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CONTENTS

From the Editors 3

ARTICLES

Days of Fear: A Lynching in St. Petersburg  By Jon L. Wilson 4

The Battle of Fort Myers  By Rodney E. Dillon, Jr. 27

Tampa's Municipal Wharves  By George E. Buker 37

Women of Tampa Bay: A Photographic Essay  By Cathy Slusser 47

MEMOIR

Memories of a Pioneer Girl  By Morning Elizabeth McDaniel 64
Introduction By Marian B. Godown

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

The Sea Breeze: The First Newspaper of the Lower Pinellas Peninsula  By Willard B. Simonds 75

BOOK REVIEWS

Sears, Fort Center: An Archaeological Site in the Lake Okeechobee Basin,
By William M. Murray 81

Services, The Log of the H. M. S. Mentor, 1780-1781,
By Baxter Billingsley 82

Bennett, Florida's 'French' Revolution, 1793-1795,
By Jerrell H. Shofner 83

Ware, George Gauld: Surveyor and Cartographer of the Gulf Coast,
By Charles W. Arnade 84

Announcements 86
FROM THE EDITORS

History, unfortunately, is filled with examples of man’s inhumanity to man. One of the cruelest forms of brutality in American History was the lynching of blacks, particularly in the South. From the early 1880s through the 1930s an average of seventy Afro-Americans each year were killed as a result of extralegal vigilante mob action. The usual justification of the terrorists was that they had to avenge the heinous crime of the rape of white women by blacks. In actuality, most of the lynchings did not result from alleged rapes but grew out of a variety of other charges, especially homicides. Whatever the specific act of provocation, lynchers generally acted in order to maintain tight control over blacks and thwart real or imagined challenges to the prevailing system of white supremacy. In doing so, their methods were vicious. Hangings, shootings, burnings, and mutilations were the weapons used to torture and execute the victims. In 1914, there were slightly over fifty lynchings of blacks, and one of them took place in St. Petersburg. Jon Wilson employs the techniques of the historian and investigative journalist to uncover the story behind this Bay Area lynching in which diverse segments of the community, rich and poor, joined together in participation. This article was chosen to receive the $50 second prize in the 1982 TAMPA BAY HISTORY Essay Contest.

The remainder of the articles in this issue deal with a broad range of subjects. Their authors examine the Civil War Battle of Fort Myers, the southernmost land battle in the state; the planning and construction of Tampa’s municipal wharves, a study of public interest politics; the publication of the first newspaper in the lower Pinellas Peninsula in what is modern-day Gulfport; and the lives of Suncoast women as portrayed in photographs. In addition, we are presenting a memoir of a pioneer family in southwest Florida, and we would like to encourage our readers to send in accounts of their family histories.

We hope that you find this volume of TBH informative reading and invite your comments.
Lynching is a vicious practice in which members of a mob take the law into their own hands. On the pretext of seeking retribution for some wrongdoing, they injure or execute a victim in summary fashion, at times with great fanfare and public acclaim. Presumptions of innocence and proof of guilt are treated as afterthoughts, if at all. The accused may have broken a law, violated a local custom, or merely offended prevailing sensibilities. Outnumbered and overwhelmed, the victim has no means of redress, since the mob functions as self-appointed prosecutor, jury, judge and executioner.¹

Ed Sherman went to bed early. Immersed in the mystique of Florida real estate, the fifty-five-year-old entrepreneur had finished a busy day, and he expected the next few weeks to bring more hard work. Already it was November 10, and Sherman was hurrying to prepare his woodland acreage for the start of St. Petersburg’s 1914 winter season and the expected invasion of northern tourists who might be interested in buying property.

Three years earlier, Sherman had purchased his tract on a desolate stretch of Johns Pass Road (30th Avenue North), a few yards west of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad tracks. During the winters of 1912 and 1913 he and his wife lived on Central Avenue in downtown St. Petersburg, where Sherman operated a photography studio. Each summer, the couple returned to New Jersey, where Sherman had studios in his home town of Camden and in the seaside resort of Wildwood eighty miles away.²

But it was among the piney woods and palmettos of remote Pinellas County that the photographer-turned-speculator dreamed of making his fortune. Many others in 1914 St. Petersburg held similar hopes. For three years, vigorous real estate trading had stirred the community, with property being sold and resold, often at inflated prices. Northern money provided much of the fuel for the little land boom. However, after war broke out in Europe, financiers seemed to back away, and St. Petersburg’s land fever diminished. When contracts for war materials finally began to bring new profits for the money men, St. Petersburg boosters anticipated a new wave of activity. As an editorial in the town’s Evening Independent put it: “Now that the tight period is over the people of this city have bright prospects and there is every reason to believe real prosperity is coming.”³

Sherman hoped the well-to-do would fall for Wildwood Gardens, the fanciful name he gave his property, which he advertised as the “newest suburb of St. Petersburg.” In truth, the land was at least a half-mile from the nearest neighbor, several miles from the town and still largely undeveloped. Nevertheless, Sherman had hope, and he had a crew of eleven black men clearing land and doing carpentry work. On the site was Sherman’s home, a one-story, frame bungalow with its rear toward the railroad tracks, and a half-finished outbuilding to be used as a shed or garage.
The evening of November 10, 1914, a Tuesday, brought a soft autumn breeze and mild temperatures near sixty-five degrees. Sherman retired about 8 o’clock, sleeping in a bedroom alcove with low, narrow windows on both sides of it and two larger ones in the front. Mrs. Sherman was sitting in an adjoining parlor, making Christmas baskets of grass and pine needles. It was about 9:30 or 10 o’clock when the blast tore through the bungalow.

Screaming, Mrs. Sherman leaped toward the bedroom. It was then, she stated later, that a black man appeared, thrusting a revolver in her face, demanding money and threatening to kill her if she resisted. Mrs. Sherman handed over about $100 in cash that her husband had withdrawn from the bank the day before. According to Mrs. Sherman’s account to police, a second black man appeared, and the pair dragged her outside, beat her across the face with a length of pipe, battered her head against an outbuilding wall and tore off some of her clothes. Newspaper accounts during the next two days strongly suggested she was also raped. With a final threat to kill her if she moved, the assailants fled, and Mrs. Sherman fainted.

The woman told police she regained consciousness awhile later, crawled inside to her husband’s bedside, touched his icy feet and fainted again. When she recovered several hours later about 3 o’clock in the morning of November 11, she managed to crawl out of the house and across the yard and railroad tracks. She then got up and staggered a half-mile through the woods to the home of J.W. Richter. But the Richters, like the Shermans, had no telephone, so a boy was sent one more mile through the woods to another house, whose owner in turn sent his son to a Ninth Street house from which the police were notified.

The news stunned the normally placid community. Edward F. Sherman, widely known, popular studio photographer, lay murdered in his bed, the top of his skull blown off by a shotgun blast. His wife lay in St. Petersburg’s Augusta Memorial Hospital, the victim of a vicious assault, probably ravished, and hovering near death. Moreover, the criminals were black, according to the newspapers. “Slain As He Slept By Unknown Negro,” blared the Evening Independent’s front-page headline on November 11. The next morning, the St. Petersburg Daily Times published photos of Sherman and at least one black man said to be the assailant, next to headlines that declared: “E.F. Sherman Is Brutally Slain While He Sleeps,” and “Two Negroes Accused of Most Atrocious Crime Here in Years.”

It was a shattering development for a town in which the peaceful pursuits of fishing, agriculture, tourism and, lately, real estate, had established a serene lifestyle. The crimes on Johns Pass Road both scared and outraged white residents. Black residents feared the reaction of the white community. Furthermore, shock waves must have jolted the business community, whose leaders were counting on the support and money of affluent patrons who lived in and near Philadelphia—just across the Delaware River from the Shermans’ home in Camden, where Sherman’s mother and minister brother still lived. Newspapers in the Philadelphia area carried front-page accounts of the killing and the assault.

If the crimes terrified St. Petersburg’s white community, the community’s response was equally frightening. During the next seventy-two hours, St. Petersburg experienced almost total disintegration of the law, which passed from authorities to the hands of mobs. Before the disorder ended, the town witnessed the torture and hanging of a black man named John Evans,
whose dangling body was riddled with bullets fired by a lynch mob at Ninth Street and Second Avenue South. Besides whipping hundreds of white residents into a lawless frenzy, the hysteria caused hundreds of black residents to flee in fear of their lives; it nearly cost a city jailer his life; it fostered mob talk about invading Clearwater and Tampa; and it caused Florida Governor Park Trammell to consider calling out troops to restore order in St. Petersburg.8

Soon after the Sherman news started moving through the community, white residents took to the streets and the surrounding country. On foot, in buggies, on horseback and in automobiles, men and half-grown boys carrying rifles, pistols and shotguns began sweeping the southern part of the county. Searching parties were formed further north after the news went by telephone to Largo and Clearwater, and grim posses with bloodhounds poked into the most desolate thickets of the Pinellas wilderness. The Evening Independent reported that two lines of men, one starting from Largo and the other from St. Petersburg, and stretching all the way across the Pinellas peninsula, were searching for suspects. Rumors flew, and each one sent vigilantes swarming to check it. Reports that a bloodhound had been shot at Crystal Beach near Clearwater, and that three blacks had been chased into a swamp, sent a dozen packed autos swaying over bumpy roads to the northern part of the county. The story proved false.9

In St. Petersburg, the rumors fed crowds roaming Central Avenue and Fourth Street. Many gathered at the combined city hall and jail at Fourth Street and Second Avenue South, waiting for police to bring in suspects. At intervals, as it was reported black suspects were being taken before Mrs. Sherman for possible identification, throngs would dash off to Augusta Memorial at Seventh Street and Sixth Avenue South. At one point, more than 100 armed men surrounded the hospital to prevent any suspect from escaping. Incidents of random violence began. As the mobs rushed back and forth, a man on horseback rode up to R.B. DuBois, a white man who was photographing the furious activity, and knocked a camera out of his hands.

However, the vigilantes directed their terror against the black community. In an effort to round up all the men who had worked for Sherman, a posse raided the black “quarters” west of Ninth Street after midnight on November 12 and took a half-dozen men to the city jail. Several others were arrested elsewhere, either on the strength of Mrs. Sherman’s reports to police or because they were unfortunate enough to be seen outside. Another black man, seen on Ninth Street at 3 a.m., November 12, was shot at three times by a posse returning from Clearwater. According to the Evening Independent, no blacks were harmed during the searches, but over the next few days, many left the city. Some took the train, while others walked the Atlantic Coast Line tracks north toward Pinellas Park and Largo. On November 13, the day after the lynching, 179 black women and children left on an afternoon boat to Tampa, and still others took smaller boats to Pass-a-Grille.10

The events in St. Petersburg earned the town several days of critical press comment from newspapers outside the city. In its November 15 editorial, the Tampa Tribune observed: “St. Petersburg and its neighborhood could have won a national reputation by permitting the law to take its course in this aggravated case—or at least by waiting until guilt could be accurately fixed before adopting the mob method.” The Clearwater Sun commented caustically, “Surely there must have been those in that city of ten thousand people, with its culture and refinement, and its
law and its gospel, who could have prevented the frenzy of a small portion of its people from adding crime to crime.”

_Sun_ editor Willis Powell may have been right in his assertion. However, the wave of terror raised a number of questions no one seemed to be asking publicly, in St. Petersburg or anywhere else. Why had the law not been allowed to take its proper course? Moreover, how could a placid community, which advertised itself as a “thoroughly cosmopolitan city” and the “cleanest, cheeriest, most comfortable little city in the south” so completely lose control? And other, more haunting questions remained unanswered: Was the kidnapping of Evans from the city jail and his subsequent lynching the spontaneous action of a mob, or was there subtle planning to achieve a quick, extralegal execution to remove a threat to the community’s progress? Would a white man have been dealt with the same as John Evans? And finally, did the mobs and the lynching define St. Petersburg’s racial division and maintain, once again, still another version of a code that spoke of one kind of justice and position for white people, and another for blacks?

If there are answers to such questions, they are to be found in the town itself. No longer a remote, pastoral village, but hardly a bustling city, St. Petersburg in 1914 resembled a bumpkin struggling to shed a backwater character and assume a new one of polish and charm. A news item in the _Evening Independent_ illustrated the duality: A driver hauling construction steel for the town’s modern, new gas plant was injured—when the mules pulling his wagon bolted and ran away. Such divided character was evident in many ways. Although Central Avenue was hard-surfaced in the downtown business district and twenty-five miles of trolley track stretched to Gulfport, Big Bayou, Coffee Pot Bayou and the Jungle on Boca Ciega Bay, citizens wrote irate letters to the editor, complaining that mule-drawn wagons were ruining the town’s few blocks of brick paving. Mechanics in five garages fixed the growing number of motor cars, but there was still a livery stable, and a harness shop and three blacksmiths. Residents could keep cows in their yards for a one dollar permit fee; and yet the town boasted a $150,000 opera house, reputedly the most modern south of Washington, D.C. St. Petersburg’s permanent population was a matter of debate. It was probably about 7,000 by 1914. Informal estimates varied, but a state census in 1915 set it at 7,186.

An _Evening Independent_ editorial, bemoaning a recent increase in burglaries, noted that “St. Petersburg is getting out of the village class and is becoming a city,” but serious crime was generally not a problem. The municipal court was more likely to fine someone for allowing a noisy card party to fracture the peace at the late hour of 11 p.m. Police Chief A. L. Easters and his four officers worried about pranksters and planned to have extra men on duty for Halloween.

By 1914, St. Petersburg had developed a socially elite group nurtured by the attention given the town by affluent and influential easterners, many of them from Philadelphia. Thanks, for example, to Philadelphian F. A. Davis and his companies, St. Petersburg had its trolleys, paved streets and power company. The St. Petersburg Investment Company, a Davis brainchild to finance development in the town, attracted many other Philadelphia money men, among them George Gandy, H. C. Hatchett, William C. Haddock, Cyrus S. Detre, H. K. Heritage, Jacob Disston and Charles R. Hall. During 1912-13, Gandy built the Plaza theater, which included the opera house and office buildings, on Central Avenue and Fifth Street. As early as 1906, the
Philadelphia group had entertained big plans for St. Petersburg. In that year a *St. Petersburg Daily Times* story mentioned an article in the *Philadelphia North American* that declared, “Capitalists in Philadelphia plan to make St. Petersburg one of the most important ports in the South Atlantic states.”

W. L. Straub’s *Times* carried on its editorial page the slogan, “Be Sure It Is Right—Then Boost It,” and the words seemed to provide inspiration. Residents consistently united behind proposals for improvements: About $624,000 was approved by voters in bond issue elections from 1908 to 1913, and not one issue was defeated during that period. Clearly, St. Petersburg was an ambitious town.

Not all was perfect, however. For many, personal and business finances were running low in the fall of 1914. *Evening Independent* city editor A. R. “Archie” Dunlap predicted that most residents would continue to burn wood for fuel even when the new gas plant was ready. “Money is none too plentiful in St. Petersburg, or anywhere else this winter,” Dunlap wrote in his “Rambler” column. The city’s Board of Trade and the proprietors of hotels and boarding houses were worried, too. More than 50,000 pieces of promotional literature had been printed and mailed north at great expense, which only a highly successful tourist season could recover.

Still, prominent citizens were predicting success. Board of Trade President Charles R. Hall and St. Petersburg Investment Company manager H. Walter Fuller, returning from a conference in Philadelphia with St. Petersburg investors, both reported high optimism among the easterners, who were said to be loosening their finances. “Each brings a story of prosperity that will not much longer be delayed,” declared an *Evening Independent* editorial. “They say St. Petersburg’s

They called it “Gandy’s White Elephant,” but his business complex at Central and Fifth featuring the Plaza Theatre proved to be a great success. It was built by George S. Gandy and opened on March 8, 1913.

Photo courtesy of *Yesterday’s St. Petersburg*. 

![Image of Plaza Theatre](https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol5/iss2/10)
The Detroit Hotel, about 1914.

Photograph courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg.

Central Avenue ran from Fourth Street and was a busy thoroughfare by 1912.

Photograph courtesy of Yesteryday’s St. Petersburg.
prospects are better than ever before, and they are in a position to know, for they are the men who do things.” Hall, who had a reputation as a master salesman, claimed that people would be sleeping in bathtubs for lack of better accommodations. Hall reported also that $100,000 worth of property had been sold to prospective winter residents during the past sixty days, at a rate of one home per week. W. A. Huber, president of the Pennsylvania State Society, announced that he expected to “bring a good-sized party [of visitors] with me to St. Petersburg this winter.” Another St. Petersburg resident, recently returned from a northern trip, reported that railway and steamship offices in Boston had never had such large bookings for Florida and that ninety percent of them were for the state’s West Coast.  

Whatever the season brought, 1914 had been a landmark year for St. Petersburg. The new gas plant and garbage crematory was almost complete. A second railroad, the Tampa and Gulf Coast, was building a $20,000 depot in town and expected to begin St. Petersburg service soon. A library financed by a Carnegie grant was under construction. An agreement was reached to bring the Philadelphia Phillies to town for spring training in 1915. The city also received a big boost from the Atlantic Coast Line railroad, which devoted the entire back page of its fall promotional brochure to St. Petersburg. 

The passenger train station of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad was built in 1913 and in use until 1963.

Photograph courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg.
All of this reflected the happy growth of an ambitious town, but there was an ailment, a festering, a flaw. Like most Southern towns, St. Petersburg was strictly segregated by race. Blacks, who composed about one-third of the city’s population, lived in separate areas west of Ninth Street. The largest sections were “Cooper’s Quarters” near the gas plant project, “Methodist Town” north of Central Avenue and another settlement about a mile west of the city limits south of Central Avenue. The black sections contained their own churches, stores and meeting halls because the residents could not use facilities in white sections. There was a separate hospital for blacks, and people in the communities had their own schools.

