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William B. Hooker
Hooker Family Monument - Oaklawn Cemetery
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The *Sunland Tribune* is the official annual publication of The Tampa Historical Society, distributed to members each year. Non-members may receive limited edition issues by contacting the Society at 259-1111.

Individuals interested in contributing manuscripts for consideration should send them to the headquarters no later than July 1 of each calendar year. The *Sunland Tribune* Editor will review, accept or reject articles and will return all photographs and materials not selected for publication. All manuscripts should be double spaced typed pages and should include endnotes, and, in addition, captions for all photographs submitted. 3-1/2” disks will be the only media allowed. Any popular word processing program will be accepted. The Tampa Historical Society and the Editor of the *Sunland Tribune* accept no responsibility for statements made or opinions held by authors.
The President’s Report

1996 has been a very good year for the Tampa Historical Society and it has been an honor to serve as president.

In March we held our first annual Spring Festival at the historic Knight House where members and visitors enjoyed a number of special exhibits.

In April the Oaklawn Cemetery Ramble was one of the best attended ever. We dedicated three special monuments, two of which were funded by the Society. We also placed ten markers at previously unmarked graves. In addition, with the assistance of the local government access channel, we produced a video tour of Oaklawn Cemetery.

Our historical marker program continues to be one of our most important projects. The Society funded two markers, one at the site of the former home of pioneer John T. Lesley and one commemorating Central Avenue, the pioneer African American business district. We also dedicated a marker on Bayshore Boulevard in June.

In August, the Tampa Historical Society helped to sponsor the dedication of the Tampa Historic Trail — the Eagle Scout project of Kip Zwolenski. The granite marker placed at the start of the trail at Ybor Square was funded by our organization.

We also held two historical programs for our membership in the fall of 1996.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow officers and directors for their dedicated service throughout the year.

Finally, I am pleased to present the 1996 edition of the Sunland Tribune, our largest issue since 1981.

Respectfully,

Kyle S. VanLandingham
In June of 1860, a group of pioneer residents on an expedition of Peas Creek, noticed a cattle crossing:

At 7 o'clock we came to what seemed to be a crossing place for cattle. It had the appearance of being a kind of forceford, having two strings of log fences, made in funnel shape, widening from the river to the pine woods. And such a fence! The reader will know but little about it without further description. It was built of forks, and logs, log chains and trace chains! One of our party being an observing man, remarked, That looks like some of Capt. Hooker's work.' Sure enough, on our return, we learned that it was one of his cattle fords. Capt. H. makes his mark wherever he goes, as well upon the earth and rivers and trees of South Florida, as upon his numerous stock of cattle.¹

By the summer of 1860, William Brinton Hooker was the "cattle king of Florida," owner of over 10,000 head of open range beef cattle. If he had looked out from the piazza or porch of his 33-room home on Madison Street in Tampa and felt satisfied with his accomplishments, Hooker could be excused. For over forty years he had played a prominent role in the pioneer life of south Georgia and Florida.²

William B. Hooker was born May 3, 1800, in Montgomery (now Tattnall) County,
Georgia, the eldest child of Stephen and Elizabeth (Brinton) Hooker. Members of the Hooker family had settled in Georgia before the American Revolution. He grew up in a Methodist household in Tattnall County, a coastal wiregrass community about 60 miles west of Savannah. Stephen, the father, was a farmer who on occasion experienced financial difficulties. In 1816, he was forced to acquire a liquor license from the Inferior Court to operate a tavern and thus supplement the family’s income. How all this squared with Mrs. Hooker’s strong Methodist leanings is not known.3

In 1819, Bill received his first public office, ensign in the militia, and three years later he served as coroner of Tattnall County. Still unmarried in 1824, he joined his parents and six brothers and sisters in a move to Appling County in south Georgia. In August of that year the Inferior Court appointed Hooker sheriff. In December 1824, Ware County was created from Appling, with the county seat at Waresboro, now a small community a few miles west of present-day Waycross. Bill Hooker became captain of the 451st militia district at Waresboro in 1827 and thus first earned the title he was to carry the rest of his life. He was also elected Ware County’s second sheriff in 1828. Perhaps the major event in his law-enforcement career occurred in 1829 when Hooker was commended by Gov. John Forsyth for capturing a band of white rustlers. John McDonald and the Stafford brothers and one Tucker had killed Indian Billy of Ware County and stolen his horses. McDonald and the Staffords were apprehended and the stolen horses were retaken. A reward was then offered for Tucker who had fled over into Florida.4

Bill also had time to father an illegitimate child, Winaford Henderson, July 10, 1827. But he accepted responsibility for his daughter by taking her into his home and rearing her. He also had her legitimized by the Georgia legislature with her name changed to Winaford Hooker.5

Bill’s younger brother, James Tarpley Hooker, moved over into Florida about 1828 and by 1830 the remainder of the family settled along the Suwannee River in Hamilton County. On August 1, 1830, at the age of 30, William B. Hooker was married to Mary Amanda Hair, the daughter of William Hair. The following year, in
In December of 1835, when war with the Indians was imminent, William B. Hooker joined Capt. John McLemore's company as third lieutenant. The company was composed mostly of Hamilton and Columbia Countymen. McLemore was initially headquartered at Fort Jennings, or Suwannee Old Town. By late December 1835, the captain and about 250 refugees abandoned the area and moved to Newnansville. Left in charge at Fort Jennings was Lt. William B. Hooker and a tiny detachment. On January 17, 1836, Hooker was crossing his men and horses over the Suwannee, near Old Town. The Tallahassee Floridian reported that Hooker finding the opposite bank in possession of about 30 Indians, crossed over with nine men to attack them. As he landed, two of his men were shot down—one with nine balls, the other with five. With his remaining men, he boldly charged the enemy. While thus engaged, . . . he was left with no alternative but victory or death. After a close and deadly contest of some minutes, the savages were routed with severe loss.

In the fall of 1836, Hooker was serving as third lieutenant in Capt. William Reed's company of Florida Mounted Militia. He participated in the Battle of Wahoo Swamp.
on November 21, 1836, and Lt. Col. Mills cited Hooker along with Capt. Reed and a fellow lieutenant for "correct and soldier-like conduct. . . ." Col. Benjamin K. Pierce praised Hooker and several others for "behav[ing] throughout the day with great energy and bravery." In the spring of 1838, Hooker organized his own company and served as its captain during three and one half months service. But the war was winding down at that time although the end did not occur until 1842.

In October 1838, elections were held for the upcoming territorial constitutional convention at St. Joseph. Hamilton County was entitled to two delegates and Joseph Watts took that prize in the first election. However, there was a tie for second place between William B. Hooker and Appleton Rosseter. A second election was held and Hooker was the victor. The convention met on December 3, 1838 and in a 27-26 vote with Hooker in the majority, Judge Robert Raymond Reid was elected President of the convention. Hooker was appointed to the Committee on the Right of Suffrage and Qualification of Officers. He joined fellow Democrats when he consistently took an anti-bank position in his floor votes. However, he voted against a proposal for ad valorem taxation of lands. But he was in the majority when he voted against a proposal that would have required a belief in God as a requirement for holding public office. Hooker returned to Hamilton County in early 1839 and the following year he was appointed Justice of the Peace by the new territorial governor, Robert R. Reid.

Though not a wealthy planter, Hooker, by 1840, owned six slaves, a substantial amount of land and was a leader in the county's politics and government. He also purchased
a section of land in Columbia County at the site of Ichetucknee Springs. Financial reverses soon followed and by 1841, in the midst of a territory-wide depression, Hooker was forced to supplement his income by teaching school. The Armed Occupation Act of 1842 proved to be Hooker’s salvation, but his departure from Hamilton County the following year was not a graceful one. In January 1843, he offered for sale his lands in Hamilton and Columbia counties. At the same time, he transferred the 489 acres in Hamilton to his brother John, in trust for his children. Creditors were pursuing Hooker but he asserted that the land transfer was for the sole purpose of complying with the terms of the Armed Occupation Act. At any rate, the Hamilton county property was eventually sold in 1845 at a sheriff’s sale.\textsuperscript{13}

In January 1843, Bill Hooker filed an Armed Occupation Act application for 160 acres of previously unsurveyed land in Hillsborough County, Florida. Formerly known as the Marsh Place, it was located at Simmons Hammock or present-day Seffner. The “road from Tampa Bay to Pease Creek” ran through the north side of the tract. A permit followed in April 1843, and when the land was surveyed in the first quarter of that year the surveyor showed Hooker’s claim on his map. Less than a mile to the north were the Thomas and John Weeks claims which Hooker later purchased. Nearby to the east was a body of water that became known as Lake Hooker. About three miles east of his homestead was the tract of John Parker, who had married the widow of Hooker’s brother, Stephen. About six miles to the southeast was John Hooker’s claim. Also, within two miles to the south was the homestead of William Parker, who in 1844 married Bill Hooker’s daughter Winaford.\textsuperscript{14}

Within a year of his arrival in Hillsborough County, Hooker was appointed a justice of the peace. In 1847, two years after Florida became a state, Bill was elected to the board of county commissioners. His younger brother John was elected sheriff in the same election.\textsuperscript{15} Capt. Hooker, now 47 years of age, began to concentrate his activities in four different areas: (1) building up a large herd of beef cattle; (2) pursuing other agricultural pursuits such as citrus growing and cotton raising; (3) large-scale land acquisitions; and (4) establishing himself and his family as a political power in Hillsborough County.

The county tax lists are a principal source for determining the size of cattle herds in pioneer Florida, although the figures are no doubt conservative estimates of cattle ownership. In 1847 William B. Hooker owned 600 head of cattle and in 1848, 800 head. By 1849, the figure had doubled to 1,675 and in 1850 he is listed with seven slaves and 2,000 head of cattle. The 1850 U.S. census included an agricultural schedule which states that Hooker had 600 milch cows, four working oxen and 1,900 "other cattle." He
also owned 35 sheep and 150 swine. The total value of livestock was $13,355. Hooker listed himself as a planter on the census rolls but his primary activity was stock raising. Indeed he was the second largest cattle owner in the state, just behind Redding W. Parramore of Madison County who owned 2,606 head. Hooker's closest competitors in Hillsborough were William Hancock with 1,700 head and Jacob Summerlin with 652. In the early 1850s Summerlin also owned over 1,000 head in Orange County. Hooker's primary cattle brand was Heart H, which he registered in Hillsborough County on April 12, 1852.16

The primary market for beef in the early 1850s was Savannah, Georgia, and the drovers were "often gone for months on a drive to that City."17 By 1854, however, cattle were being shipped to the West Indies and Key West. County Commission minutes reveal that William B. Hooker held a lease on the market place or market house in 1855 and was at that time advertising the sale of beef in the local Florida Peninsular. He advised that from Feb. 1, 1855, only cash would be accepted. The 1855 tax lists show that Hooker's herd had grown to 4,500 head, the largest in the county. John Parker, Louis Lanier, Daniel Sloan, James Alderman and Hooker's younger brother, John, were all major stock owners. Captain Hooker was the county's fourth largest taxpayer, behind sugar planters Robert Gamble and J. A. Braden and entrepreneur James McKay. McKay, who opened the cattle trade with Cuba in 1858, was a close associate of Hooker's.18 In one early reference from McKay's account book dated December 14, 1855, Hooker acknowledged receipt of $405 from McKay "being in full for twenty seven steers shipped on board sch[ooner] John Roalef,..."19

Grady McWhiney, who has advocated a Celtic interpretation of Southern history, wrote that the southern system of raising livestock on the open range was simple and easy. Aside from marking and branding their animals, Southerners had little more to do than round them up in the fall and either sell them to a buyer or drive them to market. One could even raise livestock without owning land....

The open range system of herding encouraged more than indifferent farming and a leisurely lifestyle.20
According to McWhiney it led to laziness. William B. Hooker was many things but he was not lazy. Nor, for that matter, was he a Celt.

