Louis, the tall, broad-shouldered and persuasive young Scot resumed his courtship of Matilda. This time the mother consented to the marriage. McKay was 27 years old and the bride 17. After a few years, the family moved to Mobile, where Captain McKay engaged in shipping enterprises. Four of their children were born in Mobile. In the meantime, Captain McKay had been investigating the west coast of Florida, and finally decided to settle in Tampa because "it gave great promise of developing into an important port city."

BY OX-WAGONS TO TAMPA

As the McKay schooner sailed south along the Florida coast, a violent storm drove the vessel upon a reef near the mouth of the Chassahowitzka River. Captain McKay, a brawny man, repeatedly swam through the rough surf to carry his wife, the children, and Madam Call ashore. The slaves also survived the shipwreck, but the entire cargo was lost. They tarried at Chassewiska for a time where Donald B., their fourth son, was born August 8, 1846.

The McKay family and Madam Cail walked from the site of the shipwreck to Brooksville, where they stayed for several weeks. The trip to Tampa was trekked in covered ox-wagons through the wilderness. They trudged through bogs, dense growth of pine and oak, and deep white sand made the journey quite onerous. They camped at night close to fresh water and firewood. In the early morning hours, they wakened to the gobbling of wild turkeys in concert with the whooping of red-headed cranes and the
hootings of owls. They passed many deer, turkeys, partridges, and water birds, and repeatedly saw wolf and panther tracks. The strange, wild scenery and the numerous creatures of the forest kept the travelers constantly excited and provided some compensation for the difficulties of their trek through the wilderness.

On Oct. 13, 1846, the McKays entered the little village of Tampa which numbered less than two hundred inhabitants, exclusive of the soldiers in Fort Brooke. The village consisted of a few crude log huts thatched with palmetto fronds, with wooden shutters to keep out the cold and rain. The cottages were scattered over a sea of white sand. Cattle and pigs roamed at will.

THE TOWN MARKET

The town market was located on Ashley, just south of Lafayette Street (Kennedy Boulevard). Farmers came from the hinterland to barter their produce, occasionally joined by sailors from Havana, Key West, Cedar Key, and Pensacola. The mariners brought the only news from the outside world, except the tidbits of news gleaned from trappers or hunters who wandered into the settlement.

The Tampa Bay basin was surrounded by a sylvan wilderness, and the settlers during this period lived in constant fear of Mexican and Cuban pirates lurking in its waters. Notwithstanding the buccaneer menace, the magnificent bay offered a bounty to the pioneers: oyster beds clustered the banks, and seaturtles, turtle eggs, a great variety of fish and seafowl made Tampa Bay the "Queen of the Gulf." One of the early pleasures for the pioneers in this corner of the world was the sight of "the beautiful flamingos in long files drawn up on the bayshore like bands of soldiers in red uniforms." After the 1870s, the flamingo, like the bear and wolf, was a rare sight.

Fort Brooke stood out like an oasis in a forest, with its old barracks stretching along
In 1858, Capt. James McKay I originated the cattle trade with Cuba. Shown here is a page from the record book of marks and brands of cattle shipped June 5, 1880, from Ballast Point on the steamer Ellie Knight with James McKay II as shipmaster.

Author's Collection
The river and the ancient Indian mound, its summit crowned by a summer house used as a cool retreat and observatory for the officers.

TRADING WITH INDIANS

Old Chipco, the friendly Indian Chief and his band occasionally entered the Tampa scene. They came to trade wild turkey, venison, plumes and hides for calico, whiskey, and other goods. Chipco radiated strength and charm, and settlers remembered his neutral stand during the Billy Bowlegs war. Chipco frequently dined with settlers. The comings and goings of the Indians gave the village a touch of excitement and color, a sense of drama and destiny.

A small group of Spaniards living at Spanishtown Creek on the bayshore, supplied the villagers with fish - ten cents bought eight mullet. They also made and sold palmetto-leaf hats and baskets, a crude cottage industry.

Captain McKay and his mother-in-law, Madam Call, brought their slaves and a considerable fortune in cash to start a new life in this strange frontier. The family had difficulty securing a house to live in until Captain McKay could buy property and build a home. He was given permission to use a vacant house in the Fort Brooke military reservation located south of Whiting Street near the river.