Blacks provided much of the work force that was building St. Petersburg. Men worked as laborers for one of the town's twelve white building contractors, on street paving projects, and on sewer-laying jobs. Others worked for the railroads, and some were craftsmen. Black women waited tables or were maids in hotels, boarding houses and the private homes of the affluent. A black woman might earn five dollars a week; a man five to ten dollars weekly. Other than the hours they spent working there, blacks were seldom allowed in the business district or in the white residential sections.²²

Segregation was enforced in the political process as well. In 1913, for example, a primary election in which only whites were permitted to vote produced the commissioners who would direct town affairs for the next several years. The white-only election was called because some candidates apparently had strong support from blacks. Major Lew B. Brown’s Evening Independent supported the white primary as “a voluntary expression of the white voters in order to maintain control of city affairs in the hands of the white people,” and it expressed some fear that blacks could control the town if all of them voted in a bloc. That 500 blacks were registered to vote—less than one-twelfth of the town population—seemed enough of a threat to the white community to justify the special primary.²³

Elected were J. G. Bradshaw, commissioner of public affairs; T. J. Northrup, commissioner of public safety; and C. D. Hammond, commissioner of public works. A week later, Bradshaw was chosen mayor by the other two. Bradshaw declared before the election that he “wanted to go into office as the choice of the white voters of the city and would rather not have the office than to rely on the negroes to win.”²⁴

Segregation had always been present to some degree in St. Petersburg, but to some blacks it seemed that the practice grew harsher as the 1900s progressed. Paul Barco, a black St. Petersburg resident whose father had arrived in 1905, later recalled that his mother and father conducted their courtship in Williams Park, but Barco, born in 1916, had grandchildren of his own before he saw the park for the first time. The intensity of racial discrimination seemed to increase some time after 1905. Discussing the phenomenon, Barco observed:

My daddy said when he came to this city, if you had to go to a doctor, you went on over to the doctor. He had one waiting room there, he waited on whoever was there. And the people who were in there were rustic [white] people, just like the others [who were black]. They were not the polished persons from elsewhere, who probably had never been around a [black] person. But my dad said as these persons began to come down who had the great amounts of finance and they had been exposed to a great deal
of literary training, then these people felt that they didn’t care to sit in the same room with these [black] people.

According to his father, “the polished persons” put pressure on the people who rendered the services to institute segregated facilities. Eventually, the dentist, who was white, added a separate waiting room for blacks, telling Barco’s father that “things were changing.”

Crime, even petty crime by blacks, frequently resulted in a harsh response. For example, whites would not hesitate to shoot at a black person for so slight a transgression as stealing fruit. Such extreme reaction for minor offenses further defined a system that placed blacks in an inferior position that seldom accorded them the consideration a white person would enjoy. Lula Grant, who came to St. Petersburg in 1908 when she was twenty-two years old, expressed it this way: “It’s too bad to say, but we were just black people, and they was white people, that’s all. We weren’t considered [in] any way, we were just black people.”

Marvel Whitehouse, the Pinellas County Sheriff in 1914.

Photograph courtesy of Heritage Park County.

Lower Central Avenue, looking east toward Tampa Bay in 1910, complete with trolley.

Courtesy of Heritage Park, Pinellas
The November 10 Evening Independent editorial, predicting the imminent arrival of good fortune for St. Petersburg, appeared just a few hours before the Sherman crimes happened. Suddenly, a shadow fell over the optimism. With only five policemen on its payroll, the city was plunged into a situation where it was forced to cope with serious crime and civil disorder. The days of fear had begun.

Suspicion fell immediately on John Evans, a black man from Dunnellon who had come with Sherman by car from that town several weeks earlier. Evans had worked for Sherman as a chauffeur and general roustabout, but he was fired on Saturday, November 7. Although there had been no serious quarrel, Evans drank during the weekend and seemed to carry a grudge, according to an acquaintance. From her hospital bed a few hours after the crimes, moreover, Mrs. Sherman told Dr. F. W. Wilcox that she thought she recognized the voice of one of her assailants as that of Evans.

Law enforcement officials moved swiftly on November 11. A coroner’s jury viewed the murder scene and Police Chief A. L. Easters went straight to the Sherman home. So did Deputy Charles Simms, representing Pinellas County Sheriff Marvel Whitehurst. The two law officers surmised that Sherman’s killer had crept to a window outside the alcove where Sherman lay sleeping, stood on a low pile of dirt and fired a shotgun through the screen. Footprints under the
window seemed to match others leading north from the house. Based on Mrs. Sherman’s
descriptions, apparently relayed through Dr. Wilcox, Easters ordered the arrests of Evans and
another black man known as Tobe, said to have fingers missing on his right hand.

As news of the crimes spread and residents began to form posses and mill in the streets, the
first person arrested was Ebenezer B. Tobin. Sheriff’s Deputy Grover C. McMullen made the
arrest on Ninth Street, when he spied a man who fit the description of the man called Tobe. After
questioning at the St. Petersburg police office, McMullen put Tobin on a train to Clearwater
before anyone in the gathering crowd learned of the arrest. Tobin was held in the county jail at
Clearwater despite the fact that Deputy Simms searched the black man’s home, found no
evidence and declared that he believed Tobin told the truth when he denied any part in the crime.

McMullen also arrested another black man, George W. Gadson, in some woods near Largo
after two detectives trailed Gadson and three other black men along the railroad tracks. John
Evans was found about the same time by former deputy sheriff E. L. Proctor, with the help of a
black informant. However, Evans could not be linked to the killing. Taken before Mrs. Sherman,
he was released after she could not identify him as her attacker. Mrs. Sherman looked at several
other black men, but could not name any as an assailant.

As crowds dashed wildly around the town, grim groups of manhunters prowled the rural areas,
determined to find the guilty persons they thought must be hiding in the dense woods. It was
rough going. George Gandy, one of the searchers, said the country his party went through was so
thick with palmettoes that one hundred men could have hidden within a few feet and never have
been detected. In town, commissioners ordered saloons closed about nightfall. Nevertheless,
Central Avenue remained crowded with white people until midnight. Blacks disappeared from
the streets, even in their own sections, and nearby Ninth Street was empty except for an
occasional car carrying white men. At the railroad depot, just one black hotel porter remained on
duty, although many were usually on hand to meet the night train.

Thursday, November 12, began ominously. Frustrated after failing to find and identify the
Sherman attackers, a posse raided black homes during the early morning hours and took six or
seven men to the town jail. Later in the morning, St. Petersburg seemed quieter than on the
previous day, with not so much frantic dashing about, although the streets remained crowded.

As the day wore on, new developments began to excite the people again. By now, both the
morning and evening newspapers had devoted much space to detailed, sometimes gruesome
accounts of the crimes, descriptions of black suspects including their names and the progress of
the manhunt. To infuriate further the white populace came apparent confirmation that Mrs.
Sherman had been raped. While not saying so directly, the Evening Independent published an
article pointing out that Florida law prohibited printing the name of a woman who had been
sexually assaulted. The article also reported that it would be unlawful to mention the woman's
relationship to Sherman, because it would identify her. Thus, the newspaper disclaimer, added to
opinion in the community, effectively established Mrs. Sherman as a rape victim.

Although the Evening Independent’s lead editorial on November 12 denounced mob violence
and expressed hope that the law would take its proper course, the news columns of both local
papers seemed to fan the flames of anger. Besides graphic descriptions of the crimes, stories contained statements that would tend to inflame a mob. For example, an *Evening Independent* story said, “... the general feeling is that the guilty man should be hanged promptly as soon as positively identified.” On the previous day, the *Evening Independent* had speculated that the guilty parties, if caught, had small chance of getting to jail alive. City editor A. R. “Archie” Dunlap’s November 12 column brought up the idea of lynching, although he stopped short of endorsing the practice. In an accompanying front-page story, the *Evening Independent* reported that new clues had been found and that one of them appeared to link John Evans to the crimes. Despite his release the day before, Evans was still under suspicion because he had left Sherman’s employ under forced circumstances, the story declared. It also noted: “The general feeling here is that Evans knows more of the crime than he has told.”

Meanwhile, the St. Petersburg newspapers, including the *Times* with its pictures of Sherman and black men on the front page, had gone by train to Clearwater and other sections of north Pinellas County. The news stimulated residents in those sections. “They came in [to St. Petersburg] from all over the upper county. Old-timers, old pioneers, they came in on horseback,” according to Luther Atkins, a St. Petersburg resident who observed the events and recalled them in a 1981 interview.

Two discoveries again led posses to John Evans. A torn, bloody man’s shirt and a pair of bloody shoes were found by a search party in the back of a house in Methodist Town where Evans had roomed. A black man in the house at first stated that the shirt belonged to Evans, but he soon changed his mind, saying he did not know who owned it. Another piece of evidence also turned up. A double-barreled shotgun, thought to be the murder weapon, was found alongside the railroad tracks south of the Sherman home toward the town. One barrel had recently been fired, and the gun appeared to be the one earlier stolen from L. R. Hardee’s home on Central Avenue. That discovery seemed to indicate the assailants must have fled south instead of north as originally supposed, but it did not immediately implicate any person in particular. Nonetheless, the bloody shoes and shirt were enough to spur the search parties on another hunt for Evans. Though Mrs. Sherman had said the day before that Evans was not her attacker, her statements were now placed in doubt because her injuries and medication supposedly prevented her from thinking clearly.

Since his release from custody the day before, Evans had gone to work for a black man west of town near Fifth Avenue South and Twenty-second Street. Someone telephoned his whereabouts to Police Chief Easters. The caller also indicated that Evans had been told the mob was after him again but that he had responded that he would not run. If the mob wanted him, he said, it could come get him.

That it did, after receiving directions from the police chief. Hoping to force a confession, the vigilantes took Evans into the woods, tortured him and nearly lynched him on the spot. According to the *Tampa Tribune*, Evans

was subjected to intense methods to provoke a confession, but remained a stoic throughout. After being subjected to all known methods, and his continued denial that he knew anything of the crime, Evans was told to make his peace with God and to say
his prayers. He said he had no prayers to say. It is alleged a rope was placed around his neck and he was lifted clear of the ground, but he continued to deny he is [sic] the guilty man.32

Unable to extract the confession it wanted, the mob decided to take Evans into town so Mrs. Sherman could inspect him again. For awhile, he was hidden in a Roser Park garage while an expectant crowd at the hospital awaited his arrival. Kept waiting, the crowd began to disperse, and Evans was then taken to Mrs. Sherman, who for the second time could not identify him. She said she could not see without her glasses, which had been broken in the assault. Dr. Wilcox declared that her vision had also been damaged by a blow she had received across the left eye. Later, Dr. Wilcox, Mayor J. G. Bradshaw and Police Chief Easters talked briefly with the people outside the hospital, saying that Evans would be left in the St. Petersburg jail and not taken to Clearwater if the crowd would not molest him until he could be named as an assailant.33

During the afternoon, the crowds downtown seemed to be growing more unruly. “A number of strangers, probably from the outlying sections, appeared and the crowd became more determined,” commented one newspaper story, although the account noted that there was no talk of lynching or breaking into the jail.34 But at one point, a group at the city hall became so demonstrative that Mayor Bradshaw mounted the steps to plead. He contended that he had no doubt that the law would be carried out, whether by summary justice of some determined posse or, as he hoped, by a duly constituted court.35

About 10:30 that night, a mob estimated at 1,500 seized Evans. Accounts vary as to how the vigilantes gained entrance to the jail. According to one, a crowbar was used to pry open the iron door of the corridor leading to the cells; another said bricks were removed from a wall; a third declared the jail door was battered down; and a fourth said ropes or chains hooked to horses were used to tear down the jail's alley door.36

Brandishing guns of all kinds, a crowd filled the jail corridor. The two or three officers present retreated before the muzzles. Someone thrust a revolver into jailer E. H. Nichols’ face, shouting “Kill him!” Fire chief J. T. McNulty grabbed the weapon as its hammer fell on the skin between his thumb and forefinger. The move probably saved Nichols’ life.

Evans was in a cage in the rear of the four-cell jail. Several blacks in the other cells hollered: “Are you looking for the murderer? He’s in that cell.” Others called out, “Be sure to get the right man,” pointing toward Evans. After being allowed to put on his clothes and shoes, Evans was yanked out. As he was hauled away, he said to his cellmates: “Boys, I am sorry you told on me.” Men dragged him down the corridor to the alley, where they placed a rope around his neck.

Then began a procession from the jail at Fourth Street and Second Avenue South to Central Avenue, and then west on Central. Men, women and children, some partly dressed, poured out of hotels and guest houses along the avenue. Both the street and the sidewalks were full as the parade, grimly silent, marched west toward the black section. A lighted street car followed the procession, and behind it was a line of automobiles, motorcycles and bicycles. As the cars pulled into line, someone shouted, “Put out your lights!” and every headlight blinked off.37
At the head of the column trudged Evans, still stoic and silent, the rope around his neck. Eyewitness Luther Atkins later recalled Evans’ silence:

He never said a word. He knew that he was guilty, and he knew it was his time, and as far as I know I never heard him say any sound and everybody was quiet walkin’ down the street. And everybody was determined to do one thing, and that one thing was to lynch that nigger, and that’s what they did. It was just that simple. However pitiful it was and unlawful.38

The procession turned south on Ninth Street and moved to the corner of Second Avenue South where there was an electric light on an arm attached to a pole. There was some discussion about setting fire to Evans, but as the rope was already around his neck, it was decided to proceed with the hanging. First, someone threw a rope over a nearby trolley pole, but the mob leaders decided the pole was not strong enough. They moved across Ninth Street, thinking a tree there would do for the hanging, but decided the street’s east side was too dark. The mob then went back to the light pole. A boy climbed up the pole’s spikes and threw a rope over the crossbar, and as he did someone in the crowd fired a shot at him by mistake, missing. After he scuttled down, the mob leaders started hoisting Evans off the ground.39
In every account of the lynching, both in newspapers at the time and by witnesses in later years, women played prominent roles in the episode. News accounts always mentioned women as being in the mob that finally lynched Evans. The Times reporter who covered the lynching recalled that a woman was one of the leading instigators. And as Evans desperately tried to wrap his legs around the pole while the white men heaved on the rope below, it was a white woman in an automobile who fired a shotgun into the black man’s body.\textsuperscript{40}

The blast began a murderous fusillade of bullets and shot that tore into Evans for nearly ten minutes. As he dangled in the noose, volley after volley erupted from rifles, pistols and shotguns. Occasionally, a louder explosion was heard when someone pulled both triggers at once on a double-barreled shotgun. According to Luther Atkins,

They shot that fella so fulla holes that I carried a postcard taken by a big flashlight. One on my friends here was a photographer, he took the picture at night after everybody left. You could actually see the holes in his body through his clothes. It was just riddled. Little kids with guns were shootin’, and women standin’ there shootin’ and screamin’ and yellin’ and—and shootin’. It was the damndest mess you ever heard in your life, you never heard anything like it.

It all took about 40 minutes from the time Evans was taken from jail. When it was over, the crowd melted away, remarkably quiet as it dispersed, as though, remarked the Times, “it had been going to a funeral instead of coming from an execution of its own making.” Left behind was the blasted corpse of John Evans, swaying ever so slightly in the soft, Florida night.\textsuperscript{41}

Two grim possibilities loomed as St. Petersburg entered its third day of fear on Friday, November 13. The first was that angry, white citizens, searching for the second assailant, would continue to rampage. It seemed likely to happen. Muttering crowds continuing to congregate on the streets, and their numbers increased toward evening. Ebenezer Tobin, held under tight security by Sheriff Whitehurst, was now believed with certainty to have been John Evans’ partner. Whitehurst was thought to have spirited him to Tampa for safekeeping, but when rumors circulated that Tobin was still in Clearwater, a clamor went up to march on the town and seize him. There was also talk about invading Tampa, if necessary.

The second possibility was that a race riot would explode. Not only were some white residents threatening to storm the black areas again, but angry blacks were ready to retaliate. Fighting words were heard on both sides of town. Florida Governor Park Trammell sent a telegram to Clearwater, asking Sheriff Whitehurst whether St. Petersburg needed troops to maintain order. In St. Petersburg, officials declined the offer, but an infantry company in Pinellas County stayed on alert in the armory.\textsuperscript{42} Mayor Bradshaw, in a prepared statement issued to the press, pleaded with the town to remain calm. “I am aware that the recent occurrence has been sufficient to excite everyone, but the crime has in a measure been avenged. We cannot help things by undue excitement which might work grave injury to our city,” Bradshaw declared.\textsuperscript{43}

White hostility and the possibility of further abuse convinced hundreds of blacks to flee St. Petersburg even while some white leaders promised to protect the innocent. The trouble was that
vigilantes were not making distinctions as they searched. Considering the lynching the night before, the raids on black homes and the apparent inability of authorities to control the mobs, it is not surprising the promises went unheard.

An attempt to quench some of the mob fever came with the issuance of a report about Mrs. Sherman. Acting with police as a representative of the crowds, J. C. Blocker made this public statement:

> While Mrs. Sherman is on the road to recovery, the woman is in no condition to be bothered for several days. In justice to her, the people should not insist on any more negroes being taken before her for two or three days. As might be expected after such an experience, she has a horror of the sight of a negro. Naturally, this excites her and is detrimental to her.\(^4\)

It was hoped the remarks might at least discourage vigilantes from taking blacks in front of the woman for identification, thus minimizing the possibility of white forays into St. Petersburg’s black sections or into other towns as posses hunted suspects.

J. P. Walsh, Sherman’s business partner, arrived from Camden a few hours after a policeman cut down John Evans’ corpse at 3 o’clock in the morning. Walsh, a lawyer and businessman, visited Mrs. Sherman and began immediately to settle her husband’s estate. St. Petersburg, meanwhile, had already settled one thing: The coroner’s jury, summoned by Magistrate Addison Arnold, viewed Evans’ body at S. D. Harris’ undertaking parlor on Central Avenue and reached a verdict. Evans, the jury reported, had died at the hands of parties unknown.\(^5\)

Such verdicts were typical of lynchings everywhere. A black person would be killed, often after being tortured, and the white perpetrators would remain anonymous. Because blacks were virtually powerless in terms of voting, holding public office or serving on juries, the arrest, prosecution, conviction and punishment for lynchers was almost unknown. Said historian Robert L. Zangrando,

> Local white sentiment condoned [the lynchers’] actions; public officials, answerable to a white electorate, either cooperated with the mob or sought refuge in silence and inaction. As a result, coroner’s juries repeatedly found that death had come ‘at the hands of parties unknown,’ a sham verdict, indeed, since lynchers’ identities were seldom a secret.\(^6\)

That night it rained, as if to cleanse a troubled town. The showers sent milling crowd members scurrying into their homes. Armed patrols—composed of businessmen, according to a Times headline—stayed on guard to stop any stragglers determined to create disorder. Gradually, a calm seemed to descend.

The next day, a Saturday, found the town drifting back to routine. Business in stores and shops, practically at a standstill the past few days, began to recover, although saloons remained closed until Monday at the order of the mayor. The blacks who left town started to return as the excitement and high emotion of both black and white residents began to abate. The Pinellas
County Teachers Association decided to hold its meeting as scheduled, while the city government and the Board of Trade met to discuss public ownership of waterfront property. And the *Times* carried a brief announcement: There would be a Sunday concert on the pier at 3 o’clock; a collection would be taken up to pay for band uniforms.

