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## *Our Story of Gulfport, Florida* by the Gulfport Historical Society

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Most of the essays about women address narrower topics stressing women's historical agency in areas heretofore unrecognized. These are very isolated case studies which together provide only a sketchy outline of some of the factors affecting Southern women between the eighteenth century and the Progressive Era. For example, Carol M. Bleser studies autobiographical sources and private correspondence to discover that Elizabeth Frances McCall Perry was the principal adviser to her less controversial, less ambitious, and less outspoken husband, South Carolina legislator Benjamin Perry. In his autobiography, Perry suppressed all evidence of his wife's non-traditional role in their marriage. But Bleser's analysis of the couple's correspondence - 540 previously unavailable letters - provides a glimpse of Elizabeth Perry's exceptionally strong voice in her husband's political career.

More provocative and all-encompassing is Catherine Clinton's "Caught in the Web of the Big House: Women and Slavery," which exposes the antebellum legacy of persistent patterns of sexual oppression that covertly united Southern women while racism overtly locked them in competitive conflict. As historical evidence in two other recent books - Joanne V. Hawks and Sheila Skemp's *Sex, Race, and the Role of Women in the South* (University Press of Mississippi, 1983) and Minrose C. Gwin's literary study *Black and White Women of the Old South* (University of Tennessee Press, 1985) - also document, this is a legacy which contemporary Southern women need to combat.

While the lives of ordinary Southerners have been diverse and multifaceted, they have also been altered by cultural and historical changes. Their living record is history in its most basic sense. From the study of everyday lives in times past we can look beneath the surface of political history to discover facts and details which were more relevant to a majority of Southern lives. Historical studies like these prevent both the social scientist's tendency to over-generalize and the outsider's tendency to stereotype.

*Ruth A. Banes*

*Our Story of Gulfport, Florida.* By the Gulfport Historical Society. Gulfport, Florida, 1985. Gulfport Historical Society. Illustrations. Maps. Pp. 341. \$13.25

*Our Story of Gulfport, Florida* is a compilation of the history of the city of Gulfport by the Gulfport Historical Society. The contributors to this local history volume number over fifty, and it is therefore not practical to list all of them. An acknowledgement should be made, however, of the Editorial Committee who brought all of the pieces together and furnished the glue to make this endeavor both informative and readable. The Editorial Committee consisted of Mary Atkinson, Agnes Conron, Willard B. Simonds, Genevieve Smith, and Frances Purday, chairperson.

As is usual, the early history of the city proved to be the most interesting. The early settlers who came to this tip of land on Boca Ceiga Bay were much like other settlers on the Pinellas peninsula. They lived off the land and the abundance provided by the warm waters surrounding them. Fish and game were plentiful, and it was easy to grow crops in a favorable climate. During those early years, the city went through several name changes. It started out as Disston City, so named by real estate tycoon Hamilton Disston, who had purchased four million acres from the state. The post office used the name Bonafacio until 1890, because there was already another

Disston City north of Tampa. The settlement north of Tampa disappeared in that year thus resolving the confusion. In 1905, the name of the city was changed to Veterans City in hopes of attracting Civil War veterans. This idea proved futile, and in 1910 the city of Gulfport was incorporated. The first part of the book, concerning this early settlement, is arranged chronologically using descendants of the early settlers to recount the city's origins.

The remainder of the history deals with the development of the city topographically. There are sections dealing with such topics as churches, schools, service organizations, government services, businesses, and early buildings. In each case, individuals associated with particular institutions or organizations provided the information to members of the Editorial Committee. The contributors were well chosen, and in most instances were old timers who were familiar with the complete history of those institutions, organizations, and businesses which had flourished at one time or another during the development of the city.

This local history is a most comprehensive effort. Equal consideration was given to all organizations and events, whether it was the founding of the fire department or the growth of a Russian Orthodox Church in the community. Gulfport is unusual in Pinellas County in that it started out as a small, self-sufficient community and has remained so over those decades which saw unparalleled growth in other parts of the county. It is perhaps for this reason that one gets the feeling that no stones were left unturned by the Editorial Committee. All the resources were and are still there.

*Kendrick Ford*