By the mid-1850s Hooker's cows ranged over present-day Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk, Highlands, Glades, Hendry and Charlotte counties. Hooker's Prairie, located south of present-day Mulberry, appeared in records as early as 1849. Highlands Hammock, now a state park, was originally known as Hooker Hammock and he had cattle pens at a crossing on Fisheating Creek near present-day Venus. Cattle were shipped from Hooker's Pens at a point on the north side of the lower Manatee River known today as Hooker's Point. The other, more famous Hooker's Point, which projects into Tampa Bay was also a shipping point for his cattle, as well as one of his properties.21

Capt. Hooker was a pioneer in the Florida citrus industry. In the year 1846 he planted an orange grove at the site of present-day Parrish, in Manatee County. "His plantings were all 'seedlings'—budding and grafting were then unknown in the industry. That is to say, he developed his groves from the seeds of selected fruit."22 Hooker eventually acquired over 1,000 acres of land near Fort Hamer and the Manatee River. He built a log home there and in 1853 he ventured into the growing of sea island cotton with William H. Johnson. Johnson was to cultivate 33 acres of cotton on Hooker's farm and Hooker was to build a cotton gin, gin the crop and divide it equally with Johnson. Johnson claimed that Hooker failed to divide the crop with him and sued Hooker in Hillsborough circuit court in 1854. He prevailed but Hooker appealed to the state supreme court and won a reversal in 1856. Johnson sued again and won; this time the judgment was affirmed by the high court. But the litigation dragged on until 1861, with jury awards to Johnson of over $1,000; but by this time Johnson was dead.23

During the early 1850s, Hooker also purchased a large number of city lots in
William Brinton Hooker, 1800-1871

— Author’s Collection
Tampa, thus increasing his wealth. He was also a leader in the Tampa Methodist Church and in 1852 he joined the Hillsborough Masonic lodge. Benjamin Hagler, who became his son-in-law in 1851, succeeded Hooker’s brother John as sheriff in 1849 and remained in office until 1853. John Parker was elected to the county commission in 1849 for a two-year term. Thus Hooker’s position and power were enhanced by the presence of his relatives in high positions. Hooker and his wife Mary were concerned that their children marry well and live comfortably. They gave $2,000 a year to each son-in-law. Capt. Hooker was opposed to his daughter, Martha, marrying Benjamin Hagler, whom he considered an "old fogy" with an irritating speech impediment. He preferred that, she marry her suitor, George G. Keen, from Columbia County. But Mrs. Hooker prevailed, believing Sheriff Hagler to be a wealthy match for her daughter. As it turned out, Martha married Hagler, but the marriage eventually ended in divorce. Indeed, neither John Henry Hollingsworth, who married Ann, William W. Stallings, who married Eliza Jane, nor Hagler were wealthy men. Only William Parker, who married Hooker’s daughter Winaford, was a man of any considerable wealth.24

All of William B. Hooker’s activities came to a halt in December 1855 when word reached Tampa of the Indian attack upon Lt. Hartsuff’s surveying party in southwest Florida. Tampa citizens immediately held a meeting at the courthouse on December 24. A visitor in Tampa wrote:

A list was ... presented for the signatures of those who felt disposed to fight for their country for all they held dear and sacred and for the removal of the Seminoles. Several rose up at once and with a steady step and solemn air marched up to the table and signed the paper. [Capt.] Hooker, Rev . . . . Lesley and Sherad Edwards were the first signers, all of whom were Indian fighters in the last war....25

The Billy Bowlegs or Third Seminole War was underway. Hooker quickly got to work and organized a company of mounted militia and marched to the frontier. A volunteer,

stationed at Fort Meade, wrote to the Tampa Florida Peninsular on January 4, 1856:

On the arrival of Capt. Hooker on the 29th ult., he proceeded at once to seek proper locations for troops on the line of Peas Creek. Four points were selected, to wit: Fort Meade, Fort Hartsuff, about 25 miles south of Fort Meade, Fort Green, about 12 miles S.E. of the latter

Simon Turman, Jr., ca. 1829-1864
— Courtesy Vivian Shelton
Post, and Fort Hooker, 16 miles North of Fort Meade. Each station having 16 to 25 men; leaving a large party for general scouting. From these posts a detachment of, perhaps, two-thirds of the command make daily scouts up and down the Creek, or cross over as they may see proper. All the families on the South side of Peas Creek have abandoned their places and are now forted at the above Posts. The command of Captains Hooker and Leslie now amounts to 124 men, and made into two companies. Capt. Leslie commands the upper and Capt. Hooker lower Peas Creek. You may judge something of the spirit of Capt. Hooker, (who Is denominated by the troops as the Old War Horse,) from a portion of his orders to his Lieutenants at the several Posts. He says: — 'Should you discover Indians, or the trail of them, you will pursue them to the farthest extremity — sparing neither men or horses while on that duty.'

The war cry is 'Hartsuff,' and countersign 'No Compromise.'

The whole corps is subsisted entirely from the personal resources of Capt. Hooker, who is ever active in procuring supplies; he having purchased all the surplus produce in the country. If any one ever deserved the thanks of our citizens it is him—sparing no expense in carrying out their wishes. His advice to the settlers on this side the line is, keep to your plantations, for I will keep the Indians back at all hazards. Many, very many, would have abandoned their homes, had he not given them protection.26

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.
In a letter to Gov. James Broome on January 3, 1856, Hooker wrote:

Your Excellency, I am getting old now, former wars begin to have their effect on me; yet, while I can sit in my saddle, or find a penny in my purse, all — yes, all — shall be devoted to rid our state of this curse. I feel that I want to see my beloved state free, before I close my eyes in eternal sleep; that my children, at least, may sit under their own vine and fig tree, unmolested, and none to make them afraid. This is my only wish.27

In February, Hooker's company was mustered into Federal service at Fort Meade. Hooker was headquartered at Fort Meade and a detachment under Lt. John Parker was stationed at Fort Green in Manatee County.28 The post at Fort Green soon became a problem. It proved more difficult "to supply... than any other post on the frontier."29 Chronic malcontent Matthew P Lyons, probably in league with his friend Sergeant James D. Green of Hooker's company, criticized the army command and
Capt. Hooker in letters which were published in the Tampa newspaper, the Florida Peninsular. Lyons complained that the troops at Fort Green were lacking in ammunition for their weapons and food for their horses.  

On June 14, 1856, Indians attacked the Willoughby Tillis place near Fort Meade. Lt. Alderman Carlton and six men rushed from Fort Meade to offer relief to the besieged family. In the attack, Carlton and two other men were killed, including Hooker's son-in-law, William Parker, and three wounded, including another son-in-law, John Henry Hollingsworth. Only three men of the seven-man force were from Hooker's company. Lt. Streaty Parker of Lesley's company with 18 men, pursued the Indians after the battle and engaged them on the banks of Peas Creek, south of Fort Meade on June 16. Two volunteers were killed and three were wounded. Three men from Hooker's company participated in the second battle. At least five Seminoles were killed although as many as 20 may have died in the three-day affair.

In his official report, printed July 5, in the Florida Peninsular, Capt. Hooker explained that he marched a detachment "Into the woods in search of Indians as I supposed they would attack isolated homes of settlers on the full of the moon,..."

After scouting down the Alafia River and noticing Indian signs, it was thought the Indians had headed south to Manatee. After moving to that place and finding all quiet, the troops proceeded back to Horse Creek where the Indians were known to obtain supplies of potatoes. They camped on the night of June 15 and sent two men to Fort Green to ascertain the situation
there. About midnight they returned with word of the attack on the Tillis place. Hooker and his men arrived at Brooker's place on the east side of Peas Creek about 2 p.m. on June 16 where the wounded men from the battle of that day had been carried. Hooker consolidated his force and immediately went in pursuit of the retreating Seminoles, south into the swamps along Peas Creek. By the next day, "[s]everal of the men were sick, vomiting violently and their clothes were badly torn, exposing their flesh to insects and weather." The following morning, June 18, Hooker sent out a detachment to continued hunting the Indians and then returned with the sick and disabled to Fort Meade.

Matthew P. Lyons in a letter to Col. Monroe at Ft. Brooke, dated July 7, accused Hooker of leaving Fort Meade and Fort Green without military protection and taking his men on a beef scout to round up his cattle. Lyons, who was not serving in any of the military units, charged Hooker with neglect of duty. He referred Lt. John Parker and Sgt. James D. Green to Monroe for proof of the charges. The charges were printed in the *Florida Peninsular* and following their publication the Assistant Adjutant General at Fort Brooke directed Hooker to provide Lyons’ letter to Parker and Green for verification or denial. Green equivocated, saying he could not "say the Charges is true as opinion has nothing to do with the matter. neither Can I exonerate the captain as the report is Common amongst the members of the Company Commanded by Captain Hooker." Parker, however, defended Hooker, saying "I ... believe the charges false and will not sustain them." Hooker appeared to have the last word when he printed a notice in the *Florida Peninsular* of August 16:

Mr. Editor—An editorial having appeared in your paper, a few weeks since, relative to a communication from Matthew P. Lyons, making charges of "serious nature" against (as I presume every one is aware) myself, I feel it to be my duty to state a few facts. Col. Monroe furnished me with a copy of said serious charges, an investigation of the matter was commenced, and not one charge was sustained. I now pronounce Matthew P. Lyons a liar, who has attempted, by traducing my character, to advance the interests of his friend.

Four days later, with their six-month enlistment having expired, Hooker and his entire company were honorably discharged from the United States service. Several revisionist historians in recent years have criticized Hooker's actions, asserting that had the post at Fort Meade been at "full strength the Indians might have been defeated or even wiped out. . ." But all through the first half of 1856 detachments of troops were constantly sent on scout to follow up rumors and reports of Indian parties in the woods. Federal and state authorities
ordered troops from Peas Creek south to join the regulars and in early June of 1856, some of Hooker’s men, along with soldiers from other companies, had been ordered to look for Indians in Hernando County. If Hooker had remained holed up at Fort Meade he probably would have been criticized for that. Instead, he chose to lead his men along the trails and into the swamps in search of the hostile Indians. That was, after all, an important part of his job.39

As a final postscript to the 1856 controversy, a letter from Francis A. Page, Assistant Adjutant General at Fort Brooke, to Capt. Pleasanton, dated January 31, 1857, is instructive. In arguing against re-establishing a guard at Fort Green, Page wrote:

There is only a few individuals interested in the place and the principal man who wants a guard there is [James D.] Green himself formerly of Hooker’s company of volunteers, who is a good for nothing trifling disorganizer among the volunteers.40

After his military service was over, William B. Hooker plunged into political activities at Tampa. He helped establish the Tampa Democratic Club and served as third vice president. He was foreman of the grand jury during the fall 1856 term of circuit court and by 1857 had moved with his family into Tampa.41

Hooker’s membership certificate in the Washington National Monument Society Hooker’s wife, Mary, was one of the "collecting agents" in Tampa for the Ladies Washington National Monument Society.

— Author’s Collection
Hooker decided to quit the cattle business and in two conveyances dated December 25, 1857 and January 1, 1858, he conveyed his 1,000 acres in Manatee County and his 6,000 head of cattle branded Heart H, with twelve to twenty thousand pounds of seed cotton to his son Jasper and son-in-law, Benjamin Hagler, for $35,095. Ten annual payments were set up with interest a 6% per annum. Hooker also leased his ten slaves in Manatee County to the partners. However, the arrangement was not successful and by September 1858, they were offering the cattle, land and orange grove for sale. Hooker and Hagler dissolved the partnership in July 1859. Capt. Hooker was compelled to reenter the cattle business and take over control of his extensive herd.42

In 1858 Hooker was elected to the Tampa City Council and often served as Mayor pro tem in place of Mayor Madison Post. Although not directly linked to the regulator or vigilante movement in the spring and summer of that year, Hooker had close friends and associates who were Regulators, including Mayor Post.43

Bill and Mary Hooker’s eleventh and last child, Flora Ella, was born in 1853. One daughter Georgianna Florida, died in 1854 when only four years of age and their daughter Julia Loretta died of typhoid fever in 1857. The yellow fever epidemic which hit Tampa in the fall of 1858 may have been responsible for the deaths of their daughter Eliza Jane Stallings and two of her children. Interested in the education of their children, the Hookers sent two of their daughters, Mary and Meroba to the Southern Masonic Female College in Covington, Ga., in the late 1850s to complete their education. Both daughters married well. On May 1, 1860, Mary became the wife of the rising young Hernando Countian, Samuel E. Hope. Later that year, on Sept. 20, Meroba married Florida Peninsular editor, Simon Turman, Jr. Hope ran an unsuccessful race for the state senate in 1860 and was opposed by the wily lawyer, James T Magbee. Ironically, Turman became embroiled in a feud with Hope and threw his support to Magbee.44

By 1858 Tampa Bay residents had grown disenchanted with David Levy Yulee and his Florida Railroad. Realizing that he had no intention of completing the line to Tampa, William B. Hooker, Samuel B. Todd, James McKay and others were instrumental in the establishment of the Florida Peninsular Railroad in 1859. Hooker was the second largest stockholder with 755 shares and also served on the original board of directors. The only construction, however, was a graded right of way from Waldo to Ocala. The Civil War cut short any further development.45

The Florida Peninsular of May 21, 1859 included a story on the magnificent and extensive building of Capt. Wm. B. Hooker—recently erected in our City, and now in course of completion. This is a large building—two stories in height, and contains 33 or 34 rooms, with passages, piazzas, etc., to correspond. It is constructed in a substantial and workman-like manner, and, when finished, will present a handsome as well as formidable appearance. What the original design of Capt. Hooker was, we are not aware; we know, however, that his building will prove an ornament to Tampa and a monument to the public spirit of the projector. Being conveniently located and arranged for an hotel, it will answer for that purpose, but in its construction, is pre-eminently adapted for a family boarding house. The plan is admirable, every room being well ventilated and all
the requisites for comfort supplied with good taste. Portable partitions will constitute the divisions on the lower floor; hence, the whole compass of the building can be easily thrown into one large room. When we discovered this arrangement the conclusion was irresistible that the Capt. had in view the enjoyment of Young America as well as his own comfort, and we involuntarily asked ourself, What a glorious place for 4th of July festivities! a camp meeting! or, a Dance! 

The hand-sawed timber which was used to construct the building was shipped to Tampa from Pensacola. Located at the northwest corner of Madison and East Streets, the building was almost 69 feet in length and 38 feet wide. Nails were scarce in those days, so the timbers were cut to fit one piece into another, fastened by wooden dowels. Some of the supports were nearly a yard wide and supporting uprights were three by sixes.

