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## From the Editors

Tampa Bay History

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## 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.