LANDMARK TAMPA GAS TOWER IS COMING DOWN

By HAMPTON DUNN

They were busy tearing down one of Tampa's most familiar landmarks during this year, 1982. The storage tower of the old Tampa Gas Co. (now Peoples Gas System) was being disassembled because it was no longer needed for storage and its upkeep was costly.

This photo, made July 1, 1915, was taken a short time after the 600,000 cubic foot tank was erected, along with a much larger plant, in 1912. At the time the tower was constructed at 212 feet it was the tallest structure in town.

According to Historian Karl H. Grismer, the Tampa Gas Co. was organized in 1895 by A. J. Boardman and Frank Bruen, of Minneapolis and Edward Manrara, Tampa cigar manufacturer, advancing most of the money. Peter O. Knight also was a member of the company. A small gas plant and a 30,000 cubic foot storage tank were constructed.

In the beginning, the gas company had difficulty in meeting expenses. Wood was cheap, black cooks were plentiful, and few persons wanted to go to the expense of piping gas into their homes. The company probably would have gone broke had it not secured a contract from the City of Tampa for 250 gas street lights, installed in 1898.

In 1900 the firm was purchased by a syndicate of Eastern capitalists headed by John Gribbel, of Philadelphia. Three years later the company had only 363 customers and of those, only 109 had gas cook stoves. But the "new-fangled" fuel finally became popular and by 1910 the number of customers had increased to 1,160 and annual sales totaled 35,000,000 cubic feet.