By the summer of 1860, Capt. Hooker, once again a stock drover, was involved in driving his cattle in Manatee County from the backwoods to his pens at the mouth of the Manatee River. Jasper Hooker was still agent for his father when the 1860 census was taken. Capt. Hooker owned 9,000 head in Manatee County valued at $48,750. The more conservative county tax list gave 8,060 head as the total. At any rate, only Moses Barber of New River County, credited with owning 10,200 head, surpassed Hooker. But Capt. Hooker was still considered by his contemporaries to be the Cattle King of Florida. The 1860 census for Hillsborough County shows Hooker owner of $17,660 in real estate and $6565 in personal property. He had eight slaves in Hillsborough and in Manatee he owned nine with his son Jasper as agent. He did not ignore Manatee County politics. The young county, which had been carved out of the southern portion of Hillsborough in 1855, was experiencing political conflict between the settlers in the eastern Peace River section and the more settled and wealthier Manatee section. In the fall of 1859, Hooker’s brother-in-law, William Calvin Hair, was elected to the county commission. He had only been in the county about a year and his election to the board was certainly helpful to Hooker. Former sheriff, tax assessor and collector James D. Green was also elected to the board. Hooker and Green had crossed swords during the Third Seminole War and his presence on the board could not have been welcomed by Hooker. Green was eventually barred from taking his seat because of alleged irregularities in the handling of his accounts as sheriff and tax collector. Ironically, Jasper Hooker, the captain’s son, who had been the next-highest vote recipient in the 1859 election, assumed the office of county commissioner. 

By the fall of 1860, he decided to retire and sell his entire herd. He ran the following notice in the Florida Peninsular on October 13, 1860:

NOTICE TO STOCK GATHERERS.
Having sold my entire Stock of Cattle this day, notice is hereby given, to all persons interested, of the fact, and also to forewarn all Stock-gatherers or other persons against killing, driving, or in any way interfering with said stock or any portion of it — except when done for the benefit of the stock.

W. B. HOOKER

The transaction was finalized on January 1, 1861 when Hooker sold his 10,000 head to James McKay for $40,000. Actually, McKay was acting as agent for rising cattleman Jacob Summerlin and he transferred the herd to Summerlin on May
31, 1861. This sale made Summerlin the new cattle king of Florida. The Manatee tax lists reveal the impact of this transaction for in 1860 Summerlin owned 3,500 head and in 1861 he had 10,300 head of cattle.\textsuperscript{50}

Capt. Hooker now helped to coordinate the secession movement in Hillsborough County. A mass meeting was held at Alafia on Nov. 24, 1860 and the General Assembly was urged to call a convention to take Florida out of the Union. Capt. Hooker, his wife and son Jasper attended the meeting and signed the petition calling for a state convention to consider the matter. The Civil War began in April 1861 and later that month a militia company for home defense known as "The Silver Grays," was established. It was made up of those citizens who were not subject by law for militia duty. Most were older gentlemen, and William B. Hooker was among their number. In November of that year Hooker, Alfonso DeLaunay and Madison Post served on a committee to meet with Fort Brooke commander Major Bowen to assist him in providing supplies and equipment for the garrison. Many Tampans soon refugeed inland, especially after the Union ship bombardments in the spring of 1862. By May 1862, Capt. Hooker and his family had moved to Hernando County, where he purchased over 1,100 acres of land, and set up his plantation about two miles west of Brooksville. Hooker, the planter, raised cotton and corn and cultivated peaches, grapes, plums, mulberry and banana orchards. With 20 slaves in 1863 he was the fifth largest taxpayer in the county.\textsuperscript{51}

William Jasper Hooker, the captain's first son, enlisted May 10, 1862, in Capt. Gettis' Company, 7th Fla. Infantry. However, the same day, he replaced himself with a substitute, William E. Sweat. Samuel E. Hope, a son-in-law, enlisted June 21, 1862 as captain of the Brooksville Guards, which became Co. C, 9th Fla. Infantry. Simon Turman, Jr., another son-in-law, joined Co. E, 7th Fla. Infantry, a unit known as the South Florida Bulldogs, May 14, 1862. He rose to the rank of first lieutenant on Nov. 20, 1863 and was wounded in the lungs at Resaca, Ga., May 14, 1864. He died eight days later on May 22 and was buried in Atlanta's Oakland Cemetery. Capt. Hooker's younger son, James Newton, served late in the war in Capt. Leroy G. Lesley's Co. C, Fla. Cow Cavalry.\textsuperscript{52}

Mary Amanda, the captain's wife of nearly 33 years, died January 2, 1863, a victim of cancer. Rev. Leroy G. Lesley, who was also a Methodist minister and who lived on a nearby plantation, wrote the following in her obituary:

For the last 15 months she had been an example of patient suffering which few are called to endure. Her disease was cancer. Great as were her sufferings, she could always say "the Lord's will, not mine be done." She was a good woman, always ready to make sacrifices for the benefit of others. In her death, the church and the poor have lost one of their best friends, and the way worn travelling preacher one of their best homes greatly impaired, and her husband, children and servants have met an irreparable loss.\textsuperscript{53}

In March 1864, in Marion County, Hooker married Nancy Josephine (McCreight) Cathcart, a widow from Ocala with seven children. Her first husband, William M. Cathcart, enlisted in Co. G, 7th Fla. Infantry, May 10, 1862 and died of disease at Camp Lee, May 23, 1862.\textsuperscript{54}

The Hooker plantation was not immune from Union attacks for in July 1864, Federal
forces landed at the Anclote River and marched northeast to the vicinity of Brooksville.

From David Hope’s plantation we marched to Mr. William Hooker’s three miles distant, the Capt. being absent carrying his negro property out of reach of the yankees as we were termed. Mrs. Hooker saved the sacking of her effects by furnishing Capt. Bartholf and his officers of the colored troops with dinner and a change of shirts, the refugees and their officers refusing to accept anything but melons which we found in abundance on the farm.55

Union Lt. William McCullough who wrote the above account, elaborated further:

... the officers in command promised Capt. Wm. Hooker’s family protection if they would give them breakfast and a shirt each. This the ladies promised to do, and did it in good faith, but on the eve of taking up the line of march, the negro troops were pillaging in the out houses. At length the order for marching came, and Capt. Bartholf being somewhat in the rear of the command, ran thru a patch of gourd vines, and as was getting over the fence, discovered his negro troops picking up goods of some kind, and went back, took up his armful of lady’s wear, cleared the fence, mounted his horse, and rode to the front with his arms full of lady’s dresses, underskirts, chemises, like a true and gallant officer of the government, and army of the U.S., and commanding on this raid. I being left behind to see the last man leave, about the time the last man got over the fence, one of the ladys saw her shawl, and requested the man to give it to her, and seeing he refused, asked me to get it for her which I did, remarking to the man that we were not at war with women and children, that by kind acts we would gain many friends to the Union cause.56

When the war ended in 1865, Hooker, because his wealth was greater than $20,000, was among those required under President Johnson’s reconstruction plan to personally petition the president if he wished to obtain a pardon. Hooker took the amnesty oath on September 19 and applied for the pardon October 10. It was granted on November 9, 1865.57

In the spring of 1866, Capt. Hooker and his family returned to Tampa, to their home on Madison Street. The new Mrs. Hooker, who had operated a hotel in Ocala with her first husband, may have convinced the captain to turn the mansion into a hotel. Hooker was in debt and facing creditors, so the decision to become an innkeeper was a wise one.58 In April 1866, Hooker announced the opening of the Orange Grove Hotel:

This house, having just been renovated, and refitted, is now ready for the reception of boarders. Regular and day boarders will find this a comfortable and convenient house, and every attention will be paid to the wants of travellers. The table will be filled with the best the market affords, and the charge will be reasonable.

The climate, the sea breeze, fish, oysters &c., makes this a place of resort, for health and pleasure. Stables are attached to the premises where horses, will be well attended to., Proprietor59

Hooker also began to sell off his property. On July 16, 1866, he sold the Fort Hamer tract, over 500 acres consisting of a log house, orange grove and other
improvements to Charles A. Turner, son of Maj. William I. Turner, for $1,000. Maj. Turner named the place Oak Hill and later it became the center of the small town of Parrish. Hooker also began selling off many of his town lots in Tampa. A judgment in favor of William B., John A., and James E Henderson was entered against Hooker and Benjamin Hagler in the fall term of circuit court in 1866. Block 52 of the Town of Tampa, the Orange Grove Hotel property, was sold at public sale, March 4, 1867, to satisfy the judgment. In an apparently pre-arranged agreement, son-in-law Sam Hope bought the property for $2,555. The Henderson’s received the $720.74 due them and Hooker was reimbursed the balance of $1,834.26. In August 1867, Hooker managed to protect his Orange Grove Hotel property from creditors by means of a trust deed from son-in-law Sam Hope, naming Hooker as trustee of the property for the benefit of Hooker’s children and heirs. At the spring term of circuit court in 1867, three judgments were entered against him. Perry G. Wall, executor of the John Eubanks estate, won a judgment of $715.50 in an assumpsit action. Kennedy and Darling and J. R. Fulmore also obtained judgments against Hooker. A sheriff’s sale was ordered for December 2, 1867 to sell of much of his Hillsborough County property, including that at Simmons Hammock. Hooker, however, still had a trick up his sleeve. He petitioned Maj. Richard Comba, commander of the U.S. occupation troops at Fort Brooke, for a postponement of the sale of his property. Comba received approval from his superiors and ordered a postponement of six months, until June 2, 1868. On August 17, 1867, he put up his Hernando County plantation for sale and announced an auction on November 2. But the land did not sell and in March 1869 it was finally sold at a sheriff’s sale in Hernando County to satisfy the earlier judgment in favor of Perry G. Wall.

Capt. Hooker tried to remain active in local affairs, attending Democratic and railroad meetings. However, his health was declining and for a time he drank heavily, no doubt saddened by the financial reverses of the post-war years. He and his wife Nancy separated in early 1869, when she released her dower rights in his estate in exchange for notes in the amount of $2,400. Later that year, he turned over management of the hotel to his daughter Meroba and his son-in-law, Henry L. Crane. In December of 1870 the local newspaper reported that Hooker had been seriously ill and was staying at Live Oak. His will, dated December 5, 1870, left modest bequests to his children and two of his orphaned grandchildren. He left all of his books and the secretary in which they were kept to his son, James N. Hooker. Finally, he named his son James and his “trusty and well tried and worthy friend and son in law Henry L. Crane” as executors.

The end came six months later in the early morning hours of June 11, 1871. That afternoon at 4p.m., members of Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, Free and Accepted Masons, met in special session at the lodge building. They then marched in procession to the Hooker residence where the funeral service was performed by the chaplain. Then the lodge members and others accompanied the body to the grave yard where final Masonic honors were granted to Capt. Hooker. Today, an impressive stone obelisk marks his grave in Oaklawn Cemetery where he rests along with Tampa’s other pioneers.

His obituary in the Florida Peninsular spoke of Hooker’s many accomplishments and praised his generosity:
In prosperity Capt. Hooker was a friend to the destitute, and in adversity he would divide the last dollar he had with those whom he thought needed it more than himself.63

The Royal Arch Mason chapter of which Hooker was a member, published a lengthy memorial resolution:

Our companion, William B. Hooker. . . . was "marked" on the 23d, and "presided" on the 25th, February, and was "received and acknowledged" on the 5th, and "exalted" on the 9th of March, A. D. 1861; and he thus became a member of Tampa Royal Arch Chapter, No. 17, of Free and Accepted Masons of Florida.

His death, although he had arrived at the good age of three score years and ten, was not induced directly by the wear and tear of wasting years, but by a destructive disease, past the skill of medical science to arrest....

Our departed companion was not unknown as a patriot, as a defender of civil and religious liberty, and as an influential citizen. Being the head of a numerous family of blood relations and collateral affinities by marriage, he was a power for good in the county of his residence. For the numerous dependents of his own household, he provided bountifully, and his home was ever open to the stranger and none, however poor, ever left it hungry or naked. He was in the main a good man, though by no means perfect. Let us remember and imitate his virtues and let his faults, whatever they were, be buried out of sight with his mortal remains in the grave. Let us, beloved companions, look back over the past of our own lives and see what little good we have to boast of, and be wise while we have the opportunity.64

Tampa historians C. E. Harrison and D. B. McKay did not know William B. Hooker personally but they did know his children and many of his contemporaries. Harrison, writing in 1915, described Hooker as "a man of much individuality and strong convictions, possessing in an eminent degree the power of initiative."65 McKay echoed Harrison's statements and lauded Hooker as an early advocate of good roads who laid out and cleared the first road from central Hillsborough County to the Manatee River.66

Clearly, William B. Hooker was an impressive figure in the early growth and development of Florida. As a blazer of trails, citrus grower, soldier and framer of the state's first constitution, he deserves to be remembered. But most of all, as a founder of Florida's beef cattle industry, Hooker left his mark on the pioneer history of Florida.

A shorter version of this paper was delivered at the "Florida Cattle Frontier Symposium," November 1995.

The author is a great-great-great grandson of William B. Hooker

1 Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 14, 1860.
2 Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 200-201; Tampa Florida Peninsular, May 21, 1859
3 William B. Hooker Family Bible, typescript at Polk County Historical Library, Bartow, FL; Family Record of Stephen Hooker, Stephen C. Hooker, and William B. Hooker, copy in possession of author; Folks Huxford, comp., Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, 7 vols. (Pearson, GA, 1957), III, 143-145; IV, 144-145; Charleston, SC, Southern Christian Advocate, Oct. 7, 1853; Tattnall Co., GA, Inferior Court Minutes, 1805-1816, 68; Superior Court Minutes, 1805-1823. Huxford was in error in Vol. IV, 144, when he stated that Stephen Hooker (father of Win.
B.), was the son of Stephen and Martha Swain Hooker. The elder Stephen was dead by 1767 and the younger Stephen was born in 1769. The Martha Hooker in Vol. IV, 144, was Martha Jones Hooker, widow of Nathan Hooker, a colonial settler of Georgia. Nathan may have been the father of the younger Stephen. Nathan's brother, William Hooker, III, of Dobbs Co., North Carolina, also could have been Stephen's father. There were also two other brothers, James and John, who also could qualify. Recent research indicates that William Hooker, III, was the younger Stephen's father.