FIERCE STORM TESTS METTLE

During the fierce storm and tidal wave of 1848, which destroyed or washed away most of Fort Brooke and the village, the McKay house was swept up the river by the flood, and all of the Gadsden Point peninsula was inundated to a depth of about seven feet. McKay had cattle on the peninsula, and all were drowned. The hurricane had tested the will of fledgling Tampa and the newcomer McKay: the city and man proved tenacious in spirit.

Following the hurricane, military authorities issued tents for the homeless. The McKays erected their tent at the site of the Knight and Wall Building - the southwest corner of Tampa and Lafayette Streets. McKay procured logs and built a temporary home where his family lived for about 20 months. A permanent home was built of finished lumber brought from Mobile; this homestead occupied the entire square where the forty-story City Center Building is now located.

Captain McKay thrived on adversity. Throughout his romantic and exciting life, he demonstrated an indomitable courage, a Scottish firmness of purpose, and a faith in the future of the little town. He became a dominant factor in the building of Tampa. He personally guaranteed the Morgan Steamship Company any financial losses if they would assign two of their vessels to run between New Orleans and Havana on semi-monthly basis from Tampa. Thus, Captain McKay gave Tampa the first commercial connection with the outside world.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY CREATED

The first courthouse had been erected in Tampa soon after the County of Hillsborough was organized, Jan. 25, 1834. That little courthouse was burned by the Indians at the outbreak of the Second Seminole War.
In 1848, six years after the termination of the war, the County Commissioners appointed Captain McKay to build a new courthouse. According to the contract, Captain McKay was paid $1,368 for the construction. In 1870, a visitor commented: “The first building to attract my attention was the courthouse, a frame building set in a clearing in a big scrub. It had a cupola or belfry, and was the first house I had ever seen built of anything but logs.” This building served as the courthouse until 1891, when it was moved to Florida Avenue near Cass Street (where the Kress Building stands) and served as Tampa’s first hospital.

McKay built the First Baptist Church, for which he and Madam Cail donated most of the materials and furnishings. The Captain also contributed generously to the early Methodist and Catholic churches.

“NEEDLES TO ANCHORS”

After Tampa was platted in 1847, Captain McKay began purchasing land. Old records show some of his early purchases – two blocks from Jackson to Whiting Street, between Franklin Street and Florida Avenue, the Knight and Wall block on Franklin and Kennedy, a large tract on the river now the site of the Tampa Waterworks, and police station. On this site, McKay erected a large sawmill – the first mill in Tampa. The sawmill on the “outskirts” of the village supplied the material for building, an indispensable aid to the early settlers. The block on which the Masonic Temple stands on Kennedy and Marion was the site where McKay erected the Hotel Florida. McKay also owned a large section of land from Chapin Avenue to Ballast Point, and several large tracts east of Tampa. He also erected a large building on the southeast corner of Washington and Franklin in which he conducted a mercantile store offering “everything from a knitting needle to a sheet anchor.”

In 1850, McKay was appointed treasurer of Hillsborough County with instructions to receive “nothing but gold and silver for county purchases.”

For the welfare of his fellow citizens, McKay established the Loan Money Bank, advancing supplies and money to the farmers to help them grow their cotton crops and other staples grown in the county. In 1861, only 153 names appeared on the county tax rolls. Captain McKay appeared as the principal taxpayer with 404 acres of land and five slaves valued at $1,000 each.

If Captain McKay were living today, he would be classified as an entrepreneur. He was an amazing man – a natural leader with great ability and an uncanny flair for business. Fate dealt him many reverses throughout his lifetime, but he never wavered; he forged ahead despite the setbacks.

STAGECOACH ROUTE

It was only natural that upon arriving in Tampa, he would become engaged in the same endeavor he followed in Mobile – maritime commerce. His first schooner was the Lindsey, and within a few years he had accumulated a fleet of steam and sailing vessels. The Scottish Chief, Flying Cloud, Southern Star, Kate Dale, and Valley City connected Tampa with New York, Havana, and Central America, carrying the mail, passengers, and freight. McKay transportation ventures at sea were complemented by a four-horse stagecoach route between Tampa and Gainesville.
The often fearless quality of the tough and brawny Captain McKay came into play during his eventful lifetime. In 1923, his son, Captain James McKay II, described an event which gives an example of the elder McKay’s spirit of courage and fair play: "Bill Duncan, a Negro, was liked and trusted by the white people. When freedom was granted the Negroes, Bill stayed in the service of the Walls, by whom he had been owned - and he always voted the Democratic ticket. When the news of General Grant's election as President reached Tampa the few white Republicans and most of the Negroes celebrated by getting drunk. A group of the Negroes caught Bill Duncan at the intersection of Franklin and Washington Streets and mobbed him. Captain McKay had just landed from a trip to Cuba, saw the crowd, and on being told that old Bill was in danger of being killed by the mob, he pushed his way in, pulled several off the prostrate man and struck one who was choking Bill, killing him with the single blow of his fist."

