

6-1-1988

Bradenton in 1904

Florida Times-Union

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory>

Recommended Citation

Florida Times-Union (1988) "Bradenton in 1904," *Tampa Bay History*. Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol10/iss1/6>

This Document is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tampa Bay History by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

BRADENTON IN 1904

Editor's Note: During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading newspapers engaged in the now familiar practice of boosting both their own sales and Florida development by printing expansive special editions. Handsomely illustrated, these editions featured portraits of prominent Floridians and colorful descriptions of far-flung cities and towns. The following article describing "Bradentown," as Bradenton was then known, appeared in a special "World's Fair Edition" of Jacksonville's *Florida Times-Union*, published in 1904. One of the original issues is preserved in the Special Collections Department of the University of South Florida Library.

Bradentown, the county seat of Manatee County, Florida, and the chief commercial town of that county, occupies a most commanding bluff on the south bank of the picturesque Manatee River, only five miles from the point at which this beautiful sheet of water empties into Tampa Bay. The approach to the town from the bay, through the serpentine channel of the river, presents a most attractive picture of semi-tropical loveliness. Here and there at intervals along the river's banks are cozy cottages and handsome homes peeping through vistas of lofty palmetto trees, towering pines and wide-spreading live oaks, which form a bright green border for the deeper hued foliage of the orange groves extending into the adjacent country.

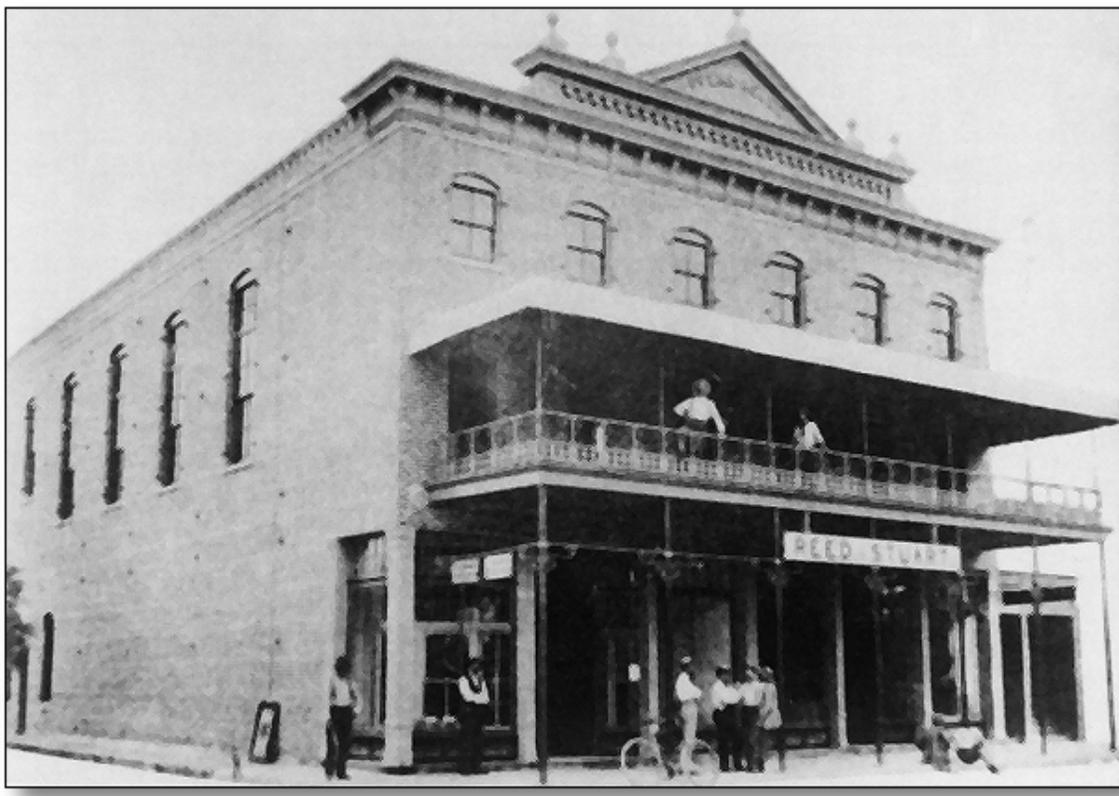
The situation of Bradentown, protected as it is by the broad waters of Tampa Bay and the more than a mile wide river which forms its water front, makes it an ideal location for the safe cultivation of all the fruits of the citrus family, besides all other semi-tropical productions of Southern Florida. In the great Florida freeze of 1895 the orange groves in the vicinity of Bradentown were practically uninjured and the major part of the oranges in Florida which in that year survived the freeze were shipped from this town and the Manatee country adjacent to it. The town from its high bluff position above the river derives unsurpassed healthfulness, which is still further promoted through an abundant supply of artesian water from numerous flowing wells.