Almost immediately, efforts began to justify or minimize the lynching of Evans. Newspaper stories, prominently displayed, said St. Petersburg blacks were certain that Evans was guilty. Mrs. Sherman, whose mind had apparently cleared, was quoted as being sure that Evans was the man who had killed her husband and assaulted her. This was on November 14 after she had twice failed to identify Evans, and the day after she had been reported in no condition to identify suspects.47

Newspaper editorials also took up the cause of justification. The *Times* carried a commentary that appeared first in the *Ocala Star*:

The negro John Evans, who was lynched in St. Petersburg Thursday night, abided awhile in his passage through this world in Marion County, and was sent up by the superior court to serve a term in the penitentiary for grand larceny. The officers here say he was a bad character, and it was probably safe for the people of St. Petersburg to lynch him on general principles whether he was guilty of the crime he was accused of or not.48

The *Evening Independent* dismissed Evans as an outsider.

It should be remembered that John Evans was not a St. Petersburg negro; he came here only a few weeks ago from Dunnellon. It is usually the negroes who stray in here and stay only a short while who commit crimes. The bulk of the St. Petersburg negroes are honest, straightwalking people who are industrious and well-behaved.49

Both editorials, while intending to reassure the town, contained elements of justification. In fact, defending mob action was a common response after a lynching. Arthur F. Raper, research secretary for the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching in the 1930s, pointed out that those who participated in or accept lynchings tended to be adamant that the right person was killed. He wrote:

The credibility of the lynchers or pro-lynchers in taking at face value all rumors, and the development of the tradition of the absolute guilt of the mob’s victims are both phases of the inability of the mass of white people to deal dispassionately with situations involving actual or potential racial conflict.50

In Evans’ case, it certainly made no difference that the evidence and accusations were circumstantial, questionable or motivated by self-interest. Mrs. Sherman, after all, twice failed to identify Evans as her attacker, even as the man stood in front of her. If she had named Evans, her identification could have been called into doubt because she lay seriously injured, emotionally traumatized and under medication. Moreover, Mrs. Sherman could not see without her glasses, which had been broken, and her doctor said the assault had further impaired her vision. Although
there is no evidence to support it, the possibility cannot be overlooked that Mrs. Sherman was persuaded to name Evans after his death as an attempt to rationalize the lynching.

As for the blacks who insisted on Evans’ guilt, it certainly would not have benefited them to claim his innocence. The whites wanted a person they could consider guilty; if not Evans, than another black person, either one of Evans’ cellmates or someone still free in the black community. As a stranger in St. Peters burg, Evans was available for sacrifice by blacks who hoped to make certain that they themselves would remain safe.

Nor could compelling physical evidence be brought against Evans. The bloody shirt and shoes, which allegedly belonged to him, were discovered at least twenty-four hours after the crimes in a house where Evans was no longer staying. A resident of the house expressed doubt that the shirt was, in fact, Evans’. The shoes could not be said with certainty to fit because, during Evans’ second interrogation in the woods, posse members had simply jammed the shoes on his feet. Even a perfect fit would not have established his ownership or that he wore them the night of the Sherman killing.

Evans’ own actions should also be considered. It would be unusual for a guilty man, once released, not to hide or attempt to leave the area. Evans did neither. He took work west of town and refused to run even when told the posse was coming for him again. Furthermore, after being recaptured and tortured, he still would not confess.

Perhaps the most damaging evidence was a pair of cuff links discovered later. The shotgun identified as the murder weapon was reported stolen from a Central Avenue house on Halloween night, and the cuff links were said to have been taken from the same house that night. However, they were not found among items reportedly belonging to Evans until after he was killed.51

Since the evidence was so limited and circumstantial, there must have been other reasons for the lynching. There were. The determination of the mobs, the manhunting posses, the fear that spawned hysteria and the whites’ willingness to kill unlawfully all contributed to the lynching, and all were rooted in the thorough racism that permeated the city. As racism fostered segregation, so too it ultimately caused a black man’s vigilante murder. The mobs and posses had quickly formed after news circulated that black suspects were wanted. The vigilantes showed no hesitation to raid black homes, round up black men on whim or torture black suspects, all of which led to the lynching. It is doubtful such extreme and indiscriminate terrorism would have been applied to whites or white neighborhoods.

Indeed, American history shows that the victims of lynchings were usually black. Between 1882 and 1968, 4,743 people were reported lynched in the United States, and 3,446 were black. In 1914 alone, Tuskegee Institute reported that 51 of 55 lynching victims were black. The Crisis, an NAACP magazine, reported even more victims that year—74, of whom 69 were black. Florida mobs lynched five blacks and no whites in 1914. The lynching in St. Petersburg, then, was part of a much larger pattern.52

Moreover, the actions of St. Petersburg’s white citizens fit another tradition of segregated society in the South: that of the manhunt. Although statistics actually proved otherwise, whites
thought that blacks were to be prone to commit crimes against white women and that unless a black was lynched periodically, women in remote areas would be in danger. According to Arthur Raper,

These assumptions underlie the traditional practice of Southern white men in arming themselves unofficially and hunting down an accused person. This method of mutual aid in policing an area evolved on the frontier and persisted in localities where the populace, for whatever reasons, insisted upon dealing directly with crime and criminals.53

In St. Petersburg, the mobs clearly fit the pattern of providing unofficial aid to the law officers. With no apparent qualms, Police Chief Easters encouraged a posse to hunt down Evans the second time, even telling the vigilantes where to look. Remarkable, too, was the spirit of cooperation evident in the naming of one man, J. C. Blocker,54 to act as an intermediary between the crowds and the lawmen. With such encouragement, it is not surprising that people in the mobs felt free to act without restraint.

Throughout the disorder, news accounts tried to distinguish between the unruly crowds in town and the posses that scoured the country, as if one were inferior and the other elite. Those in town tended to be labeled irresponsible, while the search parties in the bush were viewed as responsible citizens who deserved more respect.55 To be sure, the men who took Evans the second time may have operated separately from the downtown crowd that the posse tried to avoid at the hospital, and from which town leaders requested patience. But which element ultimately proved the more responsible [or brutal] is difficult to say. All distinctions may have been lost by the time Evans was lynched.

In fact, the notion of lynch mobs being composed of rabble has been proven a myth, in light of hundreds of newspaper accounts nationwide that point out the participation of prominent people from every station and profession. Rather than a band of howling rustics, mobs were more likely to be a cross-section sliced from every status level in the community.56

All people, regardless of social standing, may suffer from fear and hatred, and those two emotions certainly cause distinctions to be made along caste or class lines. If St. Petersburg’s white people, for whatever reason, held blacks in fear, the lynching somehow served to reassure them. “It was something that had to be done to protect our wives and children,” remarked Luther Atkins, talking about the lynching years later. He suggested that blacks had to be suppressed or they would take control of the community—a sentiment similar to the one expressed when the town held a white primary in 1913. Again, the attitude fit a wider pattern. Throughout the South, particularly after Reconstruction, lynching became the typical method of intimidating blacks and maintaining the racial superiority sought by whites. The practice, or the threat of it, was used as a means of social control and to enforce racial division.57

Although strong feelings may have prompted some St. Petersburg residents to join mobs spontaneously on the emotion of the moment, newspaper accounts and witness recollections suggest that the Evans lynching may have been quietly planned. Certainly, some in the community would have had financial reasons to want a person quickly identified as guilty and
then dispatched as soon as possible. For these people, a primary consideration would have been St. Petersburg’s economy which was on the verge of vibrant, good health but dependent on the promised support of eastern capitalists and tourists. In a single stroke of misfortune a man had been murdered and his wife brutalized—a couple from the very Philadelphia area whose support St. Petersburg needed. Worse, northern newspapers were following developments, and the dead man’s partner, himself a prominent personality from the Philadelphia area, was coming to St. Petersburg to view the situation first-hand. 58

Clearly, something had to happen to calm the community. Arrests were necessary to assure people that brutes were no longer at large. Given the attitude of many who obviously lusted for summary justice, an on-the-spot execution was not out of the question, and attempting to frustrate it would have risked the further ire of unpredictable mobs. In any event, neither killers on the loose nor armed bands of men prowling the county would be attractive to the refined northerners that St. Petersburg hoped to impress.

John Evans happened to be available. Rumor, bloody clothes and a speculative press to persuade further an aroused public made Evans a good choice for a satisfying execution. Besides, he was a transient, and a black one at that. Few people would object to killing him, and St. Petersburg could then return to the matter of pursuing prosperity.

On the afternoon of November 12, following the recapture of Evans, several things happened that suggest the lynching was well-organized. First, a policeman visited the white people living near the black area immediately west of Ninth Street South and warned them. Stanley Sweet, a witness to the lynching who lived with his family on Tenth Street and Fourth Avenue South, later remembered, “A police officer came up there and told my dad, he says, ‘You’d better plan on getting out tonight because there’s liable to be trouble.’” 59 Secondly, the coroner’s jury, whose members acted officially several times but were never named in news accounts, convened that afternoon. 60 The group had viewed the Sherman death scene and would later view Evans’ remains before deciding unknown persons had killed him, but on the afternoon of November 12, there was no apparent official reason to meet. St. Petersburg’s official records do not mention any concern being voiced about the lynching or the events leading to it, either by elected officials or by appointed investigators, but it is likely the coroner’s jury met to discuss events in St. Petersburg. 61 Third, during the afternoon, the downtown crowds took on an uglier mood after some strangers joined it. 62 While these developments do not prove the lynching was calculated, encouraged or allowed to happen the night of November 12, they do suggest a degree of anticipation and instigation.

Additional evidence of planning came from J. P. Walsh, Sherman’s partner, who arrived in St. Petersburg shortly after the lynching and should have been in a position to learn details of the events. While settling Sherman’s affairs, Walsh undoubtedly talked with St. Petersburg community leaders and others concerned with the dead man’s estate and his wife’s welfare. As a matter of course, the crimes and their aftermath would have been topics of conversation. On his return to Camden several days later, Walsh granted an interview to the Camden Courier. Most of it contained a description of the mob action and Evans’ hanging, but Walsh disclosed evidence of an organized conspiracy that went unreported in St. Petersburg newspapers. Walsh revealed that Evans had been tried and found guilty during a secret meeting of a committee—composed of
fifteen of St. Petersburg’s wealthiest citizens. They were not named and have remained, as have those who placed the rope around Evans’ neck and blasted his body, parties unknown.63

Most of the blacks rounded up by St. Petersburg posses were later released. George Gadson, an early suspect, was sentenced to pay a fine of ten dollars or serve thirty days in jail for stealing George Meares’ fruit. Another suspect, Ebenezer Tobin, was eventually identified by Mrs. Sherman and tried for murder on September 17, 1915. After deliberating fifteen minutes, the jury found him guilty and Circuit Judge O. K. Reaves sentenced him on September 20 to be hanged by the neck until dead. Governor Park Trammell rejected a plea for clemency by Tobin’s attorney. On October 22, at 11:06 a.m., Tobin died maintaining his innocence in Pinellas County’s first legal hanging. Sheriff Marvel Whitehurst, who had seen to it that Tobin was kept from the mobs, dropped the gallows trap. Tobin’s family refused the body, and it was buried in a potter’s field.64


2 St. Petersburg Evening Independent, November 11, 1914; St. Petersburg Daily Times, November 12, 1914.


4 Evening Independent, November 11, 1914; Times, November 12, 1914. The Times said 9:30 p.m., the Independent 10 p.m.

5 Evening Independent, November 12, 1914.

6 Times, November 12. Microfilm of this edition shows a section of the front page ripped out where photographs would have been placed. In a taped interview, St. Petersburg resident Luther Atkins said the Times published pictures of the black men suspected.

7 Evening Independent, November 9, 1914; Times, November 12, 1914; Tampa Tribune, November 12, 1914. Both the Philadelphia Bulletin and the Camden Courier published front-page stories on November 12, 1914.

8 These developments were reported as they occurred in the Times, Evening Independent and Tribune, November 11 through November 15, 1914.

9 Evening Independent, November 11, 13, 1914; Clearwater News, November 12, 1914.

10 Times, November 12, 14, 1914; Evening Independent, November 11, 12, 1914; Taped interviews with St. Petersburg residents Luther Atkins, November 10, 1981 and Lula Grant, December 2, 1981.

11 Clearwater Sun, quoted in the Tribune, November 17, 1914.

12 St. Petersburg Board of Trade Brochure, 1911.

Department of Commerce, Bureau of the census, Thirteenth Census of the United States (Washington, D.C., 1913), p. 311. Estimates of St. Petersburg’s 1914 population varied; the Evening Independent guessed 13,000 people lived in the town and immediately outside its limits, the Times an area winter population of 25,000 and the Sun thought the town had 10,000. Walter Fuller quoted the 1915 state census as counting 7,186 people in town.

Evening Independent, October 27, 1914.

Ibid., October 24, 1914.

Grismer, History of St. Petersburg, pp. 69-76; Times, May 19, 1906.


Evening Independent, October 28, November 5, 1914.

Ibid., October 28, November 4, 9, 10, 1914.

Ibid., October 24, 29, 30, 1914.

Thirteenth Census of the United States; Grismer, History of St. Petersburg, pp. 124, 188-89; Grant interview; taped interview with Paul Barco, November 24, 1981.

Grismer, History of St. Petersburg, p. 85; Evening Independent, June 24, 1913.

Evening Independent, June 23, 1913.

Barco interview.

Evening Independent, November 11, 1914; Grant interview.

Tribune, November 13, 1914; Evening Independent, November 11-13, 1914; Times, November 13, 1914.

Evening Independent, November 13, 1914. As George Gandy Sr. was 63 years old at the time, the person referred to may have been George Gandy, Jr.

Evening Independent, November 11-12, 1914.

Atkins interview.

Evening Independent, November 12-13, 1914; Times, November 13, 1914.

Tribune, November 13, 1914.

Times, November 13, 1914; Evening Independent, November 13, 1914.

Times, November 13, 1914.

Tribune, November 11, 1914.

Times, November 13, 1914; Tribune, November 13, 1914; Evening Independent, November 13, 1914; Atkins interview.

Times, November 13, 1914; Evening Independent, November 13, 1914; Tribune, November 19, 1914.
Atkins interview.

_Times_, November 13, 1914; _Tribune_, November 13, 1914; Atkins interview.

Taped interview with Ralph Reed, retired reporter, December 5, 1981; taped interview with Stanley Sweet, St. Petersburg resident, January 18, 1982.

_Times_, November 13, 1914; Atkins interview.

_Times_, November 14, 1914; _Tribune_, November 15, 1914; _Evening Independent_, November 14, 1914.

_Times_, November 14, 1914.

_Evening Independent_, November 13, 1914.


Zangrando, _The NAACP Crusade_, p. 8.

_Evening Independent_, November 13-14, 1914; Times, November 14-15, 1914.

_Times_, November 17, 1914.

_Evening Independent_, November 14, 1914.


_Times_, November 15, 1914.

Zangrando, _The NAACP Crusade_, p. 5; _The Crisis_, February, 1915.

Raper, _The Tragedy of Lynching_, pp. 8-9.

_Evening Independent_, November 13, 1914.

_Ibid._, November 12, 1914.


Luther Atkins, untaped interview, November 29, 1981; Zangrando, _The NAACP Crusade_, p. 3.

The _Philadelphia Bulletin_ and the _Camden Courier_ provided their readers with continuing coverage of the events in St. Petersburg.

Sweet interview.

The _Times_ on November 13, noted that the coroner’s jury convened the afternoon of November 12, 1914.

Minutes, City of St. Petersburg, Book 6, pp. 499-500.

The _Times_ on November 13 noted the appearance of strangers and the growing determination of the crowd the afternoon of November 12, 1914.

_Camden Courier_, November 20, 1914.
64 Minutes of the Circuit Court (Microfilm No. 1, Book No. 1), p. 128. Pinellas County Courthouse, Clearwater, Florida; Tribune, September 22, October 19, 22-23, 1915; Evening Independent, October 22, 1915; Times, October 23, 1915.
THE BATTLE OF FORT MYERS

by Rodney E. Dillon, Jr.

The southernmost land battle of the Civil War took place in the isolated backcountry of southwest Florida, far from the bloodstained fields of Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia. Here, around the Union outpost of Fort Myers, site of the present-day city, Federal and Confederate troops clashed in a day of spirited, if inconclusive, fighting. Although its details have remained a source of contention through the years, this engagement stands as one of the most interesting and dramatic events of the war in southern Florida.

Though most of south Florida’s sparse population initially supported secession and the southern cause, the Federal presence had been strong in that region since the beginning of the war. Two of the largest coastal fortifications in the United States were located at the southern tip of the state—Fort Taylor at Key West and Fort Jefferson in the Dry Tortugas. These strategic facilities had been secured and reinforced before the first shots of the war had even been fired, and they were occupied by Federal troops throughout the war.¹

From the outbreak of hostilities, Confederate sympathy in Key West, then Florida’s second largest city, was resolutely suppressed by Federal military and civil authorities on the island.² In 1862, Key West, which had served as a United States naval base for forty years, became the headquarters of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron, which patrolled the Florida coast from St. Andrews Bay to Cape Canaveral.³ Between 1861 and 1863, forces from the blockading squadron launched raids at Clearwater Harbor, the Pinellas peninsula, Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor, and the Manatee and Caloosahatchee rivers. Tampa itself was bombarded by Union gunboats four times, and skirmishes took place at the Hillsborough and Myakka rivers.

Several Confederate units had been recruited from Hillsborough, Manatee, and Polk counties in the early months of the conflict.⁴ As the Confederacy mobilized, however, most of these troops left the area to join the large armies in Virginia and Tennessee. By the end of 1861, it was apparent that south Florida would never be a Confederate stronghold. Tampa was protected by a small garrison at Fort Brooke through much of the war, but the defense of the area to the south was largely left to scattered guerilla bands.⁵
By the second half of the war, south Florida was primarily important to the Confederacy as a supplier of foodstuffs, particularly cattle, for the hungry southern armies. In December 1863, 1,500 head of cattle per week were reportedly driven from the lower part of the state to the armies in the field. Isolated from the mainstream of the war, cut off from natural sea routes by the blockade, and hard pressed by inflation, conscription, and taxation, southern Florida was also a refuge for deserters, conscription evaders, and Union sympathizers. Fort Myers, a Seminole War outpost established in 1850 and abandoned eight years later, was reactivated by the Federal army in January 1864. At the time, it was the only Union base on the mainland of south Florida. The Federal government established such a base to encourage Union sympathizers to enlist, break up cattle drives in the Charlotte Harbor area and as far north as practical, enlist able-bodied blacks in the United States service, blockade vessels with cattle.