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THE 'CATTLE KINGS'

In 1858, Captain McKay leased the large steamship Magnolia from the Morgan Line and originated the cattle trade with Cuba, a venture which turned into a very prosperous industry. The Cuban market brought great wealth to Florida stock raisers, gaining for them the title of "Cattle Kings." Among the more picturesque cattlemen of the time were Ziba King, Captain Frances M. Hendry, John T. Lesley, William B. Hooker, Reuben Carlton, and Jake Summerlin, "King of the Crackers." The Florida Peninsula reported on July 28, 1860, "Captain James McKay has been engaged in shipping cattle to the Havana market, thus creating a demand for beef heretofore unknown." Spanish gold and silver coins circulated in the village in this era. It was common to see children playing with rattles containing doubloons. McKay's gross sales in cattle, it was reported, exceeded $60,000 per month, a most handsome sum in those days.

The wild lands surrounding the village of Tampa sustained great herds of range cattle, descendants of Spanish stock. Captain McKay kept thousands of cattle in the Inter-bay peninsula for shipping to Havana from the Ballast Point wharf. Rex Beach, the noted novelist who was raised in Tampa, commented that, "most of the stock was shipped to Cuba on the hoof, the steers for the table and the bulls for the arena. The former made tough chewing and the latter made tough fighting. Those cracker bulls were considered more dangerous than Spanish and South American animals, and if one couldn't hook a matador it would kick him."

While rounding up cattle, Captain McKay's cowboys cracked a whip called a drag. The drag or bullwhip, is a very heavy, long leather whip about eighteen feet in length, with a heavy, short handle. These Florida cowboys could adeptly crack the whip, and thus acquired the sobriquet of "Crackers."
God with you, good old Mariner; and may your final voyage be blessed by favorable winds, by cloudless skies, by sunlit seas; and may you sail past reef and rock, through storm and stress, unto that restful haven which, for more than fourscore years, God and your friends have hoped that you at last might reach.

There may be question of this personal touch; but before my feet had pressed these Tampa streets, you met me on the train which bore me here and bade me cordial welcome to the Tampa of the Then, which became the Tampa of the Now.

It was in your home that I met the Georgia girl, who, as wife, has been the blessing and the comfort of my days.

Just a few weeks ago you sat with me at a luncheon table, where men and women planned to help the movement to carve upon the face of Stone Mountain an imperishable memorial to those who marched and fought with you.

Hence, I am placing this modest tribute upon your bier. Through all my life in Tampa, you have been my guide and counselor and friend. My fondest hope would be that, when my time shall come to sail across the outward bar, my departure may be attended by as many kindly thoughts as those which, lit with sun and star, bid you Godspeed.

-Tampa Morning Tribune, Sept. 7, 1925

"CAPTAIN COURAGEOUS"

In his cattle dealings with Spanish officials in Cuba, Captain McKay usually exhibited masterly diplomacy. At times he was plagued by corrupt officials seeking graft - that's when Scotch diplomacy would give way to militancy.

On one of his trips, Captain McKay invited the Captain General of Cuba who acted as military governor, to dine with him on board the Magnolia. After a pleasant dinner the Captain General gave his buenas noche, and departed in his volante. Shortly afterwards several petty politicians came on board looking for a payoff.

During the 1850s, Captain McKay conducted a thriving trading post on the Caloosahatchee River. During the Billy Bowlegs War Captain James McKay I, “the gentlemanly proprieter of the steamer Tampa”, made a tour of the military posts in the Fort Myers region. Simon B. Turman, Jr., editor of the Florida Peninsula, Tampa’s second newspaper, covered the expedition, and on June 13, 1857, reported that Captain

McKay ordered his first mate to fire up and cast off. As soon as the vessel began to break breeze the burly McKay grabbed the startled officials and tossed them overboard in the shark infested waters near Morro Castle. After this episode McKay was known to the Habaneros as Captain Courageous.
McKay was accompanied by Captain Domenic Ghira; F. R. Pont, engineer; Thomas Murphy, mate; R. Bolesta, cook; and Pete, “a hard specimen of the colored gentry,” fireman. Also on board were “seven young pigs, and a matronly-looking hog, of the female gender, as supernumeraries.”