Revolutionary War Records of Georgia, II, 276; Bertie and Tyrell Co., NC Wills; Hooker family notes and files in possession of author. Wm. B. Hooker's name first appears on a public document in Bulloch Co., GA, in a receipt dated Aug. 2, 1808 from John Sikes for $40 in notes from "William Brinton Hooker," for a sorrel mare. Hooker was only eight years old at the time so it is possible that the horse was put in his name to shield his father from possible creditors. Bulloch County, GA, Deed Book "AA" 1806-1813, 178.


Returns of Election of August 4, 1828, Hamilton Co. Election Returns, Territory and State Elections Returns (1824-1870), box 1, record group 156, series 21, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, hereafter, Hamilton County Elections Returns; U. S. Original Census Schedules, 5th Census, 1830, Hamilton County Florida, (Population and Slave Schedules); Hamilton County Marks and Brands Book 1, 3;
221; Carter, *Territorial Papers, Florida, 1839-1845*, XXVI, 88-89.

13 U.S. Original Census Schedules, 6th Census, 1840, Hamilton Co., FL (Population and Slave Schedules); St. Augustine *Herald and Southern Democrat*, Jan. 23, 1843; Hamilton County Orders of Court, 1841, Old File No. 135; Hamilton County, Deed Book C, 140-145, 200-201, 361-362. Passed by Congress in 1842, the Armed Occupation Act opened up much of central Florida to settlement. A single man or head of family could receive 160 acres if he could bear arms, build a house and live on the land five years and cultivate five acres. Excluded from the act were persons owning 160 or more acres of land. See Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Orlando, 1991), 66. Hooker's 489 acre tract in Hamilton Co. was made up of four parcels. The first was purchased Sept. 24, 1833 and the last three were purchased (2) Feb. 6, and (t) March 7, 1837. The tract was located in Sections 4, 8 and 9, Township 2 South, Range 16 East. A patent for the first parcel was issued Oct. 20, 1835 and the last three patents were issued Sept. 20, 1839. The Ichetucknee tract in Columbia Co. was purchased in 1837 but the patent was not issued until July 10, 1844. Historical Records and State Archives Surveys, Works Progress Administration, *Alphabetical List of Tallahassee and Newnansville Land Office Receiver's Receipts*, 4 vols., I, H-28; U.S. Tract Book Vol. 3, Newnansville, Range 15 East and U.S. Tract Book Vol. 4, Newnansville, Range 16 East, Fla. Dept. of Environmental Protection; Patent 4420, Vol. 10:364, Patent 6750, Vol. 15:120, Patent 6751, Vol. 15:121; Patent 6849, Vol. 15:207, and Patent 121, Vol. 1:15, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, Arlington, VA. Hooker also bought property in Section 34, Township 4 South, Range 17 East in Columbia Co., Feb. 10, 1838. The patent was issued July 10, 1844. Tract Book for Township 4 South, Range 17 East, Fla. Dept. of Environmental Protection. For more on Hooker's legal problems in Hamilton Co., see Hamilton County, Criminal-Common Law Docket 1839 1845; Middle District of Florida, Superior Court Minutes (book is titled in front as Hamilton County Tax Deed Book A; and Hamilton County, Circuit Court Minutes 1844-1854.

14 Armed Occupation Act Files of Wm. B. Hooker, John Parker, John I. Hooker, and William Parker, record group 49, National Archives; Original Survey of Township 29 South, Range 20 East, Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection; Family Record of Stephen Hooker, etc.; Hillsborough County, Deed Book B, 80-81, 387-389; Indian War Pension Application for children of Wm. Parker, No. 26,582; National Archives. In Florida’s “first statewide election,” May 26, 1845, William B. Hooker and John Hooker voted at Wacahootie in Marion County. Brian E. Michaels, *Florida Voters in Their First Statewide Election* (1987), 70-71. The patent for Hooker's Armed Occupation Act land was dated August 1, 1849. AOA file of W. B. Hooker.


16 Hillsborough County Tax Books, 1847, 1848, 1849, 1850, Florida State Library; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census, 1850, (Agricultural Schedules); Orange County Tax Books 1851, 1852, 1854, Florida State Library; Hillsborough County Record of Marks and Brands, 13-14. The ear marks registered were swallow fork and under bit in each car and for his children swallow fork and under keel in one ear and under keel in the other.


18 Tallahassee *Floridian and Journal*, July 1, 1854; Hillsborough County Tax Book, 1855, Florida State Library.

19 James McKay Account Book, Misc. MS 59, University of South Florida Special Collections, Tampa.

20 Grady McWhiney, *Cracker Culture: Celtic Ways in the Old South* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1988), 67, 78.


23 Manatee County, Copy Deed Record A, 72-73; Hillsborough County, (Circuit Court Minute Book 1, 1846-1854, 402; Minute Book 2, 1854-1866, 8, 24, 76, 78, 187, 243, 280, 348-349, 366-368, 382, 393, 436, 575, 636, 686; Hooker v. Johnson, 6 Fla. 730, 8 Fla. 453; 10 Fla. 198; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census, 1860, Manatee County, FL (Mortality Schedule).

24 Hillsborough County, Deed Book A and B, numerous entries; Hillsborough County, Marriage Record A, 6; Family Record of Stephen Hooker, etc.; Historical Records Survey, Roster of State and Local Officers Commissioned by the Governor of Florida, 1845-1868 (Jacksonville, 1941), 142; Hillsborough County, Commission Minute Book A, 1846-1863, 18, 44; Jacksonville News, Feb. 12, 1848; Hillsborough County, Deed Book A, 349; Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, F.&A.M., Minute Book 1852-1857, 29, 32-34; Lake City Florida Index, Feb. 16, March 23, 1900, Canter Brown, Jr., and James M. Denham have compiled Keen’s columns in the Florida Index and plan to have them published. Kyle S. VanLandingham, “John Henry Hollingsworth: 1822-1893,” South Florida Pioneers 6 (October 1975), 5-7; Wm. B. Hooker Family Bible; Tampa Florida Peninsular, Jan. 9, 1858.


26 Savannah Daily Georgian, Jan. 20, 1856.


28 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Feb. 16, March 1, April 5, 12, 1856.

29 Francis A. Page to A. Pleasanton, Jan. 31, 1857, Letters Sent, Registers of Letters Received, and Letters Received by Headquarters, Troops in Florida, and Headquarters, Dept. of Florida, 1850-1858, record group 393, National Archives, hereafter, M-1084, NA.

30 Tampa Florida Peninsular, March 8, April 5, 12, 1856, Brown, Florida’s Peace River Frontier, 110, 112.

31 Tampa Florida Peninsular, June 21, July 5, 1856; Huxford, Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, III, 143-145; Brown, Florida’s Peace River Frontier, 113-115.

32 Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 5, 1856.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Matthew P. Lyons to Col. Monroe, July 7, 1856, Page to Hooker, July 14, 1856, James D. Green to Monroe, July 30, 1856, Statement of John Parker, July 28, 1856, M-1084, NA.

36 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Aug. 16, 1856.

37 Roll of Capt. Wm. B. Hooker’s Company, Compiled Service Records, NA.


39 Brown, Florida’s Peace River Frontier, 112.

40 Page to Pleasanton, Jan. 31, 1857.

41 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Sept. 13, Nov. 1, 1856.

42 Manatee County, Copy Deed Record A, 72-73; Hillsborough County, Deed Book B, 781-783; Tampa Florida Peninsular, Sept. 25, 1858, July 16, 1859. The names of Hooker’s ten slaves mentioned in the 1858 deed were Will, Dolly (his wife), Richard, Joshua, Frank, Solomon, Henry, William, Florence and Amanda. In Jan. 1842, in Hamilton Co., he mortgaged four slaves as security for a $526 loan from Redin W. Parramore. The four were Will, 24; Dolly, 19; Peter, 4; and Nancy 2. In 1853 he used three of these slaves, Nancy, Dick and Josh in his farming operations at his plantation in the Manatee
section. In Hillsborough County, Hooker mortgaged six slaves: Parrish, 39; Lucky (Suky?), his wife, 32; Charles, 16; George, 15; Connor, 3; and Doctor, 2, to Wm. W. Tucker in 1853. Finally, on July 29, 1860 Hooker's "servants" Paris, George and Sooky became members of the First Baptist Church of Tampa. Hillsborough County, Deed Book B, 132, 782; Hamilton County, Deed Book B, 732; Hooker V. Johnson, 6 Fla. 730, 733 (1856); Tampa Tribune, Sept. 20, 1953.


46 Tampa Florida Peninsular; May 21, 1859.


49 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Oct. 13, 1860.

50 Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 200-201; Manatee County, Tax Books, 1860, 1861.

51 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Dec. 1, 1860, May 4, 1861, Aug. 17, 1867; Kyle S. VanLandingham, "The Union Occupation of Tampa: May 6-7, 1864," Sunland Tribune 19 (November, 1993), 9; McKay General Store Account Book, 388, May 7, 1862, University of South Florida Special Collections, Tampa; Hernando County, Tax Book, 1863; Confederate Papers Relating to Citizens and Business Firms, MC 346, R-463, National Archives. This file also reveals that Hooker received $48 reimbursement for furnishing "6 days hire for one four mule Team with forage Inclusive @ $8.00 ... per day." The team was used by Capt. Samuel Hope's Brooksville Guards when they transferred from Bay Port to Tampa.

52 David W. Hartman, comp., Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers: 1861-1865, 6 vols. (Wilmington, NC, 1995), I, 450, II, 732, III, 904, V, 2036; Dept. of War, Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from the State of Florida, NA. Wm. Jasper Hooker was indicted at the spring term of Manatee Circuit Court in April 1866 for the murder of one Samuel G. B. Brewer. He killed Brewer, Jan. 15, 1864, after Brewer had treated Hooker's wife "shamefully." He admitted killing Brewer after Brewer had "advanced" towards him. There was no jail in Manatee so Sheriff Addison took Hooker to Hillsborough where he was released on a writ of habeas corpus and posted a bond for $1,000. His sureties were John Darling and Lewis Dishong. The justices of the peace were Robert Jackson and William Ashley. Circuit court was not held until spring 1866 when he was indicted. A capias was ordered when Hooker was "not found in the County." The case was continued through the fall term of 1867 when the records show "Marked Dismissed on the Docket." Hooker came under the general amnesty granted by Gov. Walker for acts against the peace of Florida which occurred during the Civil War. But Jasper had already left Florida and lived in Texas and Nebraska until July 1893, when he showed up in Florida to visit his brother James, after a 27-year absence. He eventually returned to Tampa, received an Indian War pension and died in Nov. 1904. State of Florida v. William J. Hooker, Murder, Manatee Co. Circuit Court Files; Manatee County, Circuit Court Minute Book 1, 15, 16, 21, 27, 30; unidentified newspaper, July N, 1893; Indian War Pension File of Wm. J. Hooker, NA.
53 Augusta, GA Southern Christian Advocate, Feb. 19, 1863. D. B. McKay, Pioneer Florida, 3 vols. (Tampa, 1959) II, 352-358. Mary Hooker was apparently unable to read or write most of her life. She signed her name with an X mark on a deed dated May 10, 1858. However, she did sign her actual name on a deed dated June 8, 1859, indicating she learned to read and write during this period.

Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 1-2, Deed Book K, 71-72.

54 Marion County, Marriage License Book C, 14; Letter from George Wheeler to Kyle S. VanLandingham, Oct. 8, 1990; Hartman, Biographical Rosters, II, 745.


56 Ibid., 81. Hooker also owned salt works on Tampa Bay which were destroyed by the U.S. Navy June 2, 1864. The works were described as "very fine ones, consisting of four very large kettles and large furnace;" Edward VanSice, Acting Master, U.S.S. Sunflower, to Acting Rear Admiral T. Bailey, June 7, 1864, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols. (Washington, DC, 1894-1922), Ser. 1, XVII, 714-715.

57 Application of Pardon of Wm. B. Hooker, Case Files of Applications from Former Confederates for Presidential Pardons, 1865-1867, Amnesty Papers, record group 94, M-1003, National Archives; House Document No.116, 39th Congress, 2d session, (2 March 1867), Message from the President of the United States, 77.

58 Tampa, Florida Peninsular, April 28, 1866; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census, 1860, Marion Co., FL (Population Schedule). A story, apparently apocryphal, states that the second Mrs. Hooker’s (Cathcart) children, by her first marriage, were not congenial with Capt. Hooker’s children, so he had two sets of stairs built outside the house. The Cathcart children used the east stairs, the Hooker children the west, while the captain and his wife used the inner staircase. See Stetson Kennedy, Palmetto Country (New York, 1942), 222.

