

1991

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Recommended Citation

Pizzo, Tony (1991) "The Fan: El Abanico, Ambassador of Love," *Sunland Tribune*: Vol. 17 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune/vol17/iss1/8>

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**THE FAN
EL ABANICO
AMBASSADOR OF LOVE
By TONY PIZZO**



THE FAN WAS A WEAPON OF ROMANCE

In the hands of a beautiful Spanish *senorita* the fan glittered like a fluttering butterfly speaking the language of love. The gorgeous cigar-box label, "La Mia," (my own), was owned by *Pendas and Alvarez Cigar Co.* The firm was established in Havana, Cuba in 1867, and was the third cigar factory to move to Ybor City in 1887.

Original Label: Tony Pizzo Coll., U.S.F.

In the early days of Ybor City Latin *senoritas* were very proficient in the art of fan flirting. She learned the coquettish and graceful use of the fan from childhood.

It has been written that during Spain's golden epoch, *senoritas* went armed with fans and *caballeros* carried swords. Some times the amorous flutter of the fan would

be mightier than the sword and more effective than Cupid's arrows.

The fan is an exceptional work of art. The luxurious makeup of the fan made use of exotic materials, tortoise shell, plumes, silk, ivory, bamboo, palm leaves, chicken skin, leather, French rosepoint, sandalwood and adorned with colorful artwork. In the hands

of a *senorita* the beautiful fan was a weapon of fatal attraction.

Her fan flirting maneuvers, and her winning ways were a spectacle of intriguing amusement. An observer in the early days related how *senorita* watched by a vigilant *senora*, "held the fan half opened, then hid half of her radiant face, then quickly peeping with her wistful brown eyes from behind its shelter like the moon out of a gilded cloud."

The fan spoke poetically in the hands of an Ybor City *senorita*. The sight of a handsome caballero would trigger the *abanico* into a frantic flutter. She was a charming flirt with the fan, signaling disdain or supreme romantic expectations.

In the language of the fan, a graceful wave of the fan across her left cheek, meant, "I love you"; an abrupt closing indicated, "anger"; a gradual opening of the folds signified, "reluctant forgiveness"; placing the fan on the right ear, signaled, "you have changed"; the swift drawing of the fan through the hand, meant, "I hate you"; opening the fan wide conveyed the ardor, "wait for me"; fast fanning warned, "I am engaged"; or the mournful slowness of the fan sighed, "I am married". Drawing the fan across the forehead warned, "we are being watched"; placing the handle to the lips expressed the desire, "I want to be kissed."

Observing the intricate maneuvers of the fan in the hand of a beautiful Ybor City *senorita* in love was a precious sight to behold.