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TAMPA’S GREAT FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

By TONY PIZZO

The Independence Day festivities of 1918 were impressive demonstrations of unity by the diverse nationalities of Tampa in support of the war effort. The civilian population was on parade that day cheering for democracy and rekindling the fires of hate against Kaiserism. It was a proud day for Tampa.

Martin Caraballo, a native of Mexico and a prominent attorney, was chairman of the foreign-born committee that planned and carried out the Independence Day celebration.

Mayor D. B. McKay issued a proclamation to honor the day. All business establishments and government offices closed for the festivities.

The day started with a concert in front of the courthouse by the Boys’ Band. At noon, in the 4th of July of 1918 grand parade appears the Italian Club unit on 7th Avenue approaching Nebraska Avenue. The Ladies Auxiliary is shown with a large American Flag, followed by officials of the club and the Ybor City Italian band. The little boy in the white sailor suit carrying a white parasol is Tony Pizzo, now Hillsborough County Historian, striding alongside his father, Paul Pizzo, carrying the banner of the Italian Club.

Photo courtesy of Tom Cagnina
Sergeant D. B. Givens of the County Guards fired the National Salute of 48 guns.

Prior to the parade which was scheduled for 2:30 p.m., an event of great interest was the launching of another wartime vessel at Hookers Point.

The "monster parade" as described by the Tribune started promptly at 2:30 p.m. The parade route followed 7th Avenue to Franklin Street to Lafayette Street (Kennedy Blvd.) to Plant Field. Major H. E. Snow was the grand marshal.

The Centro Espanol and Centro Asturiano Clubs marched together carrying service flags of their members in the armed forces. At the head of the Spanish unit is beautiful senorita appearing as Miss Liberty, and a caballero dressed as Uncle Sam. The scene above is Franklin Street and Madison Avenue.

The unique parade was composed of the various nationalities in Tampa. Clubs and societies marched in a body bringing their own fife and drum corps, bands and floats. The fluttering flags and banners and the sound of martial music kept the throng of spectators cheering constantly.

The Italian delegation carried a sign, "Viva Italia - a valued ally, heroic and undaunted." The participants wore white uniforms and carried American and Italian flags.
Next came the men and women of the Circulo Cubano with the slogan, "To die for your country is to live." They were followed by a group of several hundred children bearing American and Cuban flags. The lead banner expressed their true thoughts: "Cuba Libre - Ever With Her Uncle Sam."

The next unit was a contingent of the Spanish colony. Members of the Centro Espanol and Centro Asturiano, dressed in white, carried the service flags of their members in the armed forces. At the head of the unit marched a beautiful senorita draped in the American flag. She represented Miss Liberty. Marching beside of her was a caballero dressed as Uncle Sam.

They were followed by hundreds of Greeks on foot. A banner was carried, showing the number of Tampa Greeks serving in the war. A beautiful float followed with Miss Hattie Sellers representing the Statue of Liberty. The float bore the slogan, "We are fighting for World Democracy."

France, Belgium, Syria, Honduras and other countries followed with banners and streamers flying in the breeze.

The parade passed in front of the grandstand packed with thousands of citizens. After the parade passed the stands the County Guard put on military exercises and patriotic speeches were made by Mayor McKay and Judge Horace C. Gordon.

The competitive drill was won by Company D. Major Conolly pinned a medal on Captain Bigham, and kissed him on either cheek a la General Joffre.

Mayor McKay congratulated Mr. Caraballo for the success of the great event, and he also congratulated the melting pot of Tampa loyalists for joining hands to cheer for democracy. "You have demonstrated," he said, "your loyalty to the American nation, and you have done what our beloved President Wilson wished to have done. Tampa is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the country, but she is one of the most thoroughly American."

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