McKay was elected Mayor of Tampa. In 1860, as mayor he was able to lease from the government the entire Fort Brooke military property since the Fort was no longer needed for military purposes. The City held the property until the Civil War broke out when the Confederate Army occupied the garrison. The flag of the Confederacy was unfurled by the citizens with appropriate ceremonies. Captain McKay raised his flag in front of his store, followed by Charlie Brown's clothing establishment, and Mr. Ferris and Son, not to be outdone, hoisted the U.S. flag in front of their store upside down.

The Civil War brought an end to the lucrative cattle trade with Havana. A few weeks before the war, McKay had purchased 10,000 head of cattle for transport to Cuba, but most of these were driven to Tennessee for the Confederate Army.

TAMPA’S BUSY PORT DURING THE CIVIL WAR

This is Artist Jed Dyer’s impression of Tampa Town during Civil War days. The mural hangs in Morrison’s Cafeteria. Capt. James McKay I's sailing vessel is anchored near the mouth of the Hillsborough River.

MCKAY ELECTED MAYOR

The Scottish Chief, the celebrated sidewheeler in Tampa history, arrived in the Hillsborough River for the first time Thursday, July 26, 1859. "Her arrival was announced by the booming of cannon, the flourish of trumpets, and the hearty buzzas of the entire population. The Tampa cornet band boarded her, with a few citizens and she steamed up the river a short distance and returned to the delight and entire satisfaction of all concerned."

While deeply involved in his varied enterprises, in 1859, Captain McKay was

AIDS THE CONFEDERATES
During the Civil War, McKay was active on land and afloat. He was appointed to the Road Commission "to view and make a road from Tampa on the nearest and best ground to the county line on the road to Fort Dade."

During the years of the conflict McKay supplied beef, corn and potatoes to the needy families of soldiers fighting in the North. In his store McKay sold Confederate States stock to help the war effort.

He served as commissary of Florida's Fifth Confederate Military District. His chief responsibility was to keep Florida cattle on the trail north for the Rebel armies. McKay had drawn over half a million cattle from the South Florida region. His cowboys kept the drives going through punishing terrain all the way into Georgia, and beyond.

At the suggestion of the Confederate Government, Captain McKay organized the colorful "Cow Cavalry" for the protection of cattle drives as well as for protection to the settlers. The "Cow Cavalry," composed of former dragoons from Dickinson's Cavalry, seasoned soldiers, ranchers, Indian fighters, and settlers, was directed by McKay until the termination of the War.

**NOT U.S. CITIZEN**

While McKay's "Cowboy Cavalry" kept the Southern Armies supplied with Florida beef, the Captain, with the help of his son Donald, gained fame as daring blockade runners.

McKay, who had not relinquished his British citizenship when he came to this country, ran his blockade-running ships under the English flag. He served as Mayor of Tampa and municipal judge in 1859-1860 without holding American citizenship, which may be a real oddity in American politics.

As a blockade runner, McKay took cotton, tobacco, molasses, and other commodities to England and brought back materiel for the Confederate Army.

During the last year of the war, McKay and his son, Captain Donald McKay, were captured and imprisoned in the North, but were released within a short time, and returned to Tampa to resume their war-related activities.
Another service Captain McKay rendered during the rebellion was the establishment of a great salt works on the shore of Rocky Point. Salt was one of the critical commodities needed by the South. This salt works was twice destroyed by the Federal forces, but on one occasion, Joe Robles, while guarding the works, single-handedly captured several Union raiders and became a celebrated war hero with the villagers.

On another occasion, the Yankees found McKay's ships the Scottish Chief and Kate Dale, anchored in a secluded area on the Hillsborough River near the present site of Lowry Park, and set the ships on fire. The alarm reached Tampa and cattle guards caught up with the raiders at Ballast Point. A skirmish ensued, a few were killed on both sides, and this encounter went down in history as the Battle of Ballast Point. An historical marker on the site marks the event.