These Federal efforts were slow starting, but Fort Myers was an active military post by the spring of 1864. The fort consisted of numerous buildings, including a hospital, commissary building, barracks, bakehouse, wharf, and two guardhouses, all of which were surrounded by pickets and earthworks. Many of the structures remained from Seminole War days, while others were constructed by the new occupants. The wharf, hospital, and officers’ quarters lined the bank.
of the Caloosahatchee River, with other structures forming a semi-circle to the east and south around the parade ground. The breastworks were seven feet high and approximately fifteen feet wide at the base. They covered a crescent-shaped area extending from just east of the hospital, near the present Edison Bridge, to about 500 feet below the wharf, at present Monroe Street.

Deserters, evaders, and Unionists who gradually straggled into the fort were at first organized as the “Florida Rangers.” In February 1864, they were incorporated into the Second Florida (Union) Cavalry. Regular Federal volunteer infantry companies from district headquarters in Key West also frequently garrisoned the fort. Federal troops stationed at Fort Myers systematically
raided cattle from the surrounding countryside, and many refugees who refused to be recruited into the Union army, nevertheless cooperated in these cattle raids. The Union details and refugee bands drove the captured herds down the Caloosahatchee Valley to Fort Myers and then on to Punta Rassa, where they supplied the Federal blockading ships. Punta Rassa soon became a busy enough depot to warrant construction of a wharf and large barracks. For the Confederates, the situation was serious enough that, on May 21, Florida Governor John Milton notified Secretary of the Navy Stephen R. Mallory of the deserters’ “many depredations” in the southwestern portion of the state, “the principal source of meat supply for the Confederate forces.” During the summer, troops from Fort Myers and Punta Rassa participated in raids far up the Gulf coast.

Aware of the danger to their supplies, Confederate authorities sought to protect the south Florida cattle herds from Union and deserter raids. If possible, they also hoped to capture Fort Myers. Federal activities in Georgia, South Carolina, and along the St. Johns River thwarted attempts to send Confederate troops from northern Florida into the region in April and May, but details of commissary agents, local pro-Confederate guerrillas, and cattle drivers detached from the South’s Army of Tennessee continued to provide a degree of protection and engaged in occasional skirmishes with Union troops and their refugee allies.

By the fall of 1864, southern authorities and sympathizers had organized these men into a unique force designed to protect cattle herds, procure beef for the Confederate armies, and combat the deserter problem. This organization, the Cattle Guard Battalion, had the support of officials throughout the area in which it operated, particularly in the vital south Florida cattle country. Efforts were made to recruit all available men for the cattle guard. Most were local stockmen and farmers who knew the country well and were unlikely to desert since they remained in their home territory where they could look after their own families and property while in the service. The battalion was placed under the command of Major Charles J. Munnerlyn, a regular Confederate officer and former Confederate congressman from Georgia. When Munnerlyn was promoted to colonel in December 1864, William Footman was appointed major in the cattle guard. The Cattle Guard Battalion consisted of nine companies and patrolled a 300-mile line stretching from upper Lafayette County to the Lake Okeechobee region. It rounded up cattle, defended the coastal salt works, and skirmished with deserter bands and Unionist refugees.
Despite the valiant efforts of the Confederate cattle guard, Federal blockading forces, occupation troops, and refugees continued to exercise power in south Florida during the second half of 1864 and early days of 1865. By 1865, outcome of the war was increasingly evident, but south Florida Confederates remained determined to continue their resistance and to eliminate Fort Myers, a major source and symbol of Union power in southern Florida.

In February 1865, as the Cattle Guard Battalion was enjoying some success in its battle against deserters and Federal cattle raiders, rumors circulated that Fort Myers was to be reduced and perhaps even abandoned. Naturally, new hopes were raised for the outpost’s capture. Cattle guard forces under Major Footman left Tampa in the second week in February, and began an elliptical march of over 200 miles to Fort Myers. The original Confederate plan was to take the Union fort by surprise. Attacking cattle guard forces consisted of two companies of horsemen from the Tampa Bay area, commanded by Captains John T. Lesley and James McKay, Jr., as well as men from the Peace River area of Polk County, under Captain Francis A. Hendry. Two accounts written later by Confederate participants agree that Footman’s force was made up of approximately 200 men, although the Union defenders of Fort Myers estimated the southern party at 400 or 500. The Confederates were armed with a brass fieldpiece, either a six-pound or a twelve-pound gun. On February 19, they arrived at Fort Thompson, a deserted Seminole War outpost on the Caloosahatchee River between Fort Myers and Lake Okeechobee at present-day La Belle. Here they left their supply train, planning to approach and attack Fort Myers without warning before daylight. Lieutenant Francis C. M. Boggess, who accompanied the expedition, later recalled that “on the night that their anticipated attack was to be made it rained until the water was knee deep over the entire country.”

These conditions slowed the Confederate advance. By early morning, February 20, the southern force, still a few miles from Fort Myers, captured the Federal outside pickets, a corporal and three privates from the Second Florida (Union) Cavalry, on the Fort Thompson Road. The capture of these pickets may have formed the basis for an obviously exaggerated account in which ten Confederate horsemen under Lieutenant William Marion Hendry were said to have captured ten Federal pickets without firing a shot, at Billy Creek on February 19. It is likely that the actual capture did take place at Billy Creek, which runs several miles east of the fort, and that it occurred before dawn on February 20.

Nearing the fort, the Confederates came upon a pond which was used by the Union soldiers and refugees to wash their clothes. This pond was probably located at the corner of present-day Thompson and Fowler Streets. Sighting a Federal laundry detail, the Confederates attacked this position, killing a black sergeant and capturing five other men. They then approached Fort Myers. Sergeant Thomas Benton Ellis, a Confederate participant, later stated that by this time there was still a chance for a successful surprise attack, as the Federal garrison was “not expecting danger.” A Federal officer stationed in south Florida during the war later wrote that the Confederates “arrived near the fort at midday and were wholly unexpected.” However, the fort’s commander, Union Captain James Doyle of the 110th New York Infantry, reported that Footman’s force was sighted a few minutes after noon and that the garrison was “instantly under arms and posted.”

https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol5/iss2/1
Whether or not the Federal garrison was aware of the Confederate advance, Major Footman abandoned his plans to rush the fort and instead sent in a surrender demand. The presence of wives and children of the refugee soldiers accounted for this decision. Under a flag of truce, a courier carrying the demand, which called for the Union surrender within twenty minutes, approached to within 500 yards of the fort. There he was met by Federal Captain John F. Bartholf of the Second United States Colored Infantry. Bartholf delivered the message to Captain Doyle and returned in five minutes with Doyle’s refusal.\textsuperscript{28} Even if the Federals had known of the Confederate approach that morning, the delay caused by the surrender demand gave them further time to prepare resistance, and Major Footman would be severely criticized for this action.\textsuperscript{29}

A little over 250 men, including Companies D and J of the Second Colored Infantry, Companies A and B of the Second Florida Cavalry, detachments from the 110th New York Infantry, and armed civilian refugees, guarded Fort Myers. Additional troops were reported absent from the fort, conveying equipment to Federal steamers at Punta Rassa. According to some accounts, Fort Myers was, in fact, being evacuated at the time of the Confederate attack, and all men and supplies were being transferred to Punta Rassa.\textsuperscript{30} Captain Doyle’s official report mentioned the supply depot at Punta Rassa but made no reference of any intended evacuation. A preponderance of evidence indicates that at this time the fort was being reduced but not yet abandoned.\textsuperscript{31} Apparently because of the reduction, arms and ammunition at the fort were scarce. Captain Doyle reported that there were “not seventy-five serviceable muskets” available between the two companies of colored troops. Ammunition was down to approximately thirty rounds per man, and the only artillery available consisted of two fieldpieces.\textsuperscript{32} Thus, the Federal defenders were not much better equipped than their Confederate opponents.

At 1:10 in the afternoon, Major Footman opened fire on Fort Myers with his artillery piece from a distance of approximately 1,400 yards. The Federal guns returned the fire with skill and accuracy, “compelling the enemy to move his battery three times.” A skirmish line composed of men from the Second Florida Cavalry and commanded by Lieutenant William McCullough, then formed a semi-circle around Fort Myers, firing at the Confederate position. A portion of the refugee cavalry dismounted and backed the Federal cannons, which were manned by soldiers from the Second Colored. According to one report, the black soldiers were “in the thickest of the fight” and urged their commanders to let them take the offensive. On horseback, meanwhile, the skirmish line covered the flanks through the bushes and trees from the front of the fort back to the Caloosahatchee River. At the same time, Captain Doyle dispatched six armed horsemen, probably men from the Second Florida, to round up and secure Federal cattle and horses which were grazing outside the fort. The cattle were feeding near the pond where the initial attack had occurred, and because of a shortage of stored feed, many of the garrison’s horses had been turned loose to graze in the surrounding areas.\textsuperscript{33}

Although Federal cannon fire had forced the southern gunners to change their position on three occasions, the little artillery duel remained more or less a stalemate. During the bombardment, the Confederates fired approximately twenty shells, with no substantial results. Major Footman, sighting the Union herding party, led part of his force off in pursuit. Two of the Federals were captured, and the remaining four were forced to abandon their mounts in a nearby swamp and escape on foot to Punta Rassa, from where they returned the following day. Upon the approach of the Confederates, most of the cattle scattered in the woods, evading capture; but, seven horses,
in addition to those abandoned by the fleeing herdsman, were reported missing and were probably seized by the Southerners.\(^{34}\)

At nightfall, Captain Doyle reinforced his skirmish line and directed the men at Fort Myers to remain armed and on alert. Major Footman, sensing the futility of further efforts, ordered his force to fall back. By now, several cattle had been procured by the hungry Confederates who slaughtered and ate them. Following this meal, the southern force resumed their withdrawal through the woods, reaching the Fort Thompson Road some five or six miles from Fort Myers, and camping there for the night. On the following morning, February 21, Footman held a council of war to determine strategy.\(^{35}\) It was probably at this time that the major, as Sergeant Ellis later reported, lined up his command and proposed returning and launching an open charge on the Federal position at Fort Myers. Footman asked all men in favor of such a charge to stay in line and those opposed to it to step forward. Only one man stepped to the front. Despite this brave show of support, Footman decided to continue the retreat north to Fort Meade, explaining to Sergeant Ellis that no “good general” would risk having his men slaughtered.\(^{36}\) The deluge of more rain, which worsened conditions in the already flooded countryside, appears to have also been a factor in his decision. Lieutenant Boggess credited the weather with “saving the lives of many,” adding that an attack “would have had no effect on the result of the war.”\(^{37}\)

That same morning, Captain Doyle, discovering that the Confederates had fallen back, sent out a mounted scouting party, which ascertained that the Southerners were “in full retreat toward Fort Thompson.” As Doyle reported, he “did not have a cavalry force sufficiently strong to pursue them.”\(^{38}\) It took Footman’s troops all day to reach Fort Thompson; another day was consumed crossing the flooded Caloosahatchee, where only one skiff was available to ferry the entire command. Lieutenant Boggess later stated that “the whole thing had been a failure and with no bread or anything to eat but beef and parched corn. The whole command was demoralized.”\(^{39}\)

Surveying the former Confederate position, Captain Doyle reported finding “bandages, splints, lint, and hastily constructed litters . . . also pieces of wearing apparel covered with blood, which seems to show that they suffered from our fire.”\(^{40}\) Nearly one month after the fight, on March 18, the New York Times reported the Confederate loss as “twenty to forty men and several horses,”
but this estimate seems exaggerated. Confederate accounts of the battle fail to mention southern casualties. The Federal defenders lost one man killed and eleven captured, as well as several horses and cattle. 41

The military situation in southwest Florida following the attack on Fort Myers was little different than it had been before the fight. The Federal presence in the area remained unchallenged, and Union activity along the Gulf coast continued through the closing months of the war. The little battle had demonstrated that the Confederate cattle guard, while effective in protecting livestock and opposing small-scale Federal and deserter expeditions, lacked the power to dislodge the Union forces from south Florida.

News of the Fort Myers battle, which reached Key West late in the evening of February 21, spurred the launching of a Union amphibious expedition up the Gulf in the succeeding weeks. A stated objective of the campaign was “to cut off the force of the enemy sent to the Lower Peninsula.” By February 25, when the expedition sailed into Cedar Key, it was evident that this would be impossible. After the retreat from Fort Myers, the companies comprising Footman’s cavalry force had separated and returned to their local cattle guarding duties. The dispersal of the Confederate force in south Florida destroyed Federal hopes to crush entirely resistance in that region, but, by demonstrating the difficulties sparse southern forces were having covering the large area, it convinced Union commanders of the feasibility of an alternative plan—an attack on middle Florida from St. Marks. Following the defeat of this Federal offensive at the Battle of Natural Bridge on March 6, the northern soldiers returned to their posts in south Florida, and Ft. Myers was disbanded. 42

Despite the abandonment of the fort, the last weeks of the Civil War brought little change to south Florida. The Cattle Guard Battalion continued its efforts to protect the area through the spring, but even the most staunch Confederates appeared resigned to the fact that their cause was lost. For most Floridians, the surrender at Appomattox on April 9 signalled the end of the war, and the last Confederates in south Florida formally surrendered on June 8. 43

Fort Myers once again lay deserted by soldiers and civilians alike. In the months immediately following the war, settlers from as far away as the Manatee River and the Pinellas peninsula sailed down the coast in small sailing vessels and dismantled most of the fort’s buildings. They brought the wood back with them to rebuild homes, barns, and fences which had been destroyed in the bitter guerrilla fighting which had characterized the war in southwest Florida. Within a year's time, however, settlers returned to the Caloosahatchee Valley, this time to stay. 44 Although Fort Myers ceased functioning as an actual fort, it had played a small but unique part as the site of one of south Florida’s most notable battles, the southernmost land battle of the Civil War.


4 *Tampa Florida Peninsular*, March 7, 16, 23, May 4, 17, 18, 1861.


7 Johns, *Florida During the Civil War*, pp. 161, 163, 176, 188-89; Boggess, *Veteran of Four Wars*, pp. 67-68.


10 Richard A. Graeffe to Woodbury, February 1864, Records of United States Army Continental Commands, 1821-1920, Record Group 393, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


22 Ellis, “Diary,” p. 10; Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 69; Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 53.

23 Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 69.


25 Grismer, Story of Fort Myers, p. 81.

26 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 54; Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 69; Fort Myers News-Press, October 4, 1979.


28 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 53.


30 New York Times, March 18, 1865; Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, pp. 53-54; Grismer, Story of Fort Myers, p. 82.

31 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 54, John Newton to C. T. Christensen, March 19, 1865, pp. 61-62; Grismer, Story of Fort Myers, p. 82.

32 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 54; New York Times, March 18, 1865; Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 69.

33 Doyle to Tracy, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, pp. 53-54; New York Times, March 18, 1865.

34 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, pp. 53-54; Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 69.

35 Ibid.


37 Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 70.

38 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 54.

39 Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 70.

40 Doyle to Tracy, February 21, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 1, p. 54.

41 Ibid., pp. 53-54; New York Times, March 18, 1865; Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, p. 69.


43 Ellis, “Diary,” p. 11; Boggess, Veteran of Four Wars, pp. 72-74; Newton to Christensen, June 10, 1865, OR, ser. 1, vol. XLIX, part 2, p. 984.
43 Grismer, *Story of Fort Myers*, p. 86.
TAMPA’S MUNICIPAL WHARVES
by George E. Buker

It is no surprise to learn that the Corps of Engineers builds harbors, canals, dams and other earth-moving projects, but what is not as well known is the Corps’ role in protecting the public from private interests gaining a monopoly from its projects. The Corps’ development of Tampa Bay was a case in point. As each segment of the bay project was built it fell under the control of the railroads. Finally, when port space was nearly gone, the Corps devised a plan to allow the general public to share in the benefits of the Tampa Bay port development. Thus, it was the Corps of Engineers which provided Tampa with its municipal wharves.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century Floridians were busy developing their state. Railroads were penetrating the peninsula, and various sections of the state were vying for this new transportation network. Railroads to nowhere were not profitable, but railroads connected to active ports were desirable. The citizens of Tampa had a harbor. What they needed was a port with which to entice a railroad. Tampans knew that these two developments, in nineteenth century terminology, would bring progress. Their first move was to request federal aid to develop Tampa Bay into a viable port.

In 1871, Captain Andrew N. Damrell, the Corps’ resident engineer in Mobile, Alabama, received instructions from Washington to survey Tampa Bay. Damrell assigned Assistant Engineer Gustave Jaenicke to the task. He told Jaenicke that his pay would be $150 a month until he was satisfied with his work, then he would raise his salary to $200 a month. Captain Damrell allocated $1,938.40 to cover all expenses, including the draughtsman’s cost for plotting the project upon completion of the investigation. Damrell instructed his assistant to write a detailed report of his work each week and to forward it to him whenever the mail system allowed.1

Gustave Jaenicke left Mobile on the lighthouse tug General Poe bound for Apalachicola. Here Jaenicke hired a crew, charted a sloop, and sailed for Tampa Bay. He arrived at Tampa on July 13, 1871, and spent three days gathering information about the bay from townsmen before conducting his own examination. Meanwhile, he sent some of his men to purchase lumber for tripods, signals and range-poles, and to rent small boats for their work.

Jaenicke found Tampa to be a small isolated settlement of about 1,000 people living on the eastern bank of the Hillsborough River. Small coastal vessels called upon Tampa at irregular intervals, and there were some rough trails leading into the interior of the peninsula. But most commercial contacts depended upon the coastal trade plying the ports of the Gulf of Mexico. Fort Brooke in Tampa contained a few government buildings on well-cultivated land in the midst of a grove of live oak trees. (Jaenicke spelled it “Fort Brooks” and said that the establishment was known as the Garrison.) He reported that an agent of the United States Quartermaster Department was in charge of the Garrison and that a custom-house officer occupied one of its buildings.

In spite of Tampa’s isolated location, Jaenicke was impressed with the town’s commercial activity. He said that there was not much money in circulation and that most business was done on a credit basis. Yet, he noted that Tampa supported eighteen stores which exchanged their
goods for the produce of the countryside. There was a newspaper-printing shop, a blacksmith, a tinsmith, a harness-maker, and two carpenters in town. Jaenicke believe the town had considerable trade, which would improve if the harbor was developed and if the railroad came to Tampa.  