59 Tampa Florida Peninsular, April 28, 1866. Tampa Guide, compiled by the Writers Program of the Works Progress Administration, included a section on the Orange Grove Hotel. It is erroneously stated that the hotel was "removed form its original site in an orange grove to 806 Madison Street." This is incorrect. The building was constructed at 806 Madison Street and was never moved. Federal Works Agency, Works Progress Administration, Tampa Guide (1941), 37. The Tampa Florida Peninsular, Feb. 29, 1868, reported: "The Orange grown here is superior in size and flavor to the Cuba Orange. In fact most of the Tropical fruit flourish here. There is some very handsome trees in Tampa. Capt. Hooker, [t]he Orange Grove Hotel, has beautiful trees and delicious fruit." The "Triumph," or "Early Triumph," grapefruit "originated as a seedling in the grounds of the Orange Grove Hotel in Tampa . . . is quite seedy . . . white-fleshed and of exceptionally high quality." It is described as a cultivar, "resembling grapefruit." Larry Jackson and Julian Sands, Fruit Crops Fact Sheet: Grapefruit, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida.

60 Manatee County, Deed Book D, 95; Interrogatories answered by James D. Haygood, Turner, et al. v. Hooker,et al, Bill to Reform and Rectify Deed, Manatee County Court Records, Feb. 25, 1885; Hillsborough County, Deed Book C, 375-377, 380, 393, 422, 467-469, 485, 498-499, 485, etc.; Hillsborough County, Court Docket, 1861-1869, Fall Term 1866, Spring Term 1867; Receipt of Wm. B. Hooker, March 4, 1867, Lesley Collection, USF; Tampa Florida Peninsular, Oct. 12, 1867; Petition of Wm. B. Hooker and related correspondence, record group 393, Part 1, Dept. of Fl., 1865-1869, Letters Received, Box 5, National Archives; Hernando County, Deed Book A, 160-167. In addition, Hooker also had property sold at an April 19, 1871 tax sale for delinquent 1868 and 1869 state and county taxes. However, his son James bought back the property for $161.20 at the sale. Hillsborough County, Deed Book D, 27. Also, Hooker and his wife Nancy faced foreclosure proceedings in 1866-67 in Marion Co., for property she had owned in Ocala. Marion County, Chancery Order Book A, 186-187; A-2, 8, 30-32.

61 Tampa Florida Peninsular, Aug. 1, 1868, June 16, 1869; Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, F.&A.M.; Lodge Minutes; Hillsborough County, Old Wills Book, 85-86. James Newton Hooker attended Emory College at Oxford, Ga., in 1869. He moved to Polk Co., where he was a prominent businessman and represented Polk in the state senate. Tampa Florida Peninsular, Oct. 27, 1869; Jacksonville Florida Times-Union and Citizen, Apr. 2, 1899. Meroba and her second husband, Henry L. Crane, were confirmed
in the Episcopal Church in 1871. St. Andrew's Episcopal Church was organized July 24, 1871 and Henry L. Crane was elected a warden and vestryman. Meroba was a prominent woman in Tampa during the late 1800s, active in the Ladies Memorial Society which cared for the town cemetery, and was a charter member of Tampa Chapter, No. 113, United Daughters of the Confederacy, in 1897. Tampa Florida Peninsular July 29, 1871; Tampa Sunland Tribune, Aug. 18, 1877; Charter of Tampa Chapter No. 113, U.D.C.

62 Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, F.&A.M., Minute Book Minute Book 1867-1873,121-123.

63 Tampa Florida Peninsular, June 17, 1871. Hooker’s obituary and the Masonic tribute states he was born May 2, 1800. His tombstone says May 10. However, his Family Bible gives May 3, 1800 as the date. His tombstone erroneously gives June 2, 1871 as the date of his death. However, the obituary, Masonic tribute and Masonic minutes correctly state that he died June 11. See Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 1, 1871 and Wm. B. Hooker Family Bible, also Family Record of Stephen Hooker, etc. Also, the original tombstone is incorrect in the date of his wife Mary’s death as it states she died Oct. 10, 1863. Her Obituary correctly gives the date as Jan. 2, 1863. See August, GA Southern Christian Advocate, Feb. 19, 1863. Finally, she was born April 3, 1810, per the Family Bible, not March 3, 1810, as stated on the tombstone. A new stone, placed at the foot of the original obelisk monument, giving the correct dates, was donated by the author and dedicated at the Tampa Historical Society’s Oaklawn Cemetery Ramble, April 14, 1996.

64 Tampa Florida Peninsular, July 1, 1871.

65 Charles E. Harrison, Genealogical Records of the Pioneers of Tampa and of Some Who Came After Them (Tampa, 1915), 110.

66 D. B. McKay, "The Hooker Family."
"ALL HIS WANTS SHOULD BE PROMPTLY SUPPLIED":

PERSIFOR F. SMITH AND THE CALOOSAHATCHEE RIVER CAMPAIGN OF 1837-38

By Joe Knetsch

Writing on December 28, 1837, the "Maligned General," Thomas Sidney Jesup ordered Major I. B. Brant, Quarter Master at Tampa to take every measure possible to keep the Louisiana Volunteers in good supply. In his order he noted:

General Smith reports that he will have eight hundred men in the field, and will not have transportation for more than half his force. His operations, from his proximity to Holatoochee, will be more important upon the results of the campaign, perhaps, than those of any other commander: All his wants should be promptly supplied. The failure of his column from want of transportation, or from any other cause, would be most disastrous, and might lead to the failure of every other column.¹

In Jesup’s plan of operation, access to the west coast of Florida and the area approaching the Big Cypress Swamp had to be denied to the Seminoles and their allies. It was the job of Persifor Smith and his command to stop the Indians from reaching these destinations. It was a crucial role in the complex operations of the United States Army against the Indians of Florida and one that Smith was quite capable of performing to Jesup’s satisfaction.

Persifor Frazer Smith was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1798 and later graduated from the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1815. He took up the study of the law while at school and moved to New Orleans in 1819. Smith quickly made his mark in the rough and tumble town and rose rapidly in its politics.² He married into the family of the prominent Francois Bureau, taking Bureau’s daughter, Francis Jeanette, as his wife. He also became very active in local militia matters, rising to command of a battalion in a few short years. In 1834, his strong political ally, Edward

¹ Persifor Smith in 1848
Simon Gratz Autograph Collection, Courtesy Historical Society of Pennsylvania Philadelphia

² Persifor F. Smith in 1848
Douglass White, became Louisiana's first Whig governor and appointed Smith to the post of adjutant general in the following year. With his political and military connections in place, Smith soon received the news of the outbreak of hostilities in Florida and was in a position to come to the aid of the Territory when General Edmund P. Gaines requested such in early 1836.³

Dr. Canter Brown, Jr. has recently shown the importance of Smith's role in the 1836 campaign. Brown has also noted the difficulties that Smith encountered in raising the first force of volunteers, including getting White to help gather the funds for the thirty dollar per man bounty. The internal politics of this command, well documented by Brown, show the tense situation in New Orleans. These included having White turn down a request by his rival for governor, Major General John B. Dawson, to lead the volunteers in Florida. The governor got around the seniority of Dawson by politely noting that the call for troops from General Gaines was for a colonel's command, eight companies, and as Dawson insisted upon maintaining his rank, the request was denied in favor of Smith. Soon thereafter, Persifor Smith led the volunteers upon the perilous voyage to Tampa to begin their service.⁴

Smith's troops served with valor and distinction during their tenure in Florida. They suffered many of the hardships of army life on the frontier, including bad food, mosquitoes, worn out clothes and shoes and impossible country for campaigning. Their Peace River expedition was difficult and without many positive results, except the exploration of about fifty-two miles of new territory, before the food ran out and they were forced to return to Charlotte Harbor. The volunteers returned to Fort Brooke on April 25, 1836, where they were greeted by orders for their departure back to Louisiana, thus ending their brief, but difficult service.⁵

The performance of the Louisiana volunteers under Smith's leadership was outstanding and widely recognized in the ranks of the regular army, something highly unusual in a war where volunteers were normally considered second-rate soldiers at best. In late July of the following year, Smith, again, offered to lead Louisiana's volunteers into the field in Florida. This time the command of the regular army was in the hands of Major General Jesup, someone who knew about Smith's capabilities. As he noted to Secretary of War Joel Poinsett:

Sir: I enclose a copy of a letter received today from General P. E Smith, of Louisiana. The general commanded a regiment under General Scott and General Gaines in the first campaign, not only with credit, but with distinction. If he could bring a regiment of infantry into the field- and I have no doubt of his ability to do so- the service would be greatly benefitted. By adding to his regiment a small body of regular troops he would be able, with naval co-operation, to commence his operations at Charlotte Harbor, or further south, and destroy or drive out the parties of Indians in the southern portion of the peninsula. . . . I consider it of the utmost importance that a regiment should be obtained from Louisiana, and of equal importance that General Smith should command it.⁶

But, this time, the terms of the service would have to be different. As Smith noted in his letter of July 30, 1837, to Jesup: "The regiment I commanded in 1836 left the service of the United States highly and justly discontented with it. They had served the whole time faithfully; indeed, had passed it
nearly two weeks, had been the whole time in constant activity, and when they arrived here, in rags and poverty, found not the slightest preparation on the part of the government to pay them off, notwithstanding the most positive orders on the part of General Scott." The governor of the state, Smith reminded Jesup, actually had to borrow money to pay the command. The army paymaster, who was supposed to have reimbursed the men for expenses, was, in one last bit of frustration for the volunteers, remanded to Alabama and was not on hand in time to perform the required duty. Yet, Smith stated hopefully, a year had passed since this ugly incident and it was probable that he could raise the troops Jesup needed for his Florida campaign.7

Two of the major reasons for Jesup’s enthusiasm for Smith’s Louisiana volunteers were their proximity, compared to Kentucky or Tennessee, and the fact they came from an area with a more similar climate.8 Another factor which weighed heavily upon the reasoning of Joel Poinsett was the very cumbersome arrangements necessary to properly staff a volunteer unit, especially under an inexperienced commanding officer. Smith, having proven himself an able and willing administrator, would be able to avoid most of the petty grievances frequently voiced by elected volunteer leaders. Also, the expense and time spent in gathering a new force would be greatly reduced with Smith in charge of the operation.9 Taken altogether, Persifor Smith was the ideal candidate to lead a major volunteer force when combined with regular troops against the stubborn foe.

After looking into business affairs in Philadelphia during most of September, Smith returned to New Orleans where his junior officers were already raising the required force.10 By November 2, 1837, Persifor Smith and the Louisiana volunteers had left New Orleans, bound for Tampa. There he was supposed to meet with five companies of Philadelphia troops and units of the 2nd Infantry to outfit and get supplies for their trip to the Caloosahatchee country. The force from Louisiana was about two hundred and fifty men.11 The Philadelphia force raised was to be about five hundred men, which, as noted earlier, meant that when Smith was ready to embark from Tampa, his force would number about eight hundred men.12

Smith’s force was to be but one element in a much larger, more elaborate plan than any yet attempted in Florida. Jesup’s plan was very involved and set into motion as many as nine different columns at one time.13 The main thrust of the plan, however, involved four columns, each entering the southern end of the peninsula from different routes, driving the Indians into the center of the Everglades and isolating them from any chance for outside assistance. Through constant campaigning and pressure on the food supply, Jesup hoped to end the war by March or April of 1838. To do this effectively would require that his forces would be in the field by no later than October. This hope was not to be. As the master planner stated:

I had desired to commence operations on the 1st of October, because, at that time, the St. John is navigable a greater distance that at a later period; and I could avail myself of more than two months of the services of the Florida troops, whose term of service expired in December. The regular troops, however, did not begin to arrive until near the last of October, and they continued to come in until December. The principal volunteer force arrived about the 1st of December.14
The late arrivals of the various forces meant that the campaign started later in the dry season and would have to end before the beginning of the rainy season. The latter meant sickness, death and impossible conditions for a campaign against the Indians.

While Jesup, himself, led forces up the St. Johns River from Fort Mellon, General Joseph Hernandez and his Florida militia would scour the area between the St. Johns and the Atlantic coast. As the distance between these two forces narrowed, the Alabama and Tennessee volunteers and others joined with Hernandez's column and attempted to push the enemy further into the Everglades and deny them the coast. The movement of these troops led to the foundation of a number of establishments, namely Forts Pierce, Jupiter, Lauderdale, Christmas and Bankhead on Key Biscayne.

Just as important to the overall success of the campaign were the western columns, outfitted and embarking from Tampa. As Jesup described the first of these: "General Taylor was directed to proceed from Tampa Bay, open a road in nearly an eastern direction into the heart of the country, establish a post on the head of Peas creek, another on the Kissimmee, and attack the enemy in that quarter." This he did with his actions culminating in the Battle of Lake Okeechobee, fought on Christmas Day 1837. The other column, was to rendezvous in Tampa and enter the field through the Caloosahatchee River. The operations of this column covered the whole country from Fisheating Creek, which enters Lake Okeechobee from the west, to Cape Sable, where forces under Colonel Thomas Lawson established Fort Poinsett. This column's activities resulted in the establishment of Forts Deynaud, Center and Keais (pronounced Keys) and the eventual capture of two hundred and forty three prisoners.