After the Yankees started bombarding the town of Tampa, McKay built a home as a refuge for the family in Bloomingdale.

With the downfall of the Confederacy, Captain McKay was given the responsibility of preventing Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of State of the Confederacy, from being captured by Federal officials. McKay hid Benjamin in his home and helped smuggle him to Nassau and refuge aboard a British frigate. For his bravery and loyalty, Benjamin presented McKay with his cavalry sword, his dearest possession. Today this historic sword, a memorial to a brave Tampa, is on display at the Gamble Mansion Museum where Benjamin was hidden before being spirited away on a schooner.

After the war, Captain McKay resumed his cattle shipments to Cuba. Mail contracts for his ships were also secured. The Reconstruction era in Tampa, a time for rebuilding, saw McKay feverishly planning for the future of Tampa. He was prospering, succeeding, his town was beginning to see new growth in population when, on Nov. 11, 1876, the brave pioneer died. Tampa will not likely see a personality of his energy, talents, and bravado again. He arrived when Tampa stood little more than a wilderness fort; he departed when the city was poised for greatness. A man of the sea, McKay Bay, in the upper reaches of Hillsborough Bay, forever honors his memory.

Captain McKay's death was not the end of his uplifting influence, for he left a line of
SCOTTISH CHIEF RELICS

Calvin “Pop” Taylor, Tampa diver and historic preservationist, is shown with the helm of the Scottish Chief and other artifacts which he recovered from the Hillsbrough River. The Scottish Chief was set afire by Union troops while hidden at a remote anchorage near Lowry Park on Oct. 17, 1863.

--Photo by Author
descendants who have carried on the work he had started. They include some of the most remarkable citizens in Tampa history. For three generations McKays have served as mayor of Tampa, and most of the descendants have in a variety of ways contributed to the progress of Tampa.

Captain McKay's offsprings consisted of five sons and four daughters. The sons were: George, James, John Angus, Donald S., and Charles; the daughters: Sarah, Marian, Matilda, and Almeria Belle. George, the first son, died in his youth, a cadet at Kentucky Military Institute.

James, the second son, became a distinguished citizen in the industrial, political, and social life of Tampa. His life was a thrilling and romantic one, full of service both afloat and ashore. In his early youth, James became a master mariner and Captain of his father's fleet of ships.

HISTORICAL MARKER
The Tampa Historical Society is placing this attractive marker at Franklin and Jackson Streets at the present-day site of the City Center building.

CAPTAIN AT REST
The impressive tombstone marks the final resting place of Capt. James McKay I at Oaklawn Cemetery. The McKay burial plot is enclosed by a neat iron fence. A Masonic emblem is seen on the marker.

-Captain James McKay II
At the outbreak of the Civil War, James joined the Confederate Army as quartermaster of the Fourth Florida Regiment. In 1864, he was ordered to Florida to help supply beef cattle to the Tennessee and Virginia armies.

He also served as Captain in command of several groups of soldiers protecting the Tampa Bay area "from forays of marauding
bands and outlaws - renegades which exists in times of war."

Captain McKay, II, like his father, was endowed with a fierce sense of fairplay and a courageous spirit. These traits were gallantly displayed in an incident which occurred during the Civil War.

One day a Union gunboat appeared in the lower bay. An ardent Union sympathizer was on board looking for his son who was strongly in favor of the Southern cause, and had come to Tampa to enlist in the Confederate army.

JAIL HOUSE DOOR
The iron door from the jail in the old Court House built in 1848 by Capt. James McKay I is preserved by Dr. Albert Gutierrez in his bird sanctuary at the mouth of Palm River and McKay Bay. Shown studying the relic are Robert McKay, left, son of D. B. McKay and great grandson of the famed captain, and his cousin, Dr. Gutierrez.

-ELECTED STATE SENATOR

The father sent a message under a flag of truce asking for a conference with Capt. James McKay, Jr., the commander of the home guard. The conference was granted - the Unionist on the gunboat, and Captain McKay on the beach, near Ballast Point, "I have come" shouted the father, "to get that renegade son of mine - I want to take him to Key West and hang him." "If you will come ashore I will give your son the privilege of hanging you," retorted McKay, and that ended the parley.
The young man was Judge Henry L. Crane, who lived out his days in Tampa holding many positions of trust.

