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***The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* by Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta**

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BOOK REVIEWS

Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands: Panton, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847. By William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson. Pensacola, Florida. 1986. University of West Florida Press. Pp. 428. Illustrations. Maps. Bibliography. Index. Cloth. \$30.00.

During the period of the Second Spanish occupation of Florida lasting from 1783 to 1821, the Florida-based trading firm of Panton, Leslie and Company (later John Forbes and Company) dominated the fur trading activities of the Indians in the southeastern portion of the present United States. The business was founded by Scots who had been traders in the region, and when the American Revolution blazed forth, the five “founding father” merchants fled from Georgia and South Carolina to St. Augustine where they made a fresh start. When Spain regained control of Florida, William Panton, with the help of Alexander McGillivay, was able to gain ascendancy over other competing firms in the competition to supply goods to the Creek and Seminole Indians.

Moving from this opening wedge, the firm established warehouses at St. Marks, Pensacola, Mobile and Chickasaw Bluffs. Soon Pensacola became the headquarters from which pack horse trains carried various articles into the interior to be traded for deerskins, furs and other forest products obtained by the Indians. In addition, the firm sold food supplies and goods to the civilian population and military outposts in Florida and acquired large tracts of land from the Indians. When competition arose in the form of William Bowles during the 1790-1800 period and Robert Ambrister and Alexander Arbuthnot in 1817-1818, the company was able to by-pass such obstacles with ease.

Research for writing of *Indian Raders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands* has been extensive. Two hundred thousand pages of documents copied from collections throughout the world have been assembled to form the papers of Panton, Leslie and Company at the University of West Florida Library. With the availability of this fine collection the two authors have written an excellent account of the company which became a frontier Sears and Roebuck. The index and maps are thorough and exact. In summary, this is a definitive work that will be a standard reference for scholars and lay readers for many years.

James W. Covington

The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985. By Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta. Urbana, Illinois. University of Illinois Press. 1987. Photographs. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Cloth. \$24.95

This study is a welcome and important overview of immigrant life in Tampa, which treats the material at two levels. First, and foremost, the work focuses on Italians in Ybor City. But it also examines their experience within the context of their neighbors: Cubans and Spaniards. Through



Ybor City's Seventh Avenue as it looked in 1921.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.

a skillfully executed comparative approach, the authors attempt to understand to what extent a “Latin” community with shared values, aspirations, and identities evolved in Ybor City.

The work’s primary focus dictated an initial chapter on Italy and the reasons for Italian migration to the United States. The next three chapters trace the foundation of Ybor City in the mid-1880s by Italians, Cubans and Spaniards. This is followed by six chapters that focus on the political and socioeconomic development of Ybor City Italians, and their neighbors, from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s. Chapter themes include labor, ideology, institutional growth, religious climate, social relations and economic adjustment. A final chapter considers post-World War II developments and the decline of Ybor City as a “Latin” community.

“Unity amid diversity emerges as a principal theme of this community’s experience,” according to the authors (p. 319). They argue that in the case of each group “old world cultures” adapted to “new world structures” sufficiently to provide some commonality, but not enough to negate differences, which remained and changed in character. While in the early years Italians shared much with Cubans and Spaniards as they all attempted to find their place in the “new world structures,” their differences ultimately led to “divergent conceptions of group behavior,

career orientation, and upward mobility. . .that produced enduring internal sources of ethnic variation” (p. 319).

This overall generalization is very persuasive, but some of the specific conclusions drawn from the comparative perspective are problematic. While the political and socioeconomic trajectory of Italians is thoroughly documented, the research on Cubans and Spaniards is more limited, and thus some conclusions are necessarily tenuous. One example appears in the chapter on economic adjustments. The authors conclude that Italians outstripped Cubans and Spaniards economically because their strategies were more conducive to that end. “The evidence does not suggest that Cubans and Spaniards worked less hard. . .but rather that their economic goals drew upon different values, producing contrasting results” (p. 267). The problem is that while Italian adjustment strategies are analyzed in considerable detail, the condition, values and aspirations of Cubans and Spaniards are insufficiently developed to explain their economic experience. Thus, the argument, for example, that “Cuban American life-styles mitigated against the accumulation of savings or property,” is not entirely convincing (p. 268).

Despite this imbalance in the research, the study’s conceptualization and organization are solid, and it is an excellent case study of an immigrant community’s formation and evolution. Furthermore, it raises issues and questions regarding immigrant group adaptation and interaction that should spark additional research by immigration and ethnic historians in general and students of the Latin community of Ybor City in particular.

Gerald E. Poyo

Uncommon Friends: Life with Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Alexis Carrel and Charles Lindbergh. By James Newton. San Diego. 1987. Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, Publishers. Pp. 368. Illustrations. Index. Cloth. \$19.95.

Fort Myers in the twenties was a small town, its population being just under 4,000. It had no industry to speak of. Its main sources of revenue were agriculture and tourism. Yet this insignificant dot on the map was the winter home of the inventor, Thomas Alva Edison, and the automobile manufacturer, Henry Ford. Tiremaker and corporate wizard, Harvey Firestone, was a frequent winter visitor. These three men, plus scientist Alexis Carrel and flier extraordinaire Charles A. Lindbergh, were the “uncommon friends” of James Newton.

The young Newton came to Fort Myers in the early 1920s to go into real estate. He acquired some raw land across McGregor Blvd. from Edison’s home and began to develop it. That proximity brought on contacts between the Edisons and Newton. These contacts grew into a deep and abiding friendship.

That friendship broadened to include Ford, Firestone, Carrel and Lindbergh, and those friendships are what *Uncommon Friends* is all about. Newton does not dwell on the well-known accomplishments of these men, but rather takes his readers behind the scenes. We see them in their shirt sleeves and hear them discussing their philosophies, their business policies and their ideas for a better world. We also read about their strength which was the result of their faith in a