Each of these two columns had specific assignments. Smith’s was to deny the enemy access to the coast and the Big Cypress Swamp. The former because of the potential for gaining arms and supplies and the latter because it was known to be an impossible area in which to successfully campaign. Also of importance, was the need to keep the Indians south of the settlements and away from their brethren further north. Taylor's troops were to swing around to the east of the big lake and, after establishing Forts Basinger and McCrea, close off any communication with the north via the Kissimmee River valley or the reaches of the upper St. Johns River. With the constant movement of troops from the coastal forts, like Fort Lauderdale, Poinsett, Dallas and Jupiter, pushing inland, attacking the Seminoles and their allies on the "islands" of the Everglades and denying the enemy the "coontie" grounds in southeastern Florida, Jesup felt confident that his campaign would have very positive results in ending the war. The total force at his command, by January of 1838, was 8,993; 4,637 regulars, 4,078 volunteers, 109 seamen and 178 Indians. All of this depended not only on the valor of the troops, but the reliable delivery of supplies and arms.

The supply problem for such a large undertaking as this campaign was enormous. The proper boats had to be ordered from Philadelphia and New York; specially designed steamboats had to be constructed to accommodate Florida's shallow waters; pontooniers had to be organized and assembled; boatbuilders had to be on hand for special needs; great quantities of forage and food had to be advanced to the fighting stations; articles for the construction of the frontier fortifications had to be obtained and
forwarded to the troops; necessary animals had to be procured for the mounted troops and wagon-masters; huge numbers of rations had to be prepared in advance; medical supplies had to be assembled, along with obtaining the medical officers, regular and volunteer, to use them properly; tents, shovels, canteens, belts, caps, etc. all had to be ordered, assembled, shipped and forwarded to the front lines of four major columns. The tasks were daunting and complicated in the extreme. In a lengthy memorandum to Major Collins, Jesup listed the articles needed for an "advanced Depot": 400 blankets for packsaddles, 6 crosscut saws, 200 pounds of spikes, 2,000 horseshoes with nails, 400 cast steel axes, 20 froes, 20 Broad axes, 3 complete sets of blacksmith’s tools, 20 coils of rope for packing, 800 packing bags, 2,000 pounds of iron, pitch for boats. Many other “essential” items that the average "advanced Depot" would need to supply the troops in the field could be listed from the above memorandum, however, those materials listed will suffice for demonstration purposes. The logistics of this campaign in the swamps of Florida were difficult, complex and, in the end, highly frustrating to the clever general.

As noted earlier, Smith's departure from Tampa was delayed by the fact that he had little in the way of transportation to get him and his command to southern Florida. Jesup, whose office as Quartermaster General of the Army was responsible for getting supplies to the armies in the field, fumed at the constant delays his command suffered during the early part of the campaign. The commander's correspondence throughout this campaign is filled with urgent requests for supplies: "Sir, Send forward to this place [Fort Lane] without delay, the boats which I directed some time ago. I mean barges or flats of the second size. The movement of the troops will be greatly embarrassed if they should not arrive, had they been sent up when I requested them they could have been sent forward with forage yesterday." Basic necessities, such as shoes and other articles of clothing were often lacking or not forwarded to the frontier soon enough. In one notable incident, the lack of shoes greatly delayed the posting of nearly four hundred troops because the saw palmetto had disabled some of the men and the General refused to move them further south until the articles needed were supplied. Always aware of the men's morale, Jesup found it intolerable that other consumables were lacking or of such poor quality that they were unfit for use, even by the regular troops: "Greatly to my surprise," he wrote on December 29, 1837; "on my return to this post yesterday, I ascertained that there was neither sugar or coffee here for the troops. This is a most unpardonable neglect of some officer of the Commissary's Department. Report, without delay, the cause of this neglect.... The Beans sent to the Army are utterly unfit for issue, if you send any of them send those that are fresh." Delays in troop movement, improperly packaged supplies, not enough equipment for the forward posts, lack of transportation facilities and a myriad amount of other factors caused Jesup great worry and may be one of the more important reasons in the failure of the campaign.

Jesup did, however, have some ability to adapt and adjust, as when he advised Colonel Taylor to improvise in constructing boats needed to explore the Kissimmee chain of lakes. As Jesup advised:

I am induced [illegible word] from information received from the Indians and others, that the chain of Lakes extending from Tohopkaliga to Pahai Okee may be navigated by macinac
boats, if not by those of larger size. Should we find this to be the fact, supplies may be taken from Tampa to the eastern side of the Okee chobee. (It is doubtful whether wagons or even packhorses can be taken to that point from this side.) I will thank you to cause a reconnaissance of those lakes to be made as far at least as the last named, and if you find them navigable, cause boats to be built, or brought from Tampa, to be employed as transport on them. Boat builders might be taken out to Fort Gardner and the boats constructed there. Canoes of Cypress enlarged by sawing them through the center from end to end, and widening them by inserting timber between the parts, in the manner of the fishing boats used on Our bay, would be well adapted to the service we shall have to perform. If the Lakes are navigable, and boats can either be built on them or brought from Tampa, the war may be certainly closed this winter.

The innovation to be noted is, "in the manner of the fishing boats used on Our bay." Here Jesup is describing the "Chesapeake Bay Log Canoe" which was constructed in just the manner described by the General. Jesup was very familiar with the craft, having been in Washington D.C. for many years. The beauty of this vessel is its great carrying capacity with a light draught of water. By extending the craft outward, as described above, the displacement becomes such that the canoe can navigate in very shallow waters. This, of course, was perfect for the streams and some lakes of the Kissimmee chain and other areas covered by this campaign. Jesup’s long career in the army, in numerous frontier assignments and in many important theaters of war, made him aware of the need for such adaption.

While Jesup was making his way down the east side of the peninsula, Persifor Smith and his force were working their way up the Caloosahatchee River. His mission, as noted above, was to prevent the Indians from attaining refuge in the Big Cypress Swamp or from obtaining supplies from outside along the west coast. Jesup was optimistic about the possibility of ensnaring the enemy in the heart of the Everglades. Writing to Colonel Taylor in early 1838, he noted: "If Colonel Smith can prevent the enemy from passing to the West, or if he can place a few boats on the Okee Chobee, to unite with yours, or prevent the Indians from occupying the Islands and Cypress Swamps to the south of the Lake, I shall entertain no doubt of a sweep." On the same day of this letter, January 18, 1838, the General learned of Colonel Smith’s capturing Holatoochee and forty of his people, who, along with eighty other prisoners, were sent immediately to Tampa and thence to New Orleans. This capture made some national news because it coincided with the surrender of Jumper and his band to Colonel Taylor. Smith’s position was reported as "still westward of Col. Taylor." To assist Smith and Taylor in holding the Indians in the Everglades, a series of fortifications was established around the lake and along the coasts of Florida. From Smith’s forces came the establishment of Fort Center, on Fisheating Creek, Fort Deynaud, on the Caloosahatchee River, Fort Keais, on the northern edge of the Big Cypress Swamp, and Fort Poinsett, on Cape Sable, which was commanded by Colonel Thomas Lawson, best known as the Surgeon General of the Army. In regards to the latter post, Jesup declared: "A post at or near Cape Sable would hold the Indians in Check, and perhaps compel them to retrace their steps." The overall strategy of surrounding the Seminoles and their allies in the Everglades, destroying their crops, cutting off all pos-
sible outside supplies and forcing a final confrontation or surrender was well thought out and articulated, however, because of the problems of supplies and the elusiveness of Sam Jones’ and other bands, the concept failed in actual application.

Jesup also had to manoeuvre in conjunction with negotiations headed by a delegation of Cherokee Indians, whose presence in Florida was an additional burden on the commander. Yet, though he appears to have had little faith in the results of the negotiations, General Jesup did participate in the attempted diplomacy. As he reported in late 1837, he had met with the Cherokee delegation, arranged a meeting with Micanopy and other Seminole leaders, held a conference where surrenders were agreed to and seems to have acted in good faith with the government’s policy. But he had no faith in the Seminole leadership which, he believed, had little or no influence over most of the warring faction. Also, he insisted on getting his forces in the desired positions and having the supplies forwarded to them, in case the negotiations failed. In a letter to Secretary of War Poinsett, Jesup stated: "General Hernandez will turn Indian river with his mounted men, and pass the foot and supplies across. I shall not allow his operations, nor those of Colonel Taylor or General Smith, to be checked for a moment by the Seminole councils; and the delay of this column will be more than counterbalanced by the increased efficiency of its means." After a year of experience and frustration with negotiating with the enemy, the cautious General was not going to be lulled into complacency.

Aside from the capture of Holatoochee and his band and the surrender of Jumper to Taylor, Jesup did not have the war wrapped up as he had planned. Many factors appeared to mitigate against a successful conclusion in early 1838. In a moment of frustration, he wrote:

Providence seems to have taken the Seminoles under its special protection. I have learnt since I wrote to you, that a vessel loaded with Rice has lately wrecked near New River, and that the Indians had secured a great part of the Cargo, this will give them subsistence for some months to come. ... Act as you may think best for the service; and should approach Colo. Smith’s command give him such instructions as from your knowledge of the country and the enemy, you may consider proper, or unite his force with yours if in your opinion any important object can be obtained by it.

Indian cattle, too, proved to be something of a problem for the army, in that special attention was given to their capture or purchase. If the wide ranging cattle could be captured, killed or bought, the war would end sooner. The reports given throughout the campaign indicate that there were still substantial numbers of these food animals within procurement distance of the enemy at any time. As the General noted to Colonel Taylor: "It is of the utmost importance that all the Indian Cattle be taken from them, purchase all you can from the Indians and negroes who come in." Keeping supplies with which to carry on the war out of reach of the Indian enemy proved to be a difficult, if not impossible, task for Jesup’s forces. The very nature of the fertile Everglades, the free roaming cattle and hogs, the comparative plentitude of game and the occasional ship wreck all worked against the general’s scheme of depriving the enemy of supplies.

The plans of the army were also frustrated by the constant barrage of intelligence, most
of it rumor or reports from "escapees" and captives. The frequent references to reports of Indian locations and numbers, all differing from each other, shows how difficult it was to accurately pin-point the enemy's camps. Reports like: "Aligator is on the west side of the Okee Chobee not more than one or two days march from Fort Deynaud, so says an Indian whom I have sent with a message to [illegible, although probably Halotoochee] urging him to go into the Fort." Or: "An Indian Negro who came into camp on the evening of the 9th informed me that several small parties of Indians had crossed the Okee Chobee in boats to the south west side, the same place, perhaps, where Captain Munroe destroyed the Canoes." Again: "An Indian who went to the head of New River for his family returned last evening, he reports that the Indians, where he left them, were making their way to a Pine Island a few miles from the swamp at the head of the north branch of New River." This constant stream of intelligence, though sometimes accurate, was often simple rumor and, maybe, even disinformation, to use the modern term. Good maps, too, were lacking. So uncertain of the exact location of Lake Okeechobee was John Lee Williams, that he did not include this vast inland sea on his famous map of 1837. The army's lack of knowledge in this area was also well known. As Jesup explained to the secretary of war: "... the greater portion of their country was unexplored wilderness, of the interior of which we were as ignorant as of the interior of China. We exhibit, in our present contest, the first instance, perhaps, since the commencement of authentic history, of a nation employing an army to explore a country, (for we can do little more than explore it) or attempting to remove a band of savages from one unexplored wilderness to another." The lack of accurate intelligence was another major factor in the final failure of Jesup's intricate plan of operation.

Colonel Smith's operations during this campaign were closely followed in the press and in the correspondence of his commander. On March 1, 1838, for example, Smith's forces were reported to have surrounded "a large body of Indians, men, women, and children," on an island in the Everglades and that, taken in conjunction with the surrender of a large force of Indians and Negroes at Tampa and General Nelson's success in central Florida, would soon lead to the close of the war. On March 8, 1838, Smith was informed of the approval of his plan to head further south into the Everglades to campaign against the enemy supposed to be in that region. Six days later, Jesup informed Taylor that Smith's medical officer, a Doctor Steincke, had left the command and that the Colonel had no other medical officer under his command. Jesup ordered Taylor to supply one if it were in his power to do so. In nearly every report of the expedition of Taylor's force reported in the media, Smith's contingent was mentioned, with the exception of the debate over the Battle of Lake Okeechobee, in which Smith's forces did not participate.

In reporting the progress of his campaign, Persifor Smith, stated that he had left Fort Deynaud and moved south on March 7th with a company of Second Dragoons, a battalion of Second Infantry, marines under Captain Dulany and his own Louisiana volunteers, with the exception of one company he had left to garrison Fort Center. On the edge of the Big Cypress Swamp: "I erected on this spot, which is about 35 miles S. by E. from Fort Deynaud a small work in which I placed 20 days rations & one compy of La. Volunteers, naming the work, until the General's pleasure is known, after one of
the officers who fell with Major Dade." This point is on the border of the great Cypress Swamp & within miles of the point where I found an Indian trail entering it, when I was here on the 26th Feby. our wagons could not well approach it nearer." His men then took with them five days rations upon their backs and proceeded to enter the swamp. After "incredible labour & fatigue, being all day Knee deep in water and mud & on wet prairies where the slimy surface is still more difficult," he searched for five days trying to locate the enemy. He was rewarded by finding a women and her child, who then negotiated with the others to come into Fort Keais or Fort Deynaud. Smith then led his men out of the swamp to await results. However, his description of the territory is worth noting to indicate the extreme difficulty of military operations in this region of Florida.