In 1881, James McKay II was elected State Senator, and the Savannah Morning News in their Feb. 5, 1881 issue reported, "Although a thorough sailor, he seems to handle the parliamentary ropes as readily as he would the tackle of a vessel. He will carefully protect the interest of commerce, and Hillsborough County is fortunate in possessing so faithful and competent a representative." He served for two terms.

After the arrival of the railroad to Tampa, McKay became the commander of the H. B. Plant Steamship Line which plied the Caribbean Sea.

**TRANSPORTS ARMY**

During the Spanish-American War, Captain McKay II headed the expeditionary fleet which took General Shafter's Army to Cuba. He showed great skill and ability in the loading of troops and materials at Port Tampa, and the unloading on the coast of Cuba. The former rebel received laudable praises from many in high office in Washington for bravery and his excellent performance in the war effort.

**WITHSTOOD GALE**

The historic Egmont Key lighthouse at the entrance of Tampa Bay was built by Mitchell McCarty, D. B. McKay's grandfather. In 1848, the lighthouse withstood the destructive winds of Tampa Bay's most devastating hurricane. For years the lighthouse safely guided the McKay vessels in and out of the bay.
In 1902, Captain McKay II was elected Mayor of Tampa.

After his tenure as mayor, McKay was appointed Marine Superintendent of the United States Transports that were charted by the Federal government. In 1914, he resigned to become postmaster of Tampa.

He was a man of tremendous popularity having such valuable friends as President Grover Cleveland, Thomas A. Edison, and Henry B. Plant. During World War II, Lykes Brothers launched a beautiful ship at Sparrows Point, Maryland, and honored their uncle, James McKay, II, by naming the ship after him.

MARRIED THRICE

Captain James McKay II, was married three times. His first wife was Mary E. Crichton, daughter of Dr. John T. Crichton, who was the mother of his nine children. His second wife was Helene Turton of Massachusetts, and his third wife was Lillian Nimms Warren of New Jersey. The descendants of Captain McKay II were: James Crichton, Harold, John Crichton, and Frederick, sons; and five daughters: Sara Matilda, Blanche, Julia, Madge, and Mary. The oldest son, James, established a large insurance firm in Tampa, McKay & Son, later the firm became known as the McKay, Clark Insurance Company.

John Angus McKay, the third son of James McKay I, like his father and brother James, became a sea captain. He commanded several of his father's ships, and served the Confederate army throughout the war.

After the war he served as deputy collector of customs at Tampa, and in 1870, was elected as a delegate to the State Conservative Convention. In 1876, he was elected to serve as chairman of the County Commission. In the latter part of the 1870s he purchased the Orange Grove Hotel, the most popular hostelry in pioneer days.

GENERAL SHERMAN VISITS

In 1879, Gen. William T. Sherman and his daughters stopped at the Orange Grove Hotel, and were escorted on a tour by John Angus McKay. They attended the Catholic Church, visited Fort Brooke, and the U.S. Cemetery which was located on Whiting Street, and now the site of the Fort Brooke parking complex.

John Angus McKay married Mary Jane McCarty. They were the parents of four sons and two daughters. The oldest son was Donald Brenham, affectionately called throughout his lifetime "D. B." He married Aurora Gutierrez, the daughter of a prominent Spaniard and one of the founders of Ybor City. They had 10 children: Donald Brenham, Jr., John Angus, Robert Angus, Helen, Alda, Margaret, Aurora, Mary Jane, Celestina and Petronilla. "D. B. McKay is one of the most remarkable men that Tampa has ever produced," wrote Charles E. Harrison in Pioneers of Tampa (1914). D. B. McKay was a self-made man, and the architect of his own fortunes.

He commenced as a youngster in the Tampa Tribune office, and in time became owner and editor-in-chief of the Tampa Daily Times, then the leading evening newspaper in the state.

Elected mayor of Tampa four times and serving a total of fourteen years, during McKay's tenure Tampa experienced the greatest advancement and development seen up to that time.
THE D. B. McKAY AWARD

McKay served on the board of directors of the First National Bank, served for President Wilson as chairman of the President's Advisory Committee, and was one of the founders and trustees of the University of Tampa.