Jaenicke learned that Tampa Bay was between six and nine miles wide, jutting northeasterly into the peninsula for twenty-four miles before it branched out Y-shaped into two inner bays. Old Tampa Bay was the westernmost bay; Hillsborough Bay was the easternmost bay. The Hillsborough River, where Tampa was situated, flowed into the head of Hillsborough Bay. Jaenicke found that he did not need to examine the main bay because adequate water was there up to the division of the two upper bays. Likewise, he was not interested in Old Tampa Bay because there was no settlement there. Jaenicke confined his activity to Hillsborough Bay.

The first month Jaenicke surveyed Hillsborough Bay placing range-poles and signals along the sinuous channel. On August 17, in the midst of his work, a northwest gale moved into the bay. By noontime, trees were crashing down on land while boats were breaking from their moorings on water. Jaenicke felt sure that the wind was near hurricane force. Although he and his crew rode out the blow safely, all of his beacons, tripods, signals and many of his range-poles vanished in the storm. Jaenicke put his men to work repositioning the destroyed items. About the time everything was back in place, another gale hit, and more damage occurred. Jaenicke worried that he would run out of money before he finished his work on Hillsborough Bay. It was close, but he completed his work on time and within his budget.  

When Jaenicke returned to Mobile to present his estimates to Captain Damrell, he thought a straight 200-foot-wide channel from the twelve foot contour in the main bay up the Hillsborough Bay to Tampa could be built for a half-million dollars. He estimated it would cost an additional fifty-thousand dollars above his first estimate for the Corps to dredge the existing sinuous shipping channel to a depth of twelve feet. However, if the channel width was reduced to 100 feet, Jaenicke believed the work could be done for a quarter of a million dollars.

But his recommendation was quite different, and he concluded that the Corps should do nothing. As he put it, the “magnitude of the cost” for any one of his estimates outweighed the benefits because in all cases the channel would fill up again. Therefore, he thought that if the city of Tampa wanted a port, it should build a railroad the nine miles from town to Passage Point.
This could be done at far less cost—he estimated $180,000 for the whole distance. Passage Point was ideal. It had eighteen feet of water within a quarter of a mile of land. Jaenicke recognized that it would not be long before the railroad came to Tampa, and he knew that it would connect with the town’s spur line to Passage Point.4

Colonel J. H. Simpson, Damrell’s superior in Mobile, agreed. He did not believe that Tampa had enough commerce to justify any federal expenditures. He too thought that private enterprise, or the city of Tampa, should build the rail line. With Jaenicke and Simpson’s negative recommendations, the Corps took no action on the Tampa Bay project. Neither Jaenicke nor Simpson could foresee that in the future their decision would be a classical example of “penny wise and pound foolish.”

Local interests were not satisfied with Jaenicke’s recommendation. They continued to pressure their congressional representatives to prevail upon Congress for another examination. By the end of the decade, Assistant Engineer J. L. Meigs arrived to reexamine the bay. He spent April and May 1879 on his task. He observed that the mail steamer from Cedar Key had little difficulty in Tampa Bay. Its route became hazardous after it rounded the interbay peninsula and steamed into Hillsborough Bay. The channel depth varied from five to eight feet. More serious was the task of navigating the tortuous channel. Meigs found that shipping had to employ careful piloting and favorable tides to traverse Hillsborough Bay to the mouth of the Hillsborough River where the town’s wharves were located.

Meigs recognized Tampa’s plight, and he felt that federal aid should be forthcoming. He presented two solutions: dredge a straight channel or dredge the natural channel. In either case the depth should be nine feet. Naturally, the merchants desired the shorter straight channel, but Meigs opted for the existing route as more economical. He was afraid that the straight channel might fill up with silt more rapidly than the natural channel and thus, require more maintenance dredging.5

His superiors accepted his recommendation. The River and Harbor Act of June 14, 1880, provided for a federal project in Hillsborough Bay. The Act assigned the Corps to the task of creating a nine-foot deep, 150-foot wide channel the length of the bay, from the Hillsborough River to the nine-foot contour in Tampa Bay. As often happened on similar projects, the annual appropriations were not always enough to keep the engineers fully employed. At times the Corps shut down the project to await new funding. This was not economical. Often the new money had to be spent repairing the ravages created during the periods of no work.6

While harbor improvements were in process, Henry Plant brought his railroad into Tampa. His construction crew began grading operations on June 16, 1883, for tracks which were coming across the state from Kissimme. In September, Plant brought his first two locomotives to Tampa in a three-masted schooner. By the spring of 1884, Plant’s railroad made regularly scheduled runs between Tampa and Sanford, covering the 115 miles in four and one-half hours. In 1886, Plant connected his line with Jacksonville. At the Tampa end, Plant linked his railroad with his steamship line sailing from Tampa to Key West and Havana.7
During the Corps dredging, Henry Plant had to anchor his steamers, SS *Mascotte* and SS *Olivette*, a mile or so off Tampa’s waterfront. It irked Plant to have to load and offload by lighter, for it was time consuming and costly. Near the end of 1887, he learned that District Engineer Captain William Black, after surveying the work, concluded that extensive diking was necessary if permanent changes were to succeed in Hillsborough Bay. Therefore, Captain Black recommended that the engineers concentrate upon Old Tampa Bay. Thus, undoubtedly influenced by Black’s findings, Henry Plant took action. With the beginning of the new year, he hired all of Tampa’s available labor to build a bridge over the Hillsborough River and to lay railroad tracks to Passage Point. Port Tampa, nine miles from the city, became his deepwater port with fifteen-feet depth just offshore.⁸

Plant’s action strengthened Captain Black’s recommendation to concentrate upon Old Tampa Bay. The Corps of Engineers decided to take another look at Tampa Bay. A new harbor survey in 1888 produced recommendations which drastically changed the earlier project. The Corps decided to keep the Hillsborough Bay Channel at its then dredged depth and divert the funds to improve Port Tampa on Old Tampa Bay. The River and Harbor Act of August 11, 1888, established a goal of a twenty-foot deep channel to Port Tampa. By 1893 the channel was completed to the twenty-foot level while the Hillsborough Bay Channel remained at its hundred-foot width and seven-foot depth. Surprisingly the Hillsborough River depth was nine feet. Thus, the city of Tampa’s terminal facilities along the river exceeded the bay entrance channel’s ability to provide traffic.⁹
The Spanish-American War brought home the weakness of Tampa’s port facilities. Because of its proximity to Cuba, the city became the major port for the embarkation of the Army's expeditionary force. The limitations of a port whose wharves were nine miles from the city, served by a single-track railroad line, were obvious. There is no need to recount the usual problems caused by the inadequate facilities, but even the Corps of Engineers suffered because of its decision to ignore Hillsborough Bay and concentrate upon Old Tampa Bay.

The Corps planned to build defensive gun batteries to protect Tampa from the Spanish Fleet, but the concentration of supplies destined for embarkation swamped the town’s storage and transportation systems. Colonel William H. H. Benyaurd wrote the Chief of Engineers at the end of 1898 that no work had been done on the batteries because he could not get the needed material. He also complained that it took several weeks to locate his equipment after it arrived in Tampa. By the time he had his material the war was over.10

The wartime conditions at Tampa brought new legislation in 1899 which provided for deepening the channel to Port Tampa to twenty-seven feet and dredging Hillsborough Bay Channel to twelve feet. District Engineer Captain Herbert Deakyne soon found his work on the two inner bays was more than an engineering problem. His harbor project was a battleground between competing sectors of private enterprise. In 1902, he wrote to the Chief Engineer that a single railroad line held a monopoly over the docks of Port Tampa because its track provided the only access to the wharves. No goods could move from the docks to Tampa except on South Florida’s tracks. He declared: “It is stated that the rate for moving certain kinds of merchandise from a ship at Port Tampa to Tampa is about equal to the rate on the same merchandise from New York to Tampa direct by water.”11

The Chief Engineer formed a board of engineers to study the situation in Tampa. A year later, Colonel Charles J. Allen, the senior member of the board, made his report substantiating Captain Deakyne’s charges. During his public hearings the town merchants presented their case effectively. Colonel Allen agreed with the merchants’ view when he stressed the economic importance of Hillsborough Bay Channel for those entrepreneurs not connected with the railroad monopoly. He told the Chief Engineer that “it is practically impossible for the shippers of Tampa to do business through Port Tampa.”12

Deakyne and Allen’s views caused a shift in the importance of the two inner bays. The River and Harbor Act of March 3, 1905, modified the depth of the channel in Old Tampa Bay from twenty-seven to its present twenty-six feet, while it increased the Hillsborough Channel to twenty feet. This disturbed the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad officials, who had acquired the South Florida Railway, for they had dredged several twenty-seven foot cuts from the main Old Tampa Bay Channel to their terminals at Port Tampa.

Two years later, District Engineer Major Francis R. Shunk completed the twenty-foot channel from Tampa Bay through Hillsborough Bay to a turning basin just before the mouth of the river. That was as far as the Corps could dredge because the Hillsborough River’s bedrock limited the river’s channel to ten feet. It was not economically feasible to work upriver. Shunk noted that his work caused the Tampa Terminal Company to plan to develop a rail terminal and wharves on
East Grassy Island (now known as Seddon Island) which runs along the eastern side of the Hillsborough Channel. Shunk added that “this company is really the Seaboard Air Line Railroad under another name.” While this venture would add to the Tampa wharf space, it would not help the independent shippers. Shunk reported that the railroad would make full use of its new port facilities just for its own business. The railroads still held tight control over Tampa’s terminal port facilities.

The firm of Hendry & Knight decided to challenge the railroads by dredging eastward from the government turning basin at the mouth of the Hillsborough River into the waterway separating the city from Seddon Island. The company cleared a twenty foot passage for 2,200 feet and built its wharves on the north, or Tampa side, of the channel. Hendry & Knight charged reasonable rates for its wharfage and warehouse facilities. Several steamship lines, including the Mallory Line, Southern Steamship Company, and Penn Line leased its facilities. By 1909, there was no unoccupied space available, but the demand for additional waterfront docking increased as the city’s commerce expanded.

When Jacksonville District Engineer Captain George R. Spalding summarized the situation in 1909 he remarked that the Corps’ dredging of the twenty foot channel in Hillsborough Bay benefited just two railroads: the Seaboard Air Line Railway and the Tampa Northern Railroad. The Seaboard owned Seddon Island, which could be reached only by its own railroad bridge. The Tampa Northern owned all of Hookers Point, which was connected to the city exclusively through its rail line. Back in 1907, Tampa Northern had dredged a 2,600 foot spur-cut from the Government’s main channel to service its Hookers Point terminal. Spalding noted that all three wharves (one at Port Tampa and two in Hillsborough) could be reached only on the tracks of the
railroads concerned, which meant that there was no possibility for competing wagon services between the wharves and the city.

Spalding estimated Tampa needed at least twelve thousand more feet of docking facilities. But where could the wharves be built? Extending the Hendry & Knight Channel eastward would provide about 2,000 more feet. The low-lying bedrock in the Hillsborough River eliminated any river work. Only the estuary just to the east of the Hendry & Knight Channel was available. This estuary ran north towards Ybor City, a subdivision of Tampa. Spalding selected that area for the next expansion of Tampa’s harbor.

No matter whether the Corps dredged in Old Tampa Bay or Hillsborough Bay, the end result had been a new monopoly for private interests. This time the engineer officers, from the District level on up the chain of command, were concerned enough to offer specific recommendations to keep the new work under the control of the general public. Captain Spalding suggested that the Ybor Estuary be dredged 300 feet wide and that

Tampa’s waterfront around 1905.

Postcard courtesy of the U.S.F. Special Collections.

Captain George R. Spalding of the Corps of Engineers.
harbor lines should be established to protect the channel for the public. Harbor lines would keep the riparian owners from erecting open pile structures or bulkhead filling which could exclude the public.  

The first to review Spalding’s recommendations was Colonel Dan C. Kingman, the Southeastern Division Engineer. He too was concerned that this work not “form the basis of a new monopoly.” He noted that the proposal would create a deep water channel where a shallow marshland existed. This would cause land, practically worthless, to zoom in value to something like $1.2 million through no effort on the part of the owners. Kingman thought the landowners should shoulder some of the burden of expense for the project. He went further to include the municipal government. Its power to tax would greatly benefit from such a proposal. In the interest of the general public, Colonel Kingman felt that all should share the cost, with the Federal Government providing between 25 and 50 percent of the expenses.

Chief Engineer General W. L. Marshall made the recommendation accepted by Congress. He suggested that the city should construct wharves of at least 1,400 feet along Ybor Channel, which should be open to all at reasonable rates and regulations. He wanted the municipality to control property along the waterfront for a depth of 700 feet on both sides of the channel so that there would be free access to the slips by the public. Further, he proposed that the Corps not expend any funds for this project until the city of Tampa met his conditions. The River and Harbor Act of June 25, 1910, contained General Marshall’s recommendations.
This Act also provided for a reorganization of the Hillsborough Bay channels. The Ybor Channel would be twenty-four feet deep. The Corps would assume responsibility for the Hendry & Knight Channel and for the outer fifty feet of the Tampa Northern Railroad cut. It would also deepen these two newly acquired channels to twenty-four feet. These two channels were to be extended to a junction at the mouth of the Ybor Estuary. (At this time the Hendry & Knight Cut became known as the Garrison Channel and the Tampa Northern Cut became the Sparkman Channel.) When this work was completed Seddon Island was surrounded by three channels.

In April, 1911, the city submitted to the Secretary of War satisfactory evidence of its purchase of the Ybor Estuary waterfront property. The development plan for the estuary was approved on August 8, 1913, and the project was activated, creating the present-day facilities. Later the River and Harbor Act of September 22, 1922, combined the works on the inner bays into one project known as the Tampa Harbor project. At the same time a standard depth of twenty-seven feet was established for Tampa Bay. This goal was achieved in 1928.

Until 1930 dredging was confined to the inner bays, but with increasingly larger ships coming into port it became necessary to dredge the main bay itself. Egmont Channel was dredged down to twenty-nine feet by 1932. Although channels were continually widened or deepened...
throughout the 1930s, the basic design of Tampa’s waterfront facilities remained the same. The last new project began in 1962 when the Jacksonville District assumed maintenance for the Port Sutton Channel and turning basin on the easternmost reaches of Hillsborough Bay.

By 1980, most channels were authorized to be dredged to depths from forty to forty-six feet. The two interior channels, Seddon and Garrison, were thirty feet deep. The Hillsborough River remained at nine feet. The overall project was 40 percent completed during the fiscal year 1980. These waterways serve Tampa’s ninety-three commercial piers and wharves. Metroport, the municipal terminals on Ybor Channel, furnishes a slip 750 feet long, 350 feet wide, with a total of 2255 feet of berthing space on both sides of the channel. The Tampa Port Authority has installed an 800-head cattle-loading wharf east of Sparkman Channel. Due to the Corps of Engineers, the conditions of waterfront monopoly are a thing of the past, and today ten of the privately owned terminals are open to the public.19

2 Ibid., pp. 650-51.
3 Ibid., pp. 648-49.
4 Ibid. 9 p. 647
12 Ibid., p. 7.
15 H. Doc. 634, pp. 15-16.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 2.
WOMEN OF TAMPA BAY:
A PHOTO ESSAY

by Cathy Slusser

Who were the history makers of the Tampa Bay area? If you ask any Tampa or Florida history class this question, you will hear such names as Colonel George Mercer Brooke, Hector Braden, H. B. Plant, C. Perry Snell, Governor Park Trammel, or “Doc” Webb. A student will rarely mention the names of historically important females, and even Bertha Honoré Palmer, a woman who greatly influenced Sarasota's history, is remembered as Mrs. Potter Palmer.

Though often relegated to the background of Florida’s history, women played an integral part in settling and developing the region. In the mid-1800s, men such as Brooke and Braden arrived in the new territory accompanied by their wives. Women worked side by side with their husbands to build houses, clear land, and plant fields. A few women even chose and claimed land without the assistance of a husband. Others operated boarding houses, bakeries and dairy farms to supplement their families’ incomes. During this early period of settlement, the scarcity of doctors created widespread dependance on nurses and midwives, particularly in periods of epidemic.

At the turn of the century, as towns and cities developed, women found more opportunities for employment. Though society emphasized the importance of motherhood and housewifery, many women were either forced or chose to seek employment outside the home. A growing population and a ready pool of laborers attracted industries to the Tampa Bay area and provided further jobs for women.

Though leisure time was often rare, the area’s women took advantage of opportunities for relaxation as well as time to meet with other women. While the amount of time and availability of activities varied, events such as sing-a-long, musicales, quilting bees, church socials and women’s club meetings provided an outlet for and an opportunity to make friends, share ideas, and receive encouragement.

Throughout history, women’s role has been complex. It is not easy to generalize about the female experience in Tampa Bay area, because every woman’s life was different. Who were the history makers of Tampa Bay? Our answer should include women, whether they were occupied as teachers, nurses, switchboard operators, shopkeepers, bank tellers, homemakers or any other job. The following photographs display individuals who worked to support and care for their families, relaxed with friends, and organized civic improvements. These are the women of Tampa Bay’s history.
Through history, the most common role for women has been that of wife, mother and housekeeper. In this position, they have helped carve out homes from the Florida wilderness. In the early 1890s, Mrs. F. C. Whitaker posed with her son, Stuart, at the dock of their home at Yellow Bluffs near Sarasota. The typical garb of a pioneer woman is revealed by this photograph. Mrs. Whitaker’s wide brimmed bonnet, long sleeves, and gloves protected her from the Florida sun while her simply-cut dress allowed her as much freedom as long skirts could afford.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

Women worked alongside their husbands or fathers helping to clear the Florida woods and create homes and farmland. Despite their encumbering dresses, Lina and Anna Hammer assisted Magnus Hammer in cutting logs near Davenport in 1912.

Photograph courtesy of the Polk County Historical Society.
Known to us only as “Aunt Phoebe,” this resident of Egmont Key must have faced many hardships as she struggled to care for her family on the small island outpost at the turn of the century.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

Wearing the same garb as earlier pioneers, this woman helps grind cane and boil molasses in 1912.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Many women remained at home to care for their children. Mrs. B. F. Holland reads to her son, Frank, and daughter, Virginia, at their house on East Sanford Street in Bartow. (c. 1900).

Photograph courtesy of the Polk County Historical Society.

Though the novels and periodicals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries glorified the role of motherhood, in reality, childbirth often brought much misery. The illness accompanying pregnancy intensified in the Florida heat, while many mothers and their children died in childbirth. Midwives, such as Georgia Willingham, a Glades County practical nurse, helped to ease the pain and suffering of childbirth, offered comfort and security to expectant mothers, and often remained with the mother for several days after the child was born. Mrs. Willingham worked as a midwife in Moore Haven and its surrounding community for thirty years and attended most births in that area during that time.