The difficulties of this march through this part of the country are beyond all belief. No doubt the late rains have increased them, but even in the best season, troops must operate without any baggage but what they can carry on their backs, and in case of sickness, wounds or accident such as snake bites, the sufferers must be carried on the men's shoulders, as we were obliged to do in the latter case, a litter could not be carried through some of the hammocks we passed. One prisoner said the large marsh we crossed was considered by the Indians impassable, and in fact we found no trail in that direction. But having never had any guide here we have got to be expert woodsmen. One prisoner was sent home by the route we came, on account of her children and the difficulties of the way.41

The whole area, the valiant Colonel stated, was under water during the rainy season, making it impossible for campaigning. As General Jesup observed: "Colonel Smith has had a most arduous service. His operations are a further proof that the Indians can be concentrated by peaceful means only. . . ."42

By April 16, 1838, Colonel Smith's forces had had some relatively successful campaigning under their belts and he could report the gathering of one hundred and seven Indians for transport to Tampa and New Orleans. He noted in his report: "Some come in every day & a party of 25 or 30 are expected to day or tomorrow."43 By May, the number had increased to one hundred and twenty of the "Halvetochin tribe."44 Prior to his leaving the area, he was to receive more prisoners, most of whom came into him at Fort Keais and Fort Deynaud. Once assembled, the prisoners were sent, via Peace River to Tampa and thence to New Orleans to await final transfer to the Indian Territory.

Toward the end of March 1838, some of the troops under Smith's command were at the end of their enlistments. This, of course, caused many adjustments in the plans of the high command, including the proposed abandonment of Fort Poinsett, on Cape Sable. Although this proposal was negated quickly, the fact of its planned abandonment gives an indication of how quickly adjustments had to be made because of the wide-spread use of volunteer forces with limited enlistment periods. Smith had to see that all arrangements for their transportation and mustering were in place and carried out. Some of the Philadelphia volunteers wanted to be discharged at Tampa, while others, particularly the Louisiana men, wished to be mustered out at New Orleans. These administrative details took up much time and concentration of the Colonel commanding and relied on the good communications between posts for their
success. Overall, Persifor Smith carried out all phases of command, including those of a bureaucratic nature, with ability and humanity.\textsuperscript{45}

By the end of April, 1838, General Jesup was seeing the ultimate end of the Seminole War as something far removed from the actions of his troops. He saw that the Seminoles would never leave Florida unless forced by circumstances and overwhelming white numbers. He proposed that the area of southern Florida be left in Indian hands for the immediate future because the costs of removal, in money and men lost, would be too great. In essence, Jesup anticipated the actual course of events, including the reserving of lands in South Florida for Indian occupation. He even predicted the eventual passage of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 when he noted: "I think a corps of Rangers should be raised in Florida of about six companies, . . . it should be raised for war, and each man should in addition to his pay and emoluments, be allowed a quarter section of land in receiving an honorable discharge after the termination of the war."\textsuperscript{46} He would later have the opportunity to help provide the provisions needed by the armed colonists.

Persifor Smith's troops had performed their duty well and honorably. Through the rugged terrain of southern Florida, they had trudged diligently and faithfully. No one could have asked for more from a volunteer force. In quoting the New Orleans \textit{Commercial Bulletin}, the \textit{Army and Navy Chronicle} described Smith's return to Louisiana:

\begin{quote}
The Soldier's Return. — Our fellow citizen, Gen. Smith, after a rugged tour of duty through the swamps and savannahs of Florida, has returned to the bosom of his family, having reached our city on the night before last. [May 1, 1838] He appears in fine health, though somewhat reduced in flesh, from the fatigues of the campaign. The scene of his military operations was confined to the southern and western territories of Florida, below Charlotte's Harbor, whither he was sent with a detachment of three hundred men in pursuit of a body of Indians. He hemmed in and drove the enemy to the extremity of the Peninsula, till they could fly no farther and were glad at length to sue for peace. After a talk with the chiefs, the whole Indian camp, amounting to two hundred and twelve in number, came in and surrendered themselves as prisoners of war. Having thus finished the campaign and the term of their enlistment having expired, Gen. Smith disbanded his forces and returned home, where he is greeted with the cordial welcome and high commendations which his arduous services rendered to the State so richly merit.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

General Jesup had a less glowing account of the exploits of the Louisiana volunteer's contribution, although he noted a much higher figure of Indians taken prisoner: "His operations covered the whole country from that river [Caloosahatchee] south to Cape Sable. The results were one or two skirmishes, in which he lost a few men, probably killed some of the enemy, and took 243 prisoners."\textsuperscript{48}

The Jesup campaign of 1837-38 was an elaborately planned affair which deserved better results. However, It was plagued from the very beginning with poor coordination by the Commissary's Office, the almost total non-performance of certain suppliers, poor topographical information, the reliance upon large numbers of limited-service volunteer forces, including Smith's, and an impossible
task of bringing to an end a war against a capable, resourceful and determined foe. Jesup was fortunate in having many able men in his ranks, too, including Smith, Colonel James Bankhead, Colonel Zachary Taylor, General Joseph Hernandez and many others whose ranks were lower, but whose names appear on the pages of history in a more famous conflict of the 1860s.

Smith’s career after this second tour of duty in Florida, was one of exemplary service. He served with distinction on the benches of the city court of Lafayette and Jefferson Parish. His service in the Louisiana militia included a term of office as adjutant general during the administration of Andre B. Roman. Smith’s military service in the Mexican War brought him national attention and lasting fame. There, he again served under Zachary Taylor and, also, Winfield Scott, taking an active roll in both Generals’ campaigns and winning a brevet to Brigadier General. He was distinguished for his bravery in the Battle of Contreras and at Mexico City. He later served as the military governor of Vera Cruz in 1848. Persifor Smith was promoted to the brevetted rank of Major General in 1849 and given the command of the Division of the Pacific. Later service included commands of the Department of St. Louis and the Department of Utah, where he was put in command of a force preparing to put down the Mormon disturbances. He was given the full rank of Brigadier General in 1856. While preparing to lead his men into Mormon territory, he died on May 17, 1858, at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Such was the man who led the Louisiana volunteers against the Seminoles of Florida from the army based at Fort Brooke, Tampa, Florida in 1837-38. He served us well.

219-220.] notes seven columns, while Jesup’s biographer, Chester L. Kieffer, clearly states that there were nine columns in motion. [Kieffer. Maligned General: The Biography of Thomas Sidney Jesup (San Rafael, California, 1979), 191.] My reading of Jesup’s report, [found in Senate Executive Document No. 263. 25th Congress, 2d Session, July 7, 1838. 253-54.] indicates that there were at least nine columns. These were led by Smith, Zachary Taylor, Brigadier General Nelson (with his Georgia volunteers), Colonel Snodgrass (with his Alabama volunteers), Lieutenant Colonel Coffee’s Alabama volunteers, General Joseph Hernandez and his Florida militia units, Major William Lauderdale with his unit of Tennessee volunteers (Spies), General Abraham Eustis and Lieutenant L. Powell’s naval contingent. If one were to include in the total operation, the “scouring actions” of Colonel David Twiggs and Colonel Mills prior to uniting with Eustis and Jesup at Volusia, the number is even higher. The main thrust, however one views the actions, was carried out by four major columns.

14 Senate Executive Document No. 263, 25th Congress, 2d Session, July 7, 1838, 253. It will be noted by the reader that Smith’s force arrived in Tampa about or on November 6, 1837. His force of nearly eight hundred men, which is mentioned in the opening paragraph, is noted in a letter dated December 28, 1837. This would indicate that Smith’s column had not reached the main area of his operation at the time of Taylor’s battle with Sam Jones, Alligator and others at Okeechobee on Christmas Day of that year. Adding to Jesup’s frustration with this campaign is the fact that Colonel Thomas Lawson’s unit of Pennsylvania volunteers, destined for assignment under Smith, only reached Florida on the same day, December 25, 1837.

15 Ibid., 254. Fort Dallas, which became the site for the present-day city of Miami, was founded after the fort on Key Biscayne.

16 Ibid., 253.

17 Ibid., 253. The loss to the enemy, in men killed or wounded is unknown. The Seminoles and their allies, if time and the action permitted, removed their dead from the field and secreted them from enemy view. Therefore, as in certain modern wars, the exact number of enemy killed is uncertain.

18 Mahon, 219-40; Kieffer, 190-212. Also see, Kenneth J. Hughes, “Warriors from the Sea, the Second Seminole War Navy and Their Exploits in Southeast Florida," Parts I and II, Broward Legacy, Volume 11, Nos. 3 & 4 (Summer/Fall 1988) and Volume 12, Nos. 1 & 2, (Winter/Spring 1989). This two-part article gives a fine overview of the entire campaign, with an emphasis on southeastern Florida. Hughes also does yeoman’s work in explaining the strategy of Jesup in readable terms.

19 Army and Navy Chronicle, January 11, 1838, 30.


23 LRAG, Letter of December 29, 1837, Jesup to Lieutenant George Watson.

24 LRAG, Letter of December 30, 1837, Jesup to Taylor.

25 For an excellent discussion of his early career, see Kieffer’s Maligned General, 1-66.

26 LRAG, Letter of January 18, 1838, Jesup to Taylor.


28 Army and Navy Chronicle, February 8, 1838. 94.

29 LRAG, Letter of January 15, 1838, Jesup to General Walker K. Armistead, who was technically in command of forces south of the Withlacoochee River, headquartered at Tampa Bay. See also LRAG, letter of January 18, 1838, Jesup to Smith. This letter gave Smith the power to establish Fort Poinsett, “so soon as you can spare the force.” Lawson arrived in Tampa on December 23, 1837, at the head of a force of 270 Pennsylvania volunteers and left to join Smith on December 27, 1837. See House of Representatives Document No. 78. 25th Congress, 2d Session, January 8, 1838, Letter of December 25, 1837, General W. K. Armistead to Jesup, 205-06.

31 Ibid., Letter of November 29, 1837, Jesup to Poinsett. 197.

32 LRAG, Letter of February 3, 1838, Jesup to Taylor.

33 LRAG, Letter of February 2, 1838, Jesup to Taylor. The *Army and Navy Chronicle* for March 8, 1838 (159), reported that Taylor had taken about six hundred head of cattle immediately after the Battle of Lake Okeechobee. This would indicate a substantial supply of fresh beef available to the Indians at this period, even though it was reported that this capture had nearly "exhausted" the Indian's overall supply.

34 LRAG, Letter of March 6, 1838, Jesup to Smith.

35 LRAG, Letter of February 14, 1838, Jesup to Taylor.

36 LRAG, Letter of March 25, 1838, Jesup to Colonel James Bankhead, then commanding officer at Fort Lauderdale.


38 *Army and Navy Chronicle*, March 1, 1838, 136.

39 LRAG, Letter of March 8, 1838, J. A. Chambers to Smith.

40 LRAG, Letter of March 14, 1838, J. A. Chambers to Smith. Also, Letter of March 14, 1838, Chambers to Taylor.

41 LARG, Letter of March 17, 1838, Smith to Chambers.

42 LRAG, Letter of April 7, 1838, Jesup to Armistead.

43 LRAG, Letter of April 16, 1838, Smith to Chambers. This letter was sent from Fort Keais.

44 *Army and Navy Chronicle*, May 17, 1838. 315.

45 LRAG, Letter of March 22, 1838, Chambers to Smith. Also, see letter of April 20, 1838, Taylor to Jesup.

46 LRAG, Letter of March 30, 1838, Jesup to Colonel W. I. Mills, Florida Militia, then in Washington D.C.

Jespur urged Mills to see his Delegate about the matter.

47 *Army and Navy Chronicle*, May 24, 1838, 334.

48 Sprague, 189.

49 Brown, "Persifor F. Smith ....," 410.
THE ACCIDENTAL PIONEER:

CAPT. JIM McMULLEN AND THE TAMING OF THE PINELLAS PENINSULA

By Donald J. Ivey

The builder of the cabin, James P. "Capt. Jim" McMullen, was one of the earliest settlers in the Tampa Bay area, and though long known for his achievements, the full extent of his contributions to the development of our area are little understood. Like many of our early pioneers, some portions of his life have been recounted in detail, while others have been ignored completely. This article will attempt to provide a comprehensive recounting of what is known of Capt. Jim's life. And what is known is quite remarkable indeed.

The odyssey of James Parramore (sometimes spelled Paramore) McMullen began on a rural farm in Telfair County, Georgia on June 11, 1823. He was the sixth child and the third son of the 12 children of James McMullen, Jr. and his wife Rebecca (Fain) McMullen.

Set amidst the urbanized hub-bub of Pinellas County sits a small four-room log cabin on the grounds of Heritage Village, the Pinellas County Historical Museum in Largo. That cabin, built in 1852, is one of the last reminders of an earlier, simpler era in the history of the Bay area, when the pine and palmetto hammocks had not yet been tamed by man.
James’ mother’s family, the Fains, also came from Scotland originally. Like the McMullens, Rebecca's father Thomas Fain settled in Georgia and served as a soldier in the Revolutionary Army.

