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***St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950* by Raymond
Arsenault**

Raymond A. Mohl
Florida Atlantic University

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José Martí, surrounded by Tampa cigar workers, stands (with his jacket open at the top center of the steps) in front of Martínez Ybor's factory in Ybor City.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

“With All and for the Good of All” enhances our understanding of the tangible manifestations of U.S. influence in Cuba: in trade, property and investment. Poyo offers a well-written and well-researched account of the issues debated in the émigré communities, and his sources include a broad range of newspaper accounts, published essays, pamphlets, broadsides, archival materials and secondary works from the U.S. and Cuba. Relating his study of emigre thought to broader political and economic processes, he has nevertheless kept his topic in precise focus. This book should be appreciated by anyone interested in Florida history, Cuban history or Latin American nationalism.

Susan Fernández

St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950. By Raymond Arsenault. Norfolk, Virginia. 1988. Donning Company. Pp. 360. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Cloth. \$29.95.

As this splendid book suggests, scholars are discovering the neglected twentieth-century history of Florida. And a fascinating history it is, characterized by colorful visionaries, boosters, and builders, an economy growing at a heady pace throughout most of the century (although often slowed by periodic economic downturns), unending waves of newcomers and tourists, increasing ethnic and racial diversity, and a powerful pattern of urbanization that made Florida 85 percent urban by the 1980s. Raymond Arsenault's *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 1888-1950*, provides a marvelous exploration of these varied themes set against the panorama of dynamic change in modern Florida history.

Arsenault moves quickly and authoritatively through the Spanish colonial era and the nineteenth-century frontier period of Pinellas history, reserving his most detailed treatment for the period after 1888 when the Orange Belt Railroad arrived at a tiny hamlet near Tampa Bay, feeding the pretensions of the town builders. From that point on, the cast of characters moving across the St. Petersburg stage is both delightful and beguiling. The city's movers and shakers ranged from Peter Demens, the railroad builder from Russia who gave the city its name, to crusading editor William L. Straub of the *St. Petersburg Times*, promoter and developer Frank Davis, baseball man and St. Petersburg Mayor Al Lang, socialite developer "Handsome Jack" Taylor, and writer and civic leader Katherine Bell Tippetts, among many other fascinating seekers and promoters of the "Florida Dream."

One of the great virtues of this book is that it consistently places the St. Petersburg experience within the larger context of urbanization and American history generally. Moreover, Arsenault has utilized effectively the "Florida Dream" metaphor – the idea that subtropical Florida's combination of sunshine and seashore could fulfill "the centuries-old promise of perpetual warmth, health, comfort, and leisure" (p. 7). In this sense, the book invites comparison with Kevin Starr's histories of *California: Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* (1973) and *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (1985).

The book is particularly admirable in that Arsenault has resisted the temptation to turn his local history into a filiopietist tract in praise of notable citizens. Instead, the author has dug deeply into St. Petersburg's history, often providing a powerful bottom-up perspective. Arsenault is especially strong in detailing the history of the Sunshine City's black community. During the boom years of the 1920s, the black community grew in proportion to the white population, totaling well over 7,000 by 1930, but an officially condoned and strictly enforced Jim Crow segregation system kept the blacks confined to a burgeoning residential ghetto and generally away from public view. Brutal lynchings were not uncommon in the early years of the twentieth century. The pervasive pattern of segregation persisted into the post-World War II period, but a 1944 Supreme Court decision ending the white primary in the South led to dramatically increased black political activity in St. Petersburg. By 1950 St. Petersburg had one of the highest rates of black voter registration in the South. Nevertheless, poverty, poor housing and overcrowding characterized the city's black neighborhoods by the 1950s, Arsenault's terminal point for the book. Similarly, Arsenault provides a fuller exploration of the role of women in the city than is commonly found in most local or urban histories.

Arsenault has done an excellent job of integrating over 350 historical photographs tracing the city's history over time. The full captions are carefully related to the narrative text. Moreover,



The St. Petersburg Pier in 1895.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Arsenault writes with an unmistakable stylistic flair that carries the reader through St. Petersburg's absorbing history. Arsenault has placed the magnetic attraction of St. Petersburg, and of Florida generally, within a persuasive interpretive context, and he has nicely balanced the general and the specific. This well-researched and finely written study is both a visual treat and a pleasure to read. At the same time, it makes a very important contribution to modern Florida history.

Raymond A. Mohl

The Character of the Word: The Texts of Zora Neale Hurston. By Karla F. C. Holloway. New York. 1987. Greenwood Press. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 127. Cloth. \$29.95.

The Literary History of the United States, originally published in 1946 and subsequently revised and augmented several times, once offered authoritative pronouncements upon major and minor American writers for students of American literature, generalists and specialists during the Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy years. It examined the career of Zora Neale Hurston in a brief but complimentary paragraph calling her "In prose depicting the humor of Negro life the outstanding writer of her race. . . . [A]n anthropologist as well as a creative writer. . . . When she describes the life of colored people in Florida, she never loses humanity and zest in the quest of science." No one-paragraph comment would suffice today for Hurston in any self-respecting