Photograph courtesy of Beryl Bowden and Joy Willingham Roberts.
A study in contrasts, these two photographs depict the changes that occurred in housekeeping over twenty years. During the 1920s, Boca Grande women still did laundry by hand in tubs of boiling water. By the 1940s, however, washing machines were in widespread use in Lee County. After World War II, industry switched from producing war supplies to household appliances, and women found more and more time available for leisure activities.

Photograph courtesy of Marian Godown.
Despite the demands placed upon them by home and children, many women did work outside of the home. While some hoped to support their families, a few sought employment for the freedom it provided them. Prior to the Civil War, most teachers in the South were men. During the war and the years following it, women moved into this role. By July, 1893, when Polk County teachers gathered at Summerlin Institute in Bartow to attend additional educational courses, more than half of the participants were women.

Photograph courtesy of the Polk County Historical Society.

About 1920, this third grade class in Dade City posed dutifully with their teacher, Mrs. Brewster.

Photography courtesy of the Pioneer Florida Museum.
When Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in the 1870s, he probably had no idea how many jobs he would provide for women who could work as switchboard operators. In January, 1891, telephone service first came to Tampa. Switchboard operators such as the Peninsular Telephone Company’s Elsie Hart, were the integral part of this system.

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

Forty-two years later, the Peninsular Telephone Company still employed women as switchboard operators. Although the switchboard had not changed much, the women’s working conditions and mode of dress differed greatly.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Another field dominated by women was that of the librarian. This woman guarded the books of the Carnegie Library in Palmetto (c. 1940).

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

Although today it is sometimes considered a “woman’s job,” the position of bank teller was usually filled by men until recent years. In 1895, the sole female employee of the Exchange National Bank of Tampa posed with her male colleagues at their office on the northeast corner of Franklin and Twigs.

Photograph courtesy of the Tamba-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
The faces of these 1922 Gordon Keller nursing school graduates appear solemn. Perhaps they contemplated life as professionals away from the security of their school in Tampa.

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

With the economic prosperity of the 1920s came more jobs for women in Florida’s industries. In 1924, most of the workers at the Eagle Lake Canning Factory in Polk County were women.

Photograph courtesy of the Polk County Historical Society.
Women of all ages operated the equipment at the Bradenton Laundry on Florida Avenue in Bradenton (c. 1920s).

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

During the cigar industry’s Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1935 in Tampa, women cigar makers stopped their work for a publicity photo.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
At the turn of the century, Florida’s women began forming women’s clubs patterned after organizations formed earlier in the northern states. With the goal of improving their communities, these clubs made many contributions to the state. In 1915, the Auburndale Women’s Club paid for a new school, and on September 8, its officers laid the cornerstone for the building.

Photograph courtesy of the Polk County Historical Society.

Another women’s club, *L’Union di Donne*, (the Women’s Union of the Tampa Italian Club) held a World War I rally in 1917.

Photograph courtesy of Gary Mormino.
In 1931, members of the Italian Club gathered for a picnic.

Photograph courtesy of Gary Mormino.

Despite economic depression, members of the Bradenton Women’s Club raised enough money to pay off the mortgage on their clubhouse on Virginia Drive and Manatee Avenue. Dressed in colonial costumes, they gathered to celebrate the burning of this mortgage in 1933.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.
Some women worked in family businesses. Here, members of the Coleman family await customers in the dry goods department of the Coleman and Ferguson Store in Dade City.

Photograph courtesy of the Pioneer Florida Museum.

In 1903, female clerks at the O. Falk and Brother, dry goods and millinery store on Franklin Street in Tampa, display merchandise for customers. Notice the cotton stockings, belts, and ties hanging from the ceiling and the lace collars in the front showcase.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Grocery stores, bakeries, the Manatee River Journal, and other businesses in Bradenton hired these young ladies to serve as “Advertising Girls” in the early 1900s. Marching in parades or appearing at local functions, these women were forerunners of today’s poster girls.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

Dressed in their best finery, members of the Skipper family in Bartow await participation in a parade. Even the youngest member of the family wears a wide brim hat which not only conformed to fashion’s dictates, but protected her from the Florida sun.

Photograph courtesy of the Polk County Historical Society.
Bertha Honore Palmer (on right) poses with friends on a visit to Osprey in 1909. Mrs. Palmer, a wealthy socialite from Chicago, bought more than 80,000 acres of land in Manatee, Sarasota, and Hillsborough Counties attracting other wealthy people to the area and stimulating growth in Sarasota.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.

By 1917, fashions had become a little more relaxed and these young women enjoyed modeling their new bathing costumes at a beach near Bradenton.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Fashionably clad from head to toe, this woman patiently awaits a nibble on her fishing pole at the C. N. Thompson Dock on Sarasota Bay during the early 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.

Models for Maas Brothers Department Store posed in an Oakland car in front of Tampa’s Coliseum in 1926.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Employees and patrons of Madam Himes Beauty Parlor participate in a promotion in the lobby of the Tampa Theatre. The new Clara Bow hair cut was the rage in 1930, and Madam Himes Beauty Parlor gave away free tickets to Clara Bow’s latest movie, “Love Among the Millionaires,” to its customers.

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

A cooking class for black women conducted by Blanche Armwood, Tampa’s first supervisor of black schools. Miss Armwood is standing in the center left, wearing the high chef’s hat.

Photograph courtesy of Hazel Armwood Orsley.
MEMORIES OF A PIONEER GIRL

by Morning Elizabeth McDaniel
Introduction by Marian Godown

Before the turn-of-the century, Southwest Florida was a sprawling frontier. Since that time, so much growth has exploded in this area, it’s hard to realize it took two days then to travel the 35 miles from Immokalee to the small spot on the Caloosahatchee River “at the end of nowhere” called Fort Myers.

There were no good roads in far-flung Lee County—which then included Collier and Hendry Counties—before 1900. To travel anywhere, you went by “river highways” or by oxcart or covered wagon.

The vast, sparsely-settled interior of Southwest Florida was mainly unexplored. Only deer and cattle trails meandered through the flatlands dotted with Cypress Strands, Oak Groves, Pine, Palmetto and open green prairies.

In 1894, when five-year-old Morning Elizabeth Curry rode to Fort Myers in a covered wagon with her mother, Josephine Yent Curry driving a team of oxen and her father, Will Curry, riding horseback with his gun, the village of Fort Myers was only nine years older than she.

It was every bit as much of a pioneer cowtown as the fabled places out West romanticized in cowboy legends and songs.

Just nine years before, a shoot-out erupted on the wooden sidewalk in front of the general store when William Guess killed homesteader Jake Daughtrey. Guess was arrested but won his freedom in far-off Key West where witnesses for both sides had to go because that’s where the county jail and the courthouse were based before Lee County broke away from Monroe County.

Some 25 years ago, Morning who had always wanted to write, put her memories down on paper. In a 16-page memoir, she penned in exacting detail, her trek through the untouched wilderness alive with wild animals and game. She told of her enjoyment at camping overnight at Half-way Pond (a slough area where cattlemen often met on their cattle drives between Fort Myers and Lake Trafford, near Immokalee. In some parts, her memoir sounds like poetry as she describes the incredible beauty of the orchids and the wild flowers or the profuse masses of ferns.

Morning’s father was a trapper and cattle herder for ranch owners on the Florida frontier. He marked and branded cattle and wild hogs, rode the unfenced range and helped drive the wild, scrawny cattle to the main shipping port at Punta Rassa, south of Fort Myers, where they were shipped to Key West and Cuba.
During his once-monthly trips, Curry would trade pelts for supplies at the big store of early-day Fort Myers merchant, Robert A. Henderson. Henderson founded his general store in 1887 - the same year Lee County was born. Back then, he would send his schooner to Key West loaded with hides, furs and egret plumes to trade and sell for necessities such as sugar, flour, or dry goods.

In the 1890s, Curry was one of the few non-Indians who could communicate with the Seminoles in their own tongue. They called him “Billy Coon.” Sometimes, the Indians would send their pelts with Curry. Other times, they would pack their covered wagon or two-wheeled carts with alligator skins and join the wagon train for the tedious trip to Fort Myers.

In her memoir, Morning also mentions one of the most colorful characters to find contentment in the Florida Everglades, William H. “Bill” Brown. London-born and educated, Brown had established a lively business with the Seminoles trading their gator hides, otter pelts and bird plumes for tobacco, salt, derby hats, fancy vests and yard goods.
His trading post at a junction of Indian canoe routes was on the eastern edge of the Big Cypress Swamp, about ten miles north of present day Alligator Alley in today’s Collier County. It was known far and wide as “Brown’s Landing”. Brown now and then would ask Curry to carry his accumulation of hides and furs to Fort Myers.

At Fort Myers, where the cowboys relaxed after their hard drive, they would take part in a tournament on horseback. Ring tournaments, as they were called, thrived only in North Florida until the Civil War. Gradually they moved south to Ocala, Bartow and Fort Myers before they died out.

The tourney harked back to medieval days in England when ladies were honored in a Court of Love and Beauty by bold knights. It involved a ceremony in which cowboy “knights” rode their high-spirited horses at full speed while they tried to impale on long wooden “lances” or spears, three small rings hanging from a cross-bar between poles about 30 feet apart. Tournament Street in Fort Myers is named for the old-time celebration.

On her next trek to Fort Myers, young Morning Curry remained to live with her grandmother, Martha Elizabeth Yent, to go to school. Growing up with the city of Fort Myers, Morning was to spend most of her life here.

For nearly a century she watched history happen, but she was not content to rest on her memories. Up until the time of her death at age 91 in August, 1981, the wiry 74-pound Florida native read the newspapers daily and saw the news on TV.

As a child on the Florida frontier, Morning had hobnobbed with cowboys and Indians. Many years later, she was to witness the crossing of another frontier undreamed of when she was small as she watched men blast off for the moon. Her memoir of growing up in Florida follows.

I

Over the dew blown willow ponds, and cypress swamps at Immokalee, Florida, near Lake Trafford, the night hung low but, inlaid with inumeral brightness, diffused a shower of starlight that lent transparency to the night air. My parents and I just arrived home from Fort Myers, a two-day journey traveling in our covered wagon drawn by our oxen. Some of the trips required four oxen which is called a two yoke outfit. Mother usually did the driving of the team while daddy rode horseback with his gun. As the country was sparsely settled and there were many wild animals as well as cattle in those days, daddy would ride along with the team. It was a long slow trip, as oxen are slow travelers, but that was the way most everyone traveled. Sometimes we used horses for our travels. This was the only way of transportation through that part of Florida at the time; no trains, buses or trucks; there were only country roads, cow and deer trails.

The country lay in a succession of timber, cypress strands and open prairie ridges, groves of oak and elder. Here and there, a pond of water surrounded with willows, broken low hills of the green prairies were a solid golden yellow with the wild daisies. In addition, there were a score of parallel paths along a hillside and marshy levels made by cattle, hogs, deer in search of water.
Trappers traveled these trails riding horseback. Game was abundant, in fact, the wild abundance of an unexhausted nature offered at every hand. In between the expanse of timberland and cypress strands, there rose blue smokes of countless campfires, each showing the location of hunters, trappers and herdsmen. Black specks grouped here and there proved the presence of livestock under herd.

Being a small child, I enjoyed every mile of our travels. We always camped one night of the trip between Lake Trafford and Fort Myers, at a place called Half-Way Pond, as it was half way between these two places. Very often there would be a number of campers there for the night. We would always arrive about sundown, then get the campfire going by gathering twigs, wood and enough for all night fire as well as to cook the evening meal and breakfast. Daddy gathered the wood, watered and fed the animals while mother unpacked our food and bedding and prepared our evening meal. Our camping outfit consisted of a dutch oven, which is a large pan with lid made of iron and is used for boiling or baking, a coffee boiler, fry pan, tin cups and plates. We slept in our covered wagon on comforts and blankets. We always had a couple of Dad’s hunting dogs along.

There was one large log cabin at Half-Way Pond that was owned by the Carsons, a rancher who had quite a herd of cattle and horses. Some of the family were always home and we would have quite an enjoyable evening. Some of the cowboys would have guitars, some harmonicas and some would sing; it was very enjoyable around the campfires. There were very few families throughout the country and nearest neighbors were eight and ten miles apart. There were small houses and log cabins of three and four rooms with low roofs, heavy beams of cypress and wood running the entire length. Some had palmetto palm fronds used for shingles on the roof, some had shingles made of cypress. Most furniture was homemade; chairs had cow or deer skin seats, benches were mostly used at the dining tables, and they were padded with dried straw grass that grew profusely in Florida. The bed mattresses and pillows were made of bird, chicken, geese and duck feathers. Some people had the Florida moss mattresses. Most had bunk beds. Every family used wood-burning stoves for cooking as well as for warmth during the winter. Oil burning lamps were used for the homes and oil burning lanterns for outside use. It was customary with all country folk to have a log fire burning all night in their yard, and the children would play many games around the log fires.

Families had milk cows and they made cottage cheese and their own butter. A flock of chickens furnished meat and eggs, and their feathers were saved. There was always a garden near. The game was plentiful—wild turkey, whooping crane, quail, ducks, squirrel, rabbit. There was always plenty of meat. First one, then another would butcher a beef or hog and the deer grazed in herds. Our smoke houses were always hanging full of meat of various kinds to be smoke cured. There were many many kind of birds; the Curlew made a very appetizing dish. If you wanted fish, there always were lakes, creeks, ponds full of fish of various kind, and for those who liked turtle or gopher, they were plentiful.

Those were happy days, all neighborly regardless of race, creed or color. The wealthy were no different from the poor as far as selfishness, greed or high mindedness was concerned. It's too bad we don't have more unity nowadays. Then this beautiful world the Lord made for us would be heavenly.
The country life called not for the life of ease but the life of strenuous endeavor, and all kept eternally active. One of the surest of all truths is that life will give you no more than you give it. There being no highways or railroads, we usually made a trip to Ft. Myers, which then was a small settlement, about once every month. My daddy, Will Curry, everyone called him Bill, was a trapper and cattle herder for the ranch owners. He broke in their wild horses, marked and branded cattle and pigs and rode the pastures to keep up the fences as well as to look for and kill wild animals that caught the cattle, hogs, and colts in the pastures. The panthers, bobcats, bear and fox were numerous. He had to be on the alert for prairie fires, and usually there were three or four men who would ride in a group in case of an emergency or accident. Bill Brown had a small business place called the trading post, where he kept tobacco, one hundred pound bags of salt, which the trappers used on various skins and furs to preserve them temporarily. Mr. Brown bought and traded for furs and skins or hides and then took them to Ft. Myers to sell, as he bought supplies in Ft. Myers for his trading post and family necessities. Mr. R. A. Henderson did quite a business in Ft. Myers. He kept hardware, groceries, dry goods and feedstuff for stock. He would buy any and all furs and skins, which consisted of alligator, coon, cow, bear, rattlesnake, fox and bird plumes. The flour came only in half and whole barrels in those days. We always bought the half barrel size as it kept very nicely. Mr. Brown would sell smaller amounts to the Indians as they lived in small tepees or shacks and couldn't take care of a large quantity at one time. You could however, get meal, grits, rice in ten-pound bags. Mr. Brown had quite a bit of business from the Seminole Indians.

II
The day before our journey was a very busy day indeed. Mother cooked and prepared food for the first day’s travel and packed clothing for a week’s trip and roll bedding for camping. Daddy packed furs and skins in barrels to take to market and very often some of the Indian friends would send in their trapped contents by Dad. Then again sometimes they would pack up their covered wagon and drive in company with our outfit. At times there would be two and three outfits traveling along, more or less like a wagon train. It was truly an exciting journey as every mile of the way had its excitement, anxieties with never a dull moment. The scenery was a constant succession of changing beauties. Game was at hand in such lavish abundance. The deer ranged always within touch, great bunches of turkey appeared now and then, and Curlew and whooping cranes flew overhead always in sight.

Wagons kept well apace with the average schedule of a dozen miles a day, and at times we would make fifteen. We would have to stop in the middle of the morning and again in afternoons to breathe our oxen and let them get a cool drink at a ford, sometime in a slough. Winding out of the low marshy country up into the timberland, the little pack train was nearing our camping ground, the smoke of a distant encampment caught mother’s eye. She said to me, “Mona, we’ll be to camp soon, the sun is about two hours high.” I always took my little rag doll with me, and when I tired of sitting on the seat with Mother, I’d play with my doll behind Mother on our bed roll and often take a nap. As our wagon advanced, we could hear the whip-o-will voices; by dark the owls would join in on the chorus. It was difficult for some wagons to keep up as the inexperienced oxen showed distress under a loaded wagon on a long stretch. We heard some of the campers singing, and we smelled the bacon, crisp and golden brown.

Daddy passed on ahead of our wagon to pick a place to park for the night. He rode up under an oak tree and turned and dismounted Mollie. He busied himself taking off the saddle, put a hobble on Mollie, and turned her loose to go grazing. Mother pulled the reins back and said “Whoa Mott, Jerry.” The oxen stopped and Dad unhitched them. He tied a rope around Jerry’s horns and led them to water. There was a hand dug well in the edge of the cypress just a few yards away, and he only had to tie one oxen and the other would follow. Finishing that chore, he fed the animals and hurried off to gather fire wood for the night and cooking. Mother only had to make coffee, for she had a basket of cooked food. Dad went up to the Carson cabin and purchased some milk for me.

We relaxed, had our evening meal, which we enjoyed. Some of the cowboys were eating, some picking a guitar, some singing, some blowing a harp with several campfires burning. The fire kept the mosquitoes away so that the horse and deer flies did not bother the animals at night. Mother said to Dad, “Billie, I’m going to turn in early so I can rest,” and Dad replied, “Alright Joan, I’ll talk to Frank a few minutes and push up the fire. Oh, by the way, did you feed the dogs?” Mother answered, “I sure did, and they are resting under the wagon.” Then, Mother and I climbed up into the wagon, lit the lantern, hung it up, and made ready for bed. We hadn’t been resting long before Daddy came. The cowboys must have been tired out too, for they all retired by nine o’clock. Dad was up a couple of times through the night to push up the low-burning campfire and to see if the animals were comfortable. It’s natural with cattle and deer to rest and chew their cud until midnight, then get up and go grazing. Horses and oxen that are experienced travelers never get too far from the camping outfit.
Before the blazing sun had fully risen on the second day, loads were repacked except for a sack of dried corn which was the animal’s food. We spread a blanket down to sit on to cover the dew-laden grass to eat our breakfast. Mother made coffee, bacon and eggs and hot cakes. We were finishing our morning meal. It was a great picture, a stirring panorama of an earlier day: the massed arklike wagons, the scores of morning flies, and wreaths of blue lazy smoke against the morning mists. In those days, the women folk usually wore sun bonnets. We could hear the gobble of the wild turkey.