The present population of the town proper is about 1,500. Several villages in its immediate vicinity augment this number between 2,500 and 3,000 people, who do their trading and have direct business relations with its merchants.

The inhabitants of the town are composed of the best elements from all sections, no town of its size in the State having a more cosmopolitan citizenship or a more orderly, peaceable and honorable class of citizens. To the fact that the sale of liquor is prohibited in the town and country is attributed the settling of so many good people here and the general peacefulness and good order which prevails.

Socially, the town compares very favorably with much older and larger communities, many of its citizens being people of literary and musical attainments of a high order, embracing elocutionists, writers of ability and expert vocal and instrumental musicians.

In the matter of educational facilities Bradentown is far ahead of the average community of its size. A county high school and a primary school with a half dozen or more progressive, capable teachers provide accommodations for nearly 400 pupils in an eight-months term of systematic and up-to-date educational work.



Bradenton's "Opera House" which housed a bank, drugstore and post office on the ground floor.

Photograph from *Yesterday's Bradenton* by Arthur C. Schofield.

Five church denominations have substantial houses of worship and a goodly membership, namely: Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal and Roman Catholic.

In its liberal and progressive business men and substantial business enterprises Bradentown has one of its most promising features of future growth. Two extensive wharves furnish adequate facilities for the shopping of the large and continually increasing fruit and vegetable productions of the surrounding country. From these wharves two commodious bay and river steamers land and take on passengers, receive and discharge tons and tons of incoming and outgoing freight and numerous and coastwise sailing craft do a lively trade.

A number of substantial brick business blocks line the main street, among them the Henry L. Coe Block, containing four commodious stores on the first floor, and above a conveniently arranged hotel. The Operahouse Block, on the ground floor of which is the Bank of Manatee, postoffice and a drug store, and in its second story one of the most commodious and best equipped operahouses in the State, with a seating capacity of 800. Another substantial business structure is the handsome brick block erected by Dr. S. M. Anderson, which accommodates a hardware store and harness and wagon establishment, both occupying two floors. The most

prominent brick block of the town is the three-story building owned by Messrs. G. and A. B. Murphy and W. M. Alderman, extensive cattle owners.

This building contains four stores, an armory, telephone exchange, newspaper office, electric light and traction company's offices and a hall for the Masonic and Knights of Pythias lodges.

Many substantial frame blocks and store houses supplement these brick structures and conveniently house the various business enterprises of the town.

The Peninsular Telephone Company operates over 400 Phones in Manatee County directly connected with the Bradentown Central office. No locality is provided with a more efficient or cheaper telephone service. A long distance system of the same company connects Bradentown with Tampa, Plant City, Bartow, etc.

The Manatee Electric Light and Traction Company is operating an electric power plant in Bradentown second to none in the State. It is supplying this town and others on this side of the Manatee River with an efficient lighting service, besides operating a trolley car line between Fogartyville, Bradentown and Manatee, three miles in length. The trolley service consists of convenient up-to-date convertible passenger cars and combination freight and baggage cars, all of which handle in a most expeditious and satisfactory manner the freight and passenger business from the steamer wharves and the Seaboard Air Line depot. Extensions of the lines are contemplated in the near future, which will reach the adjacent orange groves and vegetable sections, affording easy access and quick delivery to the steamer wharves and the trunk line railroad depot.

The enterprise was established and is being conducted with great success by Mr. John A. Graham, one of Bradentown's most progressive citizens and extensive property owners. While the mercantile interests are well provided for by the large and varied stocks which the business men carry, there is an urgent need for more hotel accommodations and the erection of a first-class hotel of moderate size and modern equipment would provide a most profitable investment.

Another need which is becoming more felt each succeeding year is the supplying of moderate sized cottages and residences for renters. Investors in eligible town lots who will improve them by the erection thereon of houses for good tenants would be sure of most satisfactory financial returns. . . .

The transportation facilities of Bradentown are excellent. The Seaboard Air Line, which is part of one of the great trunk line systems to the north, crosses the Manatee River, just east of town a half mile, and commodious steamers ply the bay and river between Tampa and Bradentown, connecting twice a day with the Atlantic Coast Line at that city for the north and west, and a good freight steamer connects with Mobile, Alabama, and accommodates the cattle trade to Cuba.

No place in the world offers more facilities for convenient, profitable, comfortable or healthful residence and sojourn than Bradentown. No community on earth extends a heartier welcome or



Bradenton's river front at the turn of the century.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

more hospitable greeting to incoming settlers or health-seeking visitors. A cordial invitation is extended to all good people from every section to come to the town and become convinced that this description of its attractions and advantages is not an overdrawn picture, but a truthful statement of the conditions as they actually exist.