On Saturday, June 20, 1992, the Tampa Historical Society dedicated a historical marker to commemorate the Orange Grove Hotel. Erected by cattleman William B. Hooker on the northwest corner of Madison and East Streets in 1859, the building played an important role in Tampa’s early history. The marker, on the corner of Kennedy Blvd. and East Street, was unveiled by Kyle S. VanLandingham, a great-great-great grandson of Capt. Hooker.

You will be glad to know that we are situated much more comfortably than we could have hoped. Tampa is the most forlorn collection of little one-story frame houses imaginable, and as May and I walked behind our landlord, who was piloting us to the Orange Grove Hotel, our hearts fell nearer and nearer towards the sand through which we dragged. But presently we turned a corner, and were agreeably surprised to find ourselves in front of a large three-story
The Orange Grove Hotel during the 1876-77 winter season. Judge and Mrs. Henry L. Crane, who operated the hotel, are standing on the left side of the second floor porch. Sidney Lanier has been identified by contemporaries as the man standing on the far right side of the second floor porch with his leg propped on the rail. But D.B. McKay in the Tampa Tribune, March 6, 1955, said Lanier is standing at the left end of the first floor veranda. The original of this photo was owned by Mrs. Samuel E. (Mary Hooker) Hope, later Mrs. Clara (Hope) Baggett and now by Mr. And Mrs. L.E. Vinson of Tarpon Springs.
and told mine host. He and his wife are all kindness, having taken a fancy, I imagine, to my sweet angel May. They have just sent up a lovely bunch of roses and violets from the garden, -- a sentimental attention which finds a pleasant parallel in the appearance of a servant at our door before breakfast to inquire whether we prefer our steak fried or broiled.

The weather is perfect summer, and I luxuriate in great draughts of balmy air uncontaminated with city-smokes and furnace-dusts. This has come not a moment too soon; for the exposures of the journey had left my poor lung in most piteous condition. I am now better, however; and May is in good case, except that the languid air takes the spring from her step, and inclines her much to laziness. . . .

We have three mails a week: two by stage from Gainesville (which is on the railroad from Fernandina to Cedar Keys) and one by steamer from Cedar Keys. Address me simply "Tampa, Fla." I have a box (No. 8: - -I don’t think there are more than twenty-five or thirty in all) at the Post-office, and the clerk knows me: as in fact everybody else does, -- a stranger is a stranger in Tampa. . . .

**TAMPA ROBINS**

The robin laughed in the orange-tree:
Ho, windy North, a fig for thee:
While breasts are red and wings are bold
And green trees wave us globes, of gold,
Time’s scythe shall reap but bliss for me
--Sunlight, song, and the orange-tree.

Bum, golden globes in leafy sky,
My orange-planets: crimson I
Will shine and shoot among the spheres
The Orange Grove Hotel building, 806 Madison street, as it appeared May 7, 1924. During this period the building was used as a rooming house.

Photo courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System

A later picture of the building taken after the second floor porch was closed in. Louise Frisbie, in an article in Tampa Bay History, Spring/Summer 1983, vol.5, No.1, p.49, incorrectly identified this photo as showing the building during its early years.

Photo courtesy of University of South Florida Special collections.
(Blithe meteor that no mortal fears)
And thrid the heavenly orange-tree
With orbits bright of minstrelsy.

“If that I hate wild winter’s spite --
The gibbet trees, the world in white,
The sky but gray wind over a grave
Why should I ache, the season’s slave?
I’ll sing from the top of the orange-tree
Gramercy, winter’s tyranny.

I’ll south with the sun, and keep my clime;
My wing is king of the summer-time;
My breast to the sun his torch shall hold;
And I’ll call down through the green and gold,
Time, take thy scythe, reap bliss for me,
Bestir thee under the orange-tree.”

From Selected Poems of Sidney Lanier,
Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1947.