There were only two wagons and a cart going our way, the others were going on south to the Big Cypress in the Everglades. Having two wheels and drawn by two oxen, the cart was used when trapping as it was light enough for the oxen to pull through muddy lowlands and water. This cart was owned and driven by an Indian from Immokalee, Josie Billie. He and his friend (Tiger Tom) were on their way to Fort Myers with a load of alligator skins.

We were now all ready to start on our journey. Mother and I were in the wagon, Dad was fumbling in his tobacco pouch filling his pipe, looking up at the vast number of quail hurtling through the silence, alighting with high heads fearlessly close. Dad said, “I’ll ride ahead until we get to the ford crossing. If there’s much water, I may have to lead the oxen across, as the spring rains leave the ground soft in places and high waters make the fords difficult to cross.” As to the start of our small wagon train, little time, indeed, remained. For we had a long day’s travel. Dad picked up the bridle reins and shouted “Let’s go,” as he would be the head of the train. The sky was unspeakably fresh and blue with its light clouds.

Our wagons wound down out of the timberland into the trampled creek bed. All kinds of palms and ferns dominated the landscape. Intertwined were wild orchids of many hues. We came to the edge of the cypress slough, and Dad’s horse was already wading in the shallow water. The cranes were flying up in midair, frogs were jumping from the lily pads swimming away. The oxen paused for a cool drink. Looking up in the moss-laden trees, you could see the squirrels playing hide and seek; they were up there for lunch, eating cypress burrs. No wagon changed its own place in the train after the start. Dad had gone on a few yards ahead to look after the condition of crossing the ford. It looked favorable, and he motioned to Mother to drive on. The oxen waded along slowly, and the water gradually got a little deeper. Dad, at the ford now, yelled aloud, “Drive on, the water is about three feet.” It was a nice hard white sand bottom, so there was no danger of getting the wagon stuck. On across the ford we went, traveling through a willow pond, a deer dashing off from here and there into the thick swamps; we saw a fawn with its mother now and then—those baby deer could really put on speed when frightened.

Nearing the timber and prairie ridges, Dad turned out of the road and waited for our team to catch up with him. He said to Mother he would speed on ahead and stop at Six-Mile Cypress, which was about a mile on ahead, and cut a swamp cabbage and get a few squirrel to cook for lunch. So, away he went in a gallop. Mother said that we would be to grandmom’s by tonight, and I was so happy to hear that, for I loved my grandmom. She had so many kinds of fruit growing, a large garden, and she always had something for me.

I was very happy the rest of our travel. As we drove up under the shade of the trees at Six-Mile Cypress just off the trail, Dad was gathering wood and twigs for our campfire to prepare lunch.
While Mother was getting the cooking outfit, Dad dressed the squirrel and lunch was soon on the way. The other travelers pulled off the trail on the opposite side to have lunch. A short distance away you could see the cowboys driving a herd of cattle. The cowboys yelled and the crack of the whip was a very familiar sound. The sun shone warm above. The birds chirped softly and sweetly. Here and there you could see a pair of raccoons scurry swiftly to the underbrush. Trees swayed with soft gray Spanish moss. Florida was so beautiful.

Mother was ready to serve lunch. We sat on the beautiful green grass and enjoyed our lunch, while the team of harness-marked oxen continued their eager drinking at the watering hole of the little stream nearby. The horse stood burying his nose and blowing into the water. Our outfitting had been done so carefully that little now remained for attention on the last day. In wagon travel, you had to have a regular system or you ended up with everything in a mess. When lunch was finished, we packed again for the last six miles of our journey toward the little cow village of Fort Myers.

Off through the cypress we went. The water was so deep in the middle of this swamp. There was a bridge made of logs, and it was a rough ride across it. The water lillies were beautiful, and the Spanish Moss hanging from the large, tall trees down to the water made a wonderful picture of nature. Out into the timberland, you could smell the sweet odor of the pine with the thick hammocks of swamp cabbage in bloom with its sweet perfume, an odor very similar to the jasimine. We admired fields of yellow daisies and white violets along the roadsides with buttermilk bread, and lemon pie. She had two milk cows so there was milk coffee or buttermilk. It was a relief to be off the wagon for a spell, have a bath, and sit at the table for our meals. My grandmother was a widow and her youngest son lived with her. He always called me “kid,” and my uncle and I had a great time. He would peel oranges and sugar cane for me. My grandmother had a great many delicious fruit trees, and there was one variety or another in season all year round. After supper, Mother and Granny busily cleared the table and washed dishes. Daddy walked down to the store, got his hair cut, swapped jokes with friends. Taff Langford had a pool room and saloon and was a wonderful man, well thought of by all who knew him.

A bunch of the boys were in town at this time, and for an all-round get-together and for a day’s fun and pleasure, they decided to have a picnic, horse racing, and rodeo. The cowboys all loved playing “tournament on horseback” and to win in this, you really had to be a skilled rider. It was very interesting to the onlookers as well as to the rider. There was a good deal of preparation. The women cooked up meats and all kinds of goodies for the picnic dinner. The men-folk cleared off the race track and put the final touch to the tournament poles. They brushed the
horses and looked after their shoeing, picked out the rested high spirited ones in order to leave those that had been working to rest up. Captain Bill Towles walked into Frank Carson’s livery stable, looking for my Daddy. It so happened Dad was in back with Bobby Carson, and they had been currying the horses. Captain Towles said, “Billie, how about you getting a couple to ride out to the pasture and bring in a couple of wild steers for the rodeo?” Dad replied, “Sure Captain Bill, one of the Green boys and Bobby here will go—We’ll get off right away to get back early tonight.” Captain Towles asked Dad to take an extra fellow along to bring in a couple of those unbroken horses to ride in the rodeo. They also decided to get a pint from T. O. Langford, the owner of the saloon. The southern ranchers all came forward offering any help towards the celebration.

Dad buckled his coiled rope to the saddle, he and his friends mounted the horses, and started on their way to the pasture. Others were busy building a long table of boards under the large oak trees, all of them doing their part of the chores. Mother and Grandma had fried three chickens and baked pies and buttermilk biscuits. Mrs. Frank Tippins was busy cooking chicken and dumplings, cakes and light rolls. Mrs. Frazier was barbecuing beef. There was cooking going on among all the neighbors. Mr. Hickey was grinding cane to make syrup, so he could furnish a barrel of juice for drinks. In those days, ice was shipped here by boat from Tampa, packed in sawdust, and sewed up in burlap bags in one and two-hundred pound cakes. There was plenty of ice cold water in barrels and drinking cups were hanging on the trees.

It was getting late in the afternoon, time to feed the chickens, milk the cows and finish the outside chores before supper as the men folk would be coming in. My uncle was a carpenter, and he and Mr. Manuel Gonzalez were building houses. Fort Myers was a small cowtown at this time and there was only one block of the business section—all small wooden buildings. Mrs. Fannie Henderson, a young widow with two children, operated a restaurant. When the cowboys were in town, they all patronized Mrs. Fannie’s place of business. She was a jolly, courteous woman and had a wonderful personality, a friend to all. The purple mantle of the twilight was dropping. Dad and Bobby were busy at the stockade, a group of Indians gathered here and there, covered wagons were scattered, white tents rose round about the blue of many fires, all proved that tomorrow would be an exciting day.

These were the days, from my observation, that there was less expense and pretense; more goodwill and less ill will, more devotion and less commotion, closer family bonds and fewer broken homes, more reverence and less revelry. We small girls wore heavy rib stockings with lace-up shoes. The dresses were just below the knee. The older girls and adults wore dresses to the ankles with button-up shoes, bonnets, mittens, fascinators, Mother Hubbards, capes and shawls. Short pants and knickers were worn by boys only. Those were days of going barefooted from early spring to fall; boys wore brogans in the winter-heel skinning torture. Children walked to school one to two miles, rain or shine, good weather or bad.

We got up early to complete the outside chores, ate breakfast, packed the picnic basket, and put on our best dresses. Mrs. Kennedy Carson galloped on horseback to the gate. She had ridden in from her ranch at Half Way Pond on the north side of the Caloosahatchee River. Ft. Myers is on the south side. The river was a two mile trip to sail by boats, and it was the only crossing in those days. A number of families lived scattered about over there: the Daughertys, Youmans, Moores,
Albrittens, Corbetts and Powells. There came riding into town from camps, ranches and pastures far and near, families in covered wagons, some or horseback. In addition, there was a band of Indians, girls, boys and squaws. They laughed and giggled together. Their black hair was sleek with oil, their wrists heavy with brass circlets. Strands of beads covered their entire necks. Their moccasined feet peeped beneath gaudy calico, and the men wore their fringed shirts. Dad knew most of them.

As the rodeo began a pleasant sun shone and only an occasional dark shadow of a moving cloud passed over. Dad sat up on the rail of the bull pen, waiting his turn. He was to ride the unbroken horse and throw the wild steer for his part. “All ready Billie,” yelled cowboy Lonnie, the trap door operator. Daddy was out in the pen now. The door opened up and out came the steer running full speed, charging at Dad. Dad jumped to one side, caught the steer’s horns and the steer running Dad holding on to tire the steer. Halfway down the pen, the steer slowed down, bellowing and jumping. About the third jump Dad gave the steer’s head a twist and threw him. Then Dad dashed for the rails before the steer got up. Next came Bobby on the wild steer holding to the rope that was tied around the steer just back of the shoulders. What a rough ride it was, the steer running, jumping and kicking; but Bobby stayed on. As they came round to the shoot, Bobby jumped off the steer still running, ready to make a charge at anyone near the rails.

A group of Seminoles, with the Indian Trader, William H. (Bill) Brown, in the 1880s.

From Yesterday’s Fort Myers, by Alberta Rawchuck and Marian Godown.
The following act coming up was riding the unbroken horses and some of the women folk got their picnic baskets and got busy fixing the dinner. Old timers sat all around chatting, having an enjoyable get-together again, talking of log-rolling, horse raising, wintry night graphophone parties, pulling big hams from the salt box and smoking them with hickory. They spoke of fishing with a sprout pole, twine line and pin hooks for shell crackers, perch and silver sides. Willie Hendry was thrown from a horse and had his wrist badly sprained. Well, everybody gathered up around the table and with all those good eats spread out, it really gave you an appetite. Each one served himself as there was variety and quantity. The squirrels played hide and seek and ate acorns in the oak trees all around. After lunch the tournament and horse racing took place at the race track at Wash Pond.

Next day we got started back home to Lake Trafford. Our next trip back to town, we'll be moving there as Mother will stay to enter me in school; but, Dad will continue right on with his work. This being our last night in town some of the folks got together for a hay ride serenade. It was customary at night to drive slowly around playing hillbilly music and singing, stopping now and then in front of some old friends’ homes, singing a song or playing one of their favorite melodies.

I’ll miss Dad and our log cabin home while Mother and I are here at my grandmother’s for the six month period of school. Dad will be coming in as usual and when vacation time comes, we will be going back home again. For every step we take forward, we leave an impression behind.
THE SEA BREEZE:
THE FIRST NEWSPAPER OF THE LOWER PINELLAS PENINSULA

by: Willard B. Simonds

On June 23, 1887 the Tampa Journal noted: “In 1885 Mr. (W.J.) McPherson came to Disston City from Deland, and on the first day of the following April (1886) issued the first number of The Sea Breeze. On the first day of the following April (1887) it was merged into the Herald” Thus, in one brief paragraph, the beginning and the end of the first newspaper published on the lower Pinellas Peninsula was reported!

W. J. (Will) McPherson was one of three sons of Elias B. McPherson, who had homesteaded 168 acres of today’s St. Petersburg Beach in 1885. Besides The Sea Breeze, the McPhersons, father and sons, operated a printing business, a lumber yard, a contracting business, and a general business agency, all in Disston City. They also cleared and farmed at least some of their acreage at St. Petersburg Beach. Besides all that activity, Elias B. was superintendent of the Disston City Sunday School. The Sea Breeze of March 1, 1887 remarked: “Another voter added to the list in this precinct on February 17th; Ye editor having attained his majority on that day. Congratulations and subscriptions are in order.” Thus, W. J. McPherson was only 20 when he founded The Sea Breeze.

McPherson was assisted in his publishing venture by G. W. Bennett, “a veteran newspaperman.” The Sea Breeze in an article about Bennett declared: “We are indebted to him for assistance in our office.” There are indications in several issues of the paper that E. B. McPherson, W. J.’s father, also had a hand in the publication. Walter Fuller credits Bennett with hand cutting, from a block of black mangrove wood, the flagstaff of the paper, first used in volume one, number three. That actual hand cut flagstaff is on display at the St. Petersburg Historical Museum, and a print from it is used as the flagstaff of the newsletter of the St. Petersburg Historical Society.

Disston City of the 1880s was no metropolis, having a population of 150, but it was the largest settlement of the five towns on lower Pinellas. No other settlement south of Bayview had a population of over 100. The settlers were farmers, fishermen, small merchants, skilled tradesmen, plus a few real estate and “general business” agents. The earliest arrivals had acquired their land by homesteading, generally in blocks of 160 acres or more. Later arrivals had to purchase their land from one of the homesteaders or from one of Hamilton Disston’s land companies. The usual purchase appears to have been either five or ten acres.

While The Sea Breeze carried no news of earth shaking importance, its seventeen issues did chronicle the comings and goings of the people of the entire lower peninsula, events which were of importance in their daily lives. It included the news from the settlements of Disston City, Pinellas, John’s Pass, New Cadiz, and Paul's Landing. Perusing it can furnish a glimpse into daily life in pioneer Pinellas County.
Editorially, *The Sea Breeze* campaigned for better roads, a railroad, better mail service, more interest in Sunday School, greater harmony among citizens, and more cooperation among the settlements on the “Point.” More then once it spoke very strongly against liquor and the people who sold it.

The final edition of *The Sea Breeze* was issued April 1, 1887, when “it was merged into the Herald and sold to Mr. Langstreth who became publisher and Mr. R. E. Neeld of Pinellas, editor.” H. M. Langstreth, apparently a resident of Disston City, was mentioned in an article in *The Sea Breeze* of December 1, 1886. Walter Fuller wrote that R. E. Neeld was one of four brothers who came to Florida from Selma, Alabama in 1873, and in 1886, moved from Tampa to Big Bayou (also known as Pinellas) where he opened a small grocery store. The final issue of *The Sea Breeze* made no mention of its forthcoming demise, and all that is known about its successor, *The Herald*, is that at least one issue was published, R. E. Neeld was the editor, and that it was printed by McPherson. No copies of any issue of the *Herald* have come to this writer’s attention.

Why did McPherson discontinue *The Sea Breeze*? We do not know the answer, but here is one theory. In the 1880s Hamilton Disston, through his land companies, was spending large sums promoting Disston City throughout the United States and England. Highly exaggerated, multicolored maps, and brochures filled with extravent claims for the future of Disston City were distributed by the thousands. Disston subsidized the first fourteen issues of *The Sea Breeze* by running full page ads in ten of those issues, possibly in the hope that having a local newspaper in Disston City would help land sales. But, those ads, and the subsidy, vanished after the January 1, 1887 issue. Without the subsidy, *The Sea Breeze* became a money-losing venture which McPherson could not or would not afford to carry on.

The question remains, why Disston discontinued the subsidy? By 1887 it had become clear that the Orange Belt Railroad was to terminate at Paul’s Landing, instead of at Disston City. While Disston had only himself to blame, it did not change the fact that Paul's Landing was destined to grow, and the other settlements on the “Point” were destined to decline. Thus, why subsidize a newspaper in a declining area? Disston City did not decline into complete oblivion as did Pinellas, New Cadiz, and John’s Pass, but it came close.

Seventeen issues of *The Sea Breeze* were published during its one year of existence. A complete file of original copies of all these issues is located in the archives of the St. Petersburg Historical Society at the Museum. A representative issue of *The Sea Breeze*, (November 15, 1886), loaned by the St. Petersburg Historical Society, is reproduced throughout these pages. Copies of all seventeen issues are available for reading at the St. Petersburg Historical Museum, the Gulfport Public Library, and the Gulfport Historical Society.
Disston City Doings.

Pleasant weather. Beautiful moonlight nights. Splendid shower Saturday morning.

S. H. Miranda is now supplying Disston with fish.

The gardeners are complaining about the dry weather.

G. W. Anderson has moved into his new house on Virginia Avenue.

Thanksgiving Thursday the 21st. Ye editor is listening for the gobble of the turkey.

Mr. Houseman is having some trouble to get fish just when he is ready for them.

W. M. Wood walks like a giant in town now, no, if he is only about five feet six.

The Cash Store now furnishes a very tasty sign. It was painted by Arthur Norwood, but the way it is hung, O my!

Mr. John S. Culkins writes us from Jacksonville that he is headed this way, and expects to be here in a few weeks.

Mr. Hamilton is fixing up his sheep, with the intention of raising sheep from Sara Sosa to Tampa, during the winter.

There will be meeting, for social worship and religious improvement, held at Locke’s hall every Sunday evening at 6 P.M. All are cordially invited to attend.

Mr. Torres’ new house gives him considerable amusement, but the results are rather expensive, in the way of wash-ups, to be kept up for some entertainment.

Steps have been taken to induce the Plant System to have the steamers Margaret touch at our wharf, on their way from Tampa to Manatee, with some prospects of success.

A party of young people went over to the Past, opposite this place, last Tuesday. They stayed there several days, had a very pleasant time, and caught a fine lot of grinning, snapping, dancing, etc.

Dr. Edmund, of Dunedin, called at our office last week, when we were absent. We regret we did not meet him, and more to learn of his recent great loss in the death of his wife.

The Doctor intends to spend the winter on his brother’s farm in Pinellas County.

We have attempted tasks impossible that called for tact and acumen, but we think most more brain-chasing than effort, consequently with the demands of our devil, to furnish a page of Disston City news. Things done sometimes must always happen.

As Messrs. Anderson and Hamilton have quit boating, Mr. Houseman, who has been supplying the other side with beef, says that he will be here every Saturday morning, and as he furnishes the very best of beef, we can depend on a first class dinner once a week at least.

Ye junior editor has invented a cast set, and has been experimenting in windows, around his neck, jinking out his face to the right and left, and has succeeded in frightening a few children, but it would make you smile a little to see the knowing boys chopped up and covered around the set while we are drawing to our military little shapes or leather fish.