D. B. McKay was named the first County Historian of Hillsborough County; Rollins College bestowed upon him the degree of Doctor of Humanities; King Alfonso XIII decorated him with the Order of Isabel la Catolica; in 1914 he received the Cervantes Medal from the Hispanic Institute in Florida. In appreciation for his interest in the welfare of the Seminole Indians, he was made an honorary chief and named Chief White Cloud.

One of his lasting contributions to Florida is the preservation of Florida history through his "Pioneer Florida" series which appeared in the Sunday Tribune for approximately 15 years. The Tampa Historical Society honors his memory with the yearly D. B. McKay Award for outstanding service in the cause of Florida history.

The second son of John Angus and Mary Jane was Charles A. He attained eminence in the business world. He served as Vice President of Maas Brothers, at that time the largest dry goods establishment in South Florida. He served as the first president of the Tampa Merchants Association, on the board of directors of the South Florida Fair and Gasparilla Association, and was a charter and lifetime member of the Tampa Rotary Club. In his later years Charles McKay became the owner of Bentley-Grey Dry Goods, Inc., one of the largest dry goods distributing firms in Florida.

A LEADING ATTORNEY

Charles M. McKay married Irene M. McKeague from Pennsylvania. They had three girls: Mary Irene, Eleanor May, and Charlotte Ann.

The third son of John Angus was Kenneth Ivor McKay. He was born in 1881. He earned a degree in law from Washington and Lee University. He returned to Tampa to practice law, and became one of the city's leading attorneys. He served as a director of Lykes Bros., Inc., Lykes Bros. Steamship Co., Tampa Interocian Steamship Co., Berriman Bros., Inc., J. W. Roberts & Son, and Vice-President of the Tampa-Clearwater Bridge Co., builders of Davis Causeway. He married Olive Petty. They had four children: Kenneth Ivor, Shirley Louise, Herbert Gifford, and Howell Angus. At the time of his death he was senior partner in the firm of McKay, Macfarlane, Jackson and Ferguson and Chairman, Board of Trustees, The University of Tampa.

John Angus and Mary Jane McCarty had three other children; a son, Mitchell Frederick and two daughters, Margaret and Ada.

The fourth son of Captain James McKay I, Donald S., like his father followed the sea for thirty-five years.

During the Civil War while serving as a blockade runner with his father he was captured by the Federals and imprisoned in New York. After his release he enlisted in the Confederate Army as a member of the Eighth Battalion and became adjutant to the battalion.

EARLY DEVELOPER
After returning from seafaring, he returned to Tampa and invested in eight acres of land on the south side of Lafayette Street (Kennedy) across from the entrance to the University of Tampa. The property was divided into lots, and Donald became one of Tampa’s early developers.

Donald S. McKay was married twice. The first marriage was to Mary M. Collier, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. W. E. Collier. They were married Jan. 10, 1868. His wife died the same year on Oct. 8. The second marriage was on Jan. 10, 1872, to Martha Hayden. They had 10 children, all born in Tampa. Four of the children died young. The surviving children were three boys: Hayden, William George, and Donald Jr., and three girls: Marion A., Martha A., and Susan May.

Of the daughters of James McKay I, Sarah, the eldest, married Robert B. Thomas of Kentucky, an officer in the U.S. Army. Marion, the second daughter, married William Randolph of Tallahassee. Their one daughter married William A. Carter, a Tampa attorney.

The third daughter, Matilda, married Dr. John P. Wall, a prominent doctor. Matilda died in 1893. They had one son, Charles McKay.

Dr. Howell T. Lykes, the progenitor of the Lykes family in Tampa, had two things in common with his father-in-law, Captain James McKay I. He was also deeply involved in the cattle trade with Cuba, and owned several schooners. It was natural that the seven Lykes brothers - one half Lykes and the other half McKay - should turn to the cattle industry, and something to do with the sea.

They started out with small funds, but with big ideas, and a tremendous determination to succeed.

In time they developed large pasture lands in Florida, Cuba, and South America, and amassed the largest merchant marine fleet in America. During World War II, the Lykes ships made important contributions in the service of the United States, and continue to be an important asset to the merchant marine of this country.

Captain James McKay I, through his far-reaching contributions to Tampa, and the continued good work of his descendants, has left a rich legacy to posterity. They are a fitting tribute to the great Scottish Chief who came to a jungle port to spawn a bonny American heritage.

THE LYKES BROTHERS

Tony and Josephine Pizzo

...He’s the New Hillsborough County Historian