New Castle, our neighboring town, is booming up. Mr. John Henschell has his store in operation, and he informs us that he has received word from Washington favorable to the establishment of a post office there. Mr. G. L. King has his new store moved down to the bay and is fixing it up at the earliest possible. He has his arrangements made to get logs from the upper part of the bay, by calling. We may look for a boat to team lumber there before long, and would not be surprised if we were cautioned at a hotel at the future great.
THE SEA BREEZE

By M. STOVER

We blow for all

To all our friends in the Northern and Western states, informing concerning the healthfulness of this and other localities, and we are frequent visitors, through the papers, of intenders and other overworked persons, coming south for the purpose of renewing their health. We think it advisable to repeat some of our former statements, with additional evidence, in favor of this delightful small town. Most localities especially pulled up by speculators as great utilities, etc., where everything gets well and graveyards are out of fashion, have been greatly overrated, and Florida has been and is at the present time well supplied with such scribblers. The worth of the whole matter is, this state is in the hands of speculators and many business men and powerful politicians are being renamed about throughout the world, to attract the attention of the home and health seekers, and many hundreds of new towns springing up all over the state are making special claims of being the one particularly favored point. Well that's as they too. We have no doubt but that there are other localities that are healthy and have many attractions. We have been in one town that the high pine ridges and also the low ridges in the flat woods, not near swamps or large streams, are generally healthy; but well chosen situations on the coast have their special claims, and we feel no hesitancy in repeating our statements concerning the small peninsula and keys enclosed by Tampa and Boca Ciega bays, the Gulf of Mexico, and Clearwater Harbor, that we have no basis to meet with any evidence to convince us that there is another locality on all the coast of Florida that will take the lead of Point Pinellas. Our space will not admit of detailed statements and particular cases, but we will endeavor to enroll them in so we go along and will show them up in a way that will be likely to convince the most skeptical. We might add that this paper is not published in the interest of any land speculator or Company, nor with the design of inducing speculators to invest in their lands, but with the view of inducing a good class of people to settle here and help build up the Point and improve the society.

Joseph R. Torres.
General Insurance Agent.
Representing Life, Accident and Fire Insurance.
Tampa, Fla.

Anderson and Hamilton.

Butchers.

Market every Saturday.

Bohica Sailes.

always on hand.

Hardware.

Clairke, Knight & Co.

Tampa, Fla.

The Cash Store.

J. M. Johnson, Prop.

Tampa, Fla.

Choice Family Groceries.

Cork, maroons, rice, etc., house enoing.

United.
Full Issue
REAL ESTATE AGENCY

FLORIDA LAND AND IMPROVEMENT COMPANY,
DISSTON CITY LAND CO.--GULF COAST LAND CO.

SPECIAL AGENTS FOR THE
LAKE BUTLER VILLA CO., COOTIE LAND AND IMPROVEMENT CO.
TOWN LOTS IN TARPOON SPRINGS, &c., &c., &c.

Valuable Orange Groves, Rich Sugar Lands,
Extensive, Productive Rice Lands, for sale.

Pinellas, Alexandria, Disston, Millerton--our Bay view towns!
All finely located on two of the finest bays on the Gulf of Mexico.

PINELLAS--ALEXANDRIA
Situated on handsome bluffs boldly overlooking Tampa Bay.

DISSTON AND MILLERTON

From their breezy ridges overlooking the more quiet and picturesque waters of Boca Ciega Bay.

HEADQUARTERS
OF THE LAND DEPARTMENT, at present at the office of the Company, at DISSTON, and under the personal management of WM. B. MIRANDA.


The Surveying Department is under the direction of competent Surveyors. Abstracts of Titles made; Conveyances drawn, &c., &c.

THE AGENCY is also prepared to furnish all kinds of Florida Taxe, and set out and mark for Farmers for Non-residents.
BOOK REVIEWS


Fort Center (the name of a 19th century Seminole War fort which once existed nearby) is the local name given to a fascinating prehistoric site stretching about a mile along Fisheating Creek to the west of Lake Okeechobee. The site, excavated by the author William H. Sears and others over a span of six years (1966-1971), produced interesting evidence of habitation in four basic periods from about 1000-800 B.C. to approximately A.D. 1700. The people who lived here interacted with a complex environment, the wet savannah, made up of three distinct ecological subsystems. They made their homes near the creek on low mounds elevated above the marshy plain and supplemented their hunting, gathering and foraging with a productive system of agriculture. Their fields, drained by circular ditches in the first period and later raised on linear earthworks, seem to have produced maize or corn.

Undoubtedly the most interesting phase at Fort Center is Period II (c. A.D. 200 to c. 600-800) when a ceremonial center functioned at the site. This complex consisted of an artificially excavated pond in which stood a charnel platform decorated with large carved wooden birds and beasts (many of which were recovered and preserved by the excavation). Adjacent to the pond was a low mound where bodies were prepared for placement on the platform, and an associated habitation mound. A low earth wall, attached to each side of the habitation mound, surrounded the other elements of the complex. Sears believes the small community constituted a single social class of sacred status and that it produced the lime needed in the preparation of dried corn for consumption. He further concludes that Fort Center was merely one of a number of ceremonial centers which stretched into the midwestern states that permit one to trace the religious-ritual spread of the introduction of a corn economy from Mesoamerica and northern South America.

It is beyond dispute that Fort Center is an important, significant site and that Sears has conducted a competent and thorough investigation of it. One might have hoped, however, for a more clear and useful final report than is presented in Sears’ book. The chief failure of the book is that it attempts to reach both a professional and general audience. As a result, many details important for the specialist are omitted, yet the book is still too specific and scientific for the general reader to enjoy.

The specialist expects a final report to present illustrations and profiles of the pottery recovered, for on this critical evidence rests the entire structure of the site’s relative chronology; none are included. When illustrations are included, the relative sizes of the objects appearing side-by-side are deceptive - a ten inch piece looks as large as a 20 inch piece. Scales should have been included for each illustration, or all represented at the same relative scale. This comment applies to each class of object represented. Line drawings and profiles should also have been given for the pipes that were found. And for the sake of consistency, Karl T. Steinen (who contributed the chapter on the nonceramic artifacts) should have given his measurements in inches rather than millimeters.
Similar criticisms can be raised concerning the copious maps and plans presented in the book. These should be an aid to the reader’s understanding of the text, and generally they are. Some, however, are more of a hinderance than an aid. North arrows are frequently omitted, exact locations of profile drawings should have been noted on the specific site plans, and two profiles give no elevations. An overall map of South Florida showing the Lake Okeechobee Basin and the exact location of Fort Center would have been a welcome addition, as well as a complete listing of the maps, plans and illustrations appearing in the text.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the book for the general reader is its organization. Sears has tried to present the data recovered from the site before discussing its implications. Although this is a laudable theory of organization, in Fort Center it merely serves to confuse the reader. Many technical terms and discussions are taken for granted in the earlier chapters (e.g. the Calusa Indian empire, the Hopewell phenomenon, Period designations at Fort Center, and the deposit definitions used in the tables) and are not explained in simple terms until the later chapters. A rigorous system of cross-references would have been helpful, although a total reorganization of the chapters in the following sequence would be preferable: 1, 2, 9, 10, 3, 4, 6, 5, 7, 8, 11. Fewer questions are left unanswered if the reader follows the above order.

Despite all these shortcomings, Fort Center, the site, remains a significant and important excavation that raises interesting questions concerning Florida’s prehistoric population. As the only substantial report of this fascinating site, Fort Center is invaluable. It is a shame, however, that the book was targeted at two different audiences, and this, unfortunately, has diminished its value for either one.

William M. Murray


The major part of this book is the text of the personal log of Captain Robert Deans, R.N., commanding H.M.S. Mentor, during the brief service of that ship in the Royal Navy from March, 1780, to May, 1781. The text is copied from the original in the library of the University of West Florida and has been edited to modernize archaic symbols and phrases and to indicate differences between the captain’s personal log and the official log submitted to the Admiralty. Mentor was a former privateer hastily purchased and commissioned at the height of the Revolutionary War to bolster England’s weak naval forces in the Gulf of Mexico against America’s ally, Spain. Following commissioning she was stationed at Pensacola to prey on Spanish shipping in the Gulf while protecting the scant British commerce. In 1781, when a superior Spanish force under the able leadership of Governor Bernardo Galvez laid siege to Pensacola, Mentor became an important element in the futile defenses of that city. Therein lies the principal interest of this volume for students of Florida history or the American Revolution. The log gives a fresh, if somewhat stark, account of the running battle between the British and the Spanish for control of the Gulf from the viewpoint of the British navy. It gives a day to day account of the battle for Pensacola in somewhat more detail than is usually found in naval logs. Perhaps this is because Deans, knowing that his light ships would be ineffective against the heavier Spanish fleet,
ordered them destroyed and moved his guns and men ashore to incorporate them in the land defenses. In the long run his sacrifice was futile. The British could neither find spare ships for action in the Gulf nor reinforce the garrison of Pensacola. The city capitulated May 9. Captain Deans was made prisoner and remained a hostage in the hands of the Spanish until the end of the war.

At best logs are dull and repetitious. In recognition of this fact introductory chapters written by Robert R. Rea provide explanations of the situation along the Gulf coast during the Revolution, a reconstructed description of the Mentor, a short sketch of the officers and crew, and a very interesting description of the Mentor's log. They do much to add meaning to the austere entries found in the log itself. Unfortunately, the printers have fouled up the notes following the explanatory chapters. Several pages are either missing or misnumbered. An appended glossary of "Names and Technical Terms" is very helpful for readers not familiar with eighteenth century naval terminology. An unnecessary but interesting account of Captain Deans’ naval career after his capture is included in the first chapter. It includes the fact that a court martial of seven officers convened at his request to investigate his actions at Pensacola completely exonerated him. One of the members of the court was Horatio Nelson. After a long period in semi-retirement at half pay the Mentor’s captain was elevated to the rank of "Admiral of the White" on the retired list.

Baxter Billingsley


Most students of United States history are generally aware of "Citizen" Genet’s audacious efforts to launch invasions of Spanish Florida from the United States during the early 1790s, and of his ultimate fate when a new revolutionary regime came to power in France. Congressman Bennett has investigated the episode from the vantage point of the Spanish-American border and its effects on Americans who had recently accepted Spain’s invitation to settle in Florida. He has used the requisite supporting materials, but the testimony elicited from alleged conspirators John McIntosh, Richard Lang, Abner Hammond, John Peter Wagnon, William Jones, and William Plowden by Governor Juan Nepomuceno de Quesada’s officials and depositions from several witnesses constitute the basis and critical source for the book.

The first four chapters portray the complex military and diplomatic activities preceding Spain’s reoccupation of Florida in the 1780s, Spain’s effort to populate the province by making it attractive to Americans, "Citizen" Genet’s efforts to include George Rogers Clark, Elijah Clark, Samuel Hammond and others in his audacious scheme, and the exposure of plans for a rebellion by Richard Lang and Abner Hammond.

In chapters five through eleven, the testimony of the accused and several witnesses is so arranged as to reconstruct the events of the widely rumored conspiracy of the Americans to revolt in the context of the Spanish government’s efforts to ascertain whether there was such a conspiracy and who was involved in it.
Chapter twelve is concerned with the heroic efforts of Sarah McIntosh, the near blind wife of John McIntosh, to free her husband from Morro Castle where he was held for nearly a year after the investigation was concluded. Chapter thirteen, entitled "Path of the Peddler," places the Indian traders of the region and their incessant rivalries in the context of the border struggle. The trading firm of Samuel and Abner Hammond of Savannah was apparently interested in replacing Panton, Leslie and Company in its role as provisioner for the Indians along the Spanish-American border. This appears to have been the primary motive of Samuel Hammond in supporting Genet’s efforts.

The next chapter deals with the conclusion of the investigation of 1794. Lang, Plowden, Wagnon, and Jones were released for insufficient evidence. Although admitting that there was little evidence of their collusion, McIntosh and Hammond were held for "reason of state" before finally being freed nearly a year later.

The final two chapters depict the dissolution of the rebellious forces. Even though some of the rebels captured the Spanish fort at Juana, they were driven out in 1795. Elijah Clark migrated to west Georgia and others relocated north of the border. Samuel Hammond was still conspiring in the late 1790s and John McIntosh engaged in the rebellion of 1812.

The book is an account of a minor affair, but it casts considerably light on the conflicting interests of men and nations along the Spanish-American border in those turbulent years when Europe was torn by the French Revolution and the United States was beginning to be a nation.

_Jerrell H. Shofner_


The first Spanish period (1513-1763) gave us a little knowledge of Florida, mostly political and religious. The land, the shores, the flora and fauna were hardly reported. When in 1763 England acquired Florida as a trade for conquered Havana the English government realized that its knowledge of this new land was minimal. The remedy gave us much more concrete information about Florida. George Gauld’s task provided part of this data. It is a pioneer work and is in some way a semi-classic for its long usefulness. Gauld emerges as an accomplished scientist with a graceful pen and a diversified knowledge that contrasts with that of the modern technocrat. To be sure, he is one of those figures of the past who is often considered uninteresting and minor since his work is too regional and too technical for the historian’s interest.

Historical geography remains neglected. It should not be. We are indebted to the late John Ware, an expert in Naval surveys, for lifting John Gauld from obscurity and giving Florida history a new vital study.

Gauld was from Scotland, born to modest means but winning a scholarship to Kings College. As a student he secured a job in 1757 as a school master in the English navy stationed aboard ship. After receiving his degree he continued in the navy as a coastal surveyor, a task he
performed from 1764 to 1781. With the exception of eighteen months in the Caribbean his surveying was done on Florida's Gulf Coast but with some "surreptitious surveys" in adjacent Spanish Louisiana reaching as far as Spanish Texas. His surveys cover from Key Largo to Galveston. He lived in Pensacola. He was most disappointed that because of international disputes he could not survey the Florida East Coast.

While much of the work is technical and not given to line by line reading there is a considerable amount of other material of interest to the historian. I was impressed by Gauld's description of the town of Pensacola and the many changes that took place during his residence. The chapter "George Gould's Pensacola" certainly provides new insights.

Of special interest for Tampa Bay is chapter five, his survey of its Bay then called Espíritu Santo. It had never been reoccupied by the Spaniards since the early sixteenth century. The Bay was surveyed by Spain in the mid-eighteenth century, just before the transfer to England. Gauld's survey is adequate, it is not as thorough as the one done in 1757 by the surveyor Celi. But the Gauld survey is a welcome addition to the scarce history of pre-U.S. Tampa Bay.

The Gauld book could never have been published with the dedication of the late Captain Ware who in 1952 became a Tampa Bay harbor pilot. He was a man devoted to quality and accuracy. After editing the Celi survey he worked long hours with the Gauld manuscript and charts which had gone unnoticed, dispersed and even "pirated." He was able to conclude his search and most of his writing before his untimely death. We are all indebted to history Professor Robert Rea of Auburn University for completing the Ware manuscript for publication.

The University of Florida and the University of South Florida Presses are to be praised in their cooperation in the publication of this book. We have here a fine addition to Florida history and to the rapidly emerging literature of Tampa Bay history, as well as to United States historical geography.

Charles W. Arnade
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Florida Historical Society will be holding its eighty-second meeting at Fort Myers on May 4-5, 1984.

The Florida Folklore Society invites all persons involved in the study and appreciation of Florida’s folk heritage to become members. The society serves scholars, folklorists, and interested citizens by providing a vehicle for the exchange of ideas as well as the formal study of folk culture and history. Write to Florida Folklore Society, C/O L. Pat Waterman, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL 33620.

The Florida Genealogical Society is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. It was organized in the Hillsborough County Courthouse, Tampa, on January 8, 1958. Mrs. John Branch was the first president. A brief history of the society is included in the recent issue of the organization’s Journal. For information on publications and membership, write the Society at Box 18624, Tampa, FL 33679.

The Owsley Family Historical Society held their fifth annual meeting at the John Marshall Hotel in Richmond, Virginia, 13 May, 1983. Carl J. Owsley of Orlando, Florida was chosen President for the next two years. Mrs. William H. Martin of Seattle, Washington is the Secretary. Albert W. L. Moore, Membership Chairman, 1420 North Spring, Independence, Mo., 64050.

The Fort Myers Historical Museum, in conjunction with Dr. Martha Ambrose, is currently conducting an oral history program for Sanibel and Captiva Islands for the years 1910-1927. Both oral and video tape will be part of the project. Comments may be addressed to Dr. Ambrose at the Fort Myers Historical Museum, 2300 Peck Street, Fort Myers, Florida 33901.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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MARIAN BAILEY GODOWN is a Florida historian, based in Tallahassee. For eleven years, she was the historical consultant and writer for the Fort Myers News-Press. Along with Alberta Rawchuck of Fort Myers, she co-authored the photographic book, Yesterday’s Fort Myers.

MORNING ELIZABETH MCDANIEL was a lifetime resident of Lee County and a member of the Pioneer Club.

WILLIAM M. MURRAY is Assistant Professor of History at the University of South Florida and is a specialist in the archaeology of Ancient Greece.

JERRELL H. SHOFNER is a Professor of American History and Chairman of the Department of History at the University of Central Florida.

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Cover: Five young Bartow women entertain a visitor from Georgia with a game of Croquet in the 1880s. Photograph courtesy of the Polk Historical Society.
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ALL AROUND TOWN

Hot and cold water baths at all hours at the City Barber Shop.

Phosphate is still on the move.

Two laundrys for Bartow speak well for our new enterprises.

There is no bigger fool than the man who marries a girl simply because she is pretty, unless it is the man who won’t marry a girl because she is pretty.

(from the Polk County News, Bartow, Friday December 19, 1890.)

Perry Brown, a young lad of this place, while out gunning on Blue Jordan Run, killed a large rattle snake six feet and two inches long and fourteen inches in circumference.

(Polk County News, Friday, January 2, 1891)

Now comes Prof. Wiggins with a new weather theory, submitting that telephone wires and wire fences cause drought. They get in the way of the rain clouds and break them all up. It would seem to the common mind that any rain cloud that got so low down as a barb-wire fence, ought to sink a few feet lower and go under. Maybe Prof. Wiggins has not detected that wire fences over half a mile high are very unusual.

(Polk County News, Friday, July 10, 1891, p. 4)
The Gasparilla Inn at Boca Grande was built in 1913 and reached by a four-mile trestle of the Charlotte Harbor and Northern Railroad from mainland Florida to Gasparilla Island. The 135-room hotel is still open and favored by game fishermen when the tarpon season opens in mid-April. An earlier, much smaller, hotel on the island was also known in its time as the Gasparilla Inn. See Tampa Bay History, Spring/Summer 1982, p.24.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa Hillsborough Public Library and Louise Frisbie.