James was named after both his father and grandfather. His middle name was his maternal grandmother’s maiden name, and as the third son James was, according to Scottish legend, believed to be exceptionally blessed.¹

About the year 1827, James’ father (James Jr.) moved his growing family to the Talloaks area of Lowndes County, near the town of Quitman, Georgia and settled in that portion of the county which became Brooks County in 1858. There, he established a prosperous farm in the hardscrabble backcountry of south Georgia — no mean feat in those days — and young James no doubt spent a considerable amount of his time doing chores along with the rest of his brothers and sisters, while learning to hunt, fish, ride a horse and tend crops and livestock as well. Little precise information is known about his early childhood and education, but according to his granddaughter, Nancy McMullen Meador, "James P. McMullen did not have a great deal of higher education but he educated himself by reading, study and experience. His favorite authors were Shakespeare and Dickens."²

This rather placid existence went on until probably sometime in the spring of 1842, when at the age of 18, James suddenly fell ill with "consumption," now known as the respiratory disease tuberculosis. At that time the disease was frequently fatal, so to avoid infecting the rest of the McMullen family, James was sent away to recuperate.

Taking little more than his horse, dog, bedroll, gun and "bullet- molds and powder," James ventured south into the Florida Territory. He eventually came to Rocky Point, located between Clearwater and Tampa. At some point, he also acquired a sailboat, which he took on excursions all over the Tampa Bay area, soaking in the fresh air and sunshine. On one of these excursions, he crossed the Bay and came upon a high bluff which formed a lasting impression on him. This would later become the settlement of Bay View in present-day Pinellas County.

At that time still a part of Hillsborough County, the Pinellas peninsula (then known as "West Hillsborough") was little more than raw unsettled back-country, inhabited by Indians and only a handful of settlers. Around 1830, Odet Philippe had arrived and became the first permanent European settler, establishing a homestead near Safety Harbor. But by 1840, there were still only a few families on the peninsula, hardy souls who lived primitively at best. But where many only saw empty wilderness, McMullen found opportunity, and he was quickly captivated by the vast potential of the area. In his wanderings, McMullen would come to spend considerable amount of time in Pinellas, camping out and living, as one source states, "virtually like a hermit," seeing no other human beings except for some Indians.³

After almost a year, McMullen recovered from his illness and headed back to Quitman to rejoin his family. On the way back north, he stopped at the pioneer settlement of Melendez in Hernando (which from 1844 to 1850 was known as Benton) County. There he met Elizabeth Campbell, 18, the daughter of the late John Campbell, who died fighting the Seminoles in 1838, and his wife Nancy (Taylor) Campbell. Like the McMullens, the Campbells had originally come from Scotland. In the 1790s, they had settled in
South Carolina, and eventually they drifted south into Georgia and in 1826 moved to Florida, where they took up residence at Melendez.\(^4\)

With the keen eye of a born entrepreneur, McMullen had clearly sensed the future potential of the Pinellas peninsula, and on his return to Georgia, he told his six brothers about his experiences in the Tampa Bay area, which he called "the closest thing to heaven that he could imagine."\(^5\)

Evidently, even at this young age, McMullen was a man of unusual energy, enterprise and daring. Son Birt McMullen later recalled that "Pa [the name that all of the McMullen clan affectionately gave to Capt. Jim] . . . had many enterprises, which he worked at with all the zest and energy possible, never saying 'You must do so and so,' but 'come on boys, let's get this thing done,' and worked right along with them."\(^6\)

By 1844, James McMullen had returned to Florida, and on December 26th, after a courtship largely conducted by correspondence, he married Elizabeth Campbell, at the Campbell family's homestead near present-day Brooksville.
Like her husband, Elizabeth was evidently a woman of considerable strength and energy. Altogether she and James would have 11 children. She would also act as a midwife to the local women in the area and planted and tended much of the family’s crops during their many years together in the wilderness. As their youngest son Ward recalled years later, each child "was taught to mind and as each one grew older, they would help with the younger ones and they all had chores to do."

For the next four years, McMullen was in Benton County. There, he had established a small farm, probably near his mother-in-law's homestead at Melendez where he bided his time, waiting for the right moment to strike out on his own. Finally, probably in the late spring of 1848, he returned with his wife and two children to the Pinellas peninsula, and homesteaded 240 acres near what is now Northeast Coachman Road and State Road 590A. There, he built a log cabin and began farming the land, which at that time was little more than virgin pine forest. But in time the presence of hostile Indians and the isolation of living in such a remote wilderness forced them to return to Benton County. Shortly after they left, the
local Indians are said to have set fire to their cabin, destroying it. Also, according to McMullen's youngest son Ward, McMullen was caught in the great storm of this year, which devastated Pinellas and caused heavy damage from winds and high water all along Florida's west coast. "The Great Gale of '48" blew away part of a big Indian mound behind which he and his friend "Uncle Dick" Booth (one of the earliest settlers on the peninsula and son-in-law of Odet Philippe) had taken cover near their camp by a spring in Safety Harbor. This experience, according to Ward, convinced McMullen that inland residence was best.8

This failure did not, however, deter him. Sometime after early December in 1850 it is believed that James moved the family back south to Pinellas to make a second go of settling there. Returning to their original homestead, he built a second log cabin house in the area that later became known as Coachman Station, near Clearwater. Constructed of heart pine, the double pen log cabin contained four rooms and had a second story, unusual for cabins of that period. With a central breezeway and large cracks between the log sides, it was built to give plenty of fresh air, something the tubercular McMullen was particularly insistent upon. He is reported to have said, "I wouldn't give anything for a house that didn't have cracks wide enough to throw a cat through."

A simple home, with most of the furniture made by hand (including the beds, with mattresses made of stuffed corn shucks or Spanish moss), the McMullen homestead nonetheless became a popular meeting place for local residents. The McMullens were known as great hosts, and being on the road from Anona, Clearwater and all points to Tampa, their home became a popular stop-over for anyone going to attend business across the Bay. Ministers, for example, would often come to the area to hold conferences and would stay over with the family. Ward McMullen later recalled that "I have seen as many as eleven Preachers eating dinner at my father's table in one day." In time, other outbuildings were also added and included a sugar house, where corn syrup and sugar were made and stored.9

At the time, cattle raising, subsistence farming and fishing were the chief industries on the peninsula. With no trading posts, stores or other established businesses, residents of the area had to be self-sufficient. Roads consisted of sand trails winding through untouched pine forest, and the principal money in circulation was the Spanish gold doubloon, obtained from selling cattle in Cuba. It was hard living and to be successful, an individual had to possess a real pioneering spirit.10

This the McMullens had in abundance and by 1852 James was joined on the peninsula by his younger brother Daniel, who moved to the Largo area and homesteaded 160 acres near what is now Rosery Road and Missouri Avenue. The first of James' brothers to join him in Pinellas Daniel also joined with his brother in the cattle business which both began to pursue at this time with a good degree of success. Another brother, John Fain McMullen also joined them on the peninsula, probably also during this year. He settled in Anona south of Clearwater Bay, near present-day Indian Rocks and Wilcox Roads. Like his brothers, cattle and citrus would become his chief interests. He would stay until 1857 when he moved to Madison County in North Florida. In 1871, he returned to Pinellas and settled in what is now the Lealman area of St. Petersburg, but soon after left for Perry in Taylor County, where he died in 1895.11
Although the day-to-day struggle to survive remained paramount, McMullen was actively involved in the area's community affairs from the very beginning. In particular, he seems to have taken a great interest in education. In 1853, with no schools on the peninsula, McMullen established a log cabin schoolhouse for local children in the area, using the second floor of his sugar house. The McMullens took in approximately 30 children for common schooling at this school and supplied room and board for them while school was in session. McMullen acquired a teacher for the children from up north, and paid her salary himself — making this the first organized school on the Pinellas peninsula.

Over the course of the years, the McMullens were also said to have taken in nearly 25 orphaned children in the area into their home, raising them along with their own children. Later, according to Nancy Meador, when the sugar house "was not large enough to take care of the children who wanted to go to school . . . Pa got his brother John Tom and Dick Booth to help him and together they built a one-room log schoolhouse" about two miles southeast of Clearwater. According to Meador, the school was named Sylvan Abbey because "Pa said the first girl that went to school there should be honored by having the school named for her. The teacher's name was Mrs. Abbey and her daughter's name was Sylvan so he named the school Sylvan Abbey." By 1884, this

The seven McMullen brothers of Pinellas. Back row standing, from left to right: John Fain, David and Malcolm Lawrence. Front row seated, left to right: William, Thomas Fain, James Parramore (Capt. Jim), and Daniel. This now famous photograph was taken by C. W. Motes at the Atlanta International Cotton Exposition in 1881.

— Courtesy Heritage Village
schoolhouse was no longer adequate to accommodate the growing needs of the community, so McMullen built a third, larger schoolhouse near present-day Sylvan Abbey Cemetery, between Clearwater and Safety Harbor. Years later, McMullen's daughter Sally would often recall fondly of her education in these early area schools that "it was a hard task to study when they wanted to watch the little bears playing about in the trees nearby."12

At the same time, McMullen also became deeply involved in local politics. In October of 1853 he was elected as a Whig to serve as a member of the Hillsborough County Commission. According to historian John Solomon Otto, by this time McMullen was known as a prominent "backcountry" cowman, and as such he was no doubt elected to represent their interests on the Board. Two years later, he served as one of the founders of Hillsborough County's American Party, which held a convention in Tampa on September 15, 1855. The "Know-Nothing" Party (so-called because of their secretiveness and the reply of their members to queries of non-members, "I know nothing") endorsed a platform supporting a legal constitutional solution to the question of slavery within the Union, along with positions that were strongly anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant. McMullen, who himself was endorsed on the Know-Nothing ticket for a second term on the County Commission, subsequently went down in defeat with the rest of his party's slate of county candidates in the October 1855 elections.13

When news of the attacks which precipitated the start of the Third Seminole War reached the Tampa Bay area early the next year, McMullen was one of the first men to enlist in the Army as a volunteer, serving as a private in Capt. William B. Hooker's Company of Florida Mounted Volunteers, which on January 3rd, was mustered into service and ordered to protect the Florida frontier against the Seminoles. Seven weeks later he was mustered out of the service at Fort Meade, after probably spending the duration of his service on garrison or patrol duty in or near Fort Meade, and most probably never saw combat. At the expiration of his term of service, he returned to his family on the Pinellas peninsula, where he resumed farming and raising cattle.14
His service in the war apparently had no effect on his relations with the local Indians. As his son Birt later recalled: "I do remember him telling about staying all night with the Indians, just outside of Fort Myers — how he ate out of the same bowl with them and smoked the pipe of peace. They loved him and called him the 'Big Chief.'"\(^{15}\)

After the war, he was elected to a second term on the Hillsborough County Commission in 1859, and was one of the last men to serve on the Board before the coming of the Civil War. Then, in the following year, he was elected Major of the 20th Regiment of the Florida Militia.\(^{16}\)

But as the clouds of war began to loom larger on the horizon, McMullen found himself increasingly out of step with the local populace. When the Florida Secession Convention convened in Tallahassee on January 3, 1861 to consider seceding the state from the Union, the news was generally greeted with enthusiasm in the Tampa Bay area. But in contrast, McMullen was, according to Florida historian George M. Chapin, so "strongly opposed to secession and announced his views so unmistakably that he became unpopular with his fellow citizens" in the area. However, when Florida finally did secede on January 10th, McMullen, according to Chapin, "felt that he must remain with his loved southland" and thus chose to remain and support his adopted state.\(^{17}\)

As the war progressed, the McMullens and other neighboring families on the peninsula were forced to flee to an encampment at Fort Bone in Keystone Park near Safety Harbor for protection from Federal raiding parties and Confederate deserters. While the men
served the Confederacy, the women took turns guarding the makeshift fort built on the site. They also planted gardens and raised sweet potatoes, sugar cane, cows and hogs to help them get through the increasing hardships caused by the war, and the blockade. James McMullen’s youngest daughter Lucy, who was born at Keystone, later recalled how her mother "walked all night around and inside of the fort with a loaded gun on her shoulder".18

During the spring or summer of 1861, McMullen began organizing a company of 60 men to protect against Federal incursions onto the Pinellas peninsula. Nicknamed the "Clearwater Guards," most of the company consisted of men from some of the first families to settle in Pinellas. On July 20, 1861, the Guards were mustered into the service of the Florida State Militia by order of Brigadier General Joseph M. Taylor with McMullen as Captain. The company was stationed at Clearwater Harbor. In forming the company McMullen, never a great believer in the Confederate cause, was probably less motivated by patriotism than by a desire to protect his property and family from raiding and looting.19

Within a month however, McMullen and his men became embroiled in controversy. On August 15th a group of 35 citizens from Clearwater Harbor "and vicinity" signed a petition addressed to Florida Gov. Madison S. Perry, which outlined a long list of grievances against the local military authorities in the area. Among other complaints, they cited the fact that Gen. Taylor "has appointed a Captain or Commander over the troops raised here [McMullen], against the wishes of a large majority of the men." Further, they complained about the lack of protection provided Clearwater Harbor and stated that "many of the men [the Clearwater Guards] are without arms and are nearly all without suitable ammunition . . . we . . . do not feel safe under existing circumstances . . ."20

On October 20th, at the expiration of their three months term of enlistment, the company was mustered out of service. Many of the members of the command then went on to join other units in the Confederate Army, some eventually serving in units as far away as Tennessee and Kentucky. McMullen, however, returned to civilian life to care for his crops and livestock, but ever afterwards, he was always known by the nickname "Capt. Jim," from this military service.21

But McMullen could not escape the war entirely. The tightening of the Federal naval blockade on the South, combined with increasing lawlessness in the Tampa Bay area brought severe hardship on area residents. Bands of looters and deserters roamed freely, robbing, stealing and inflicting damage wherever they went. According to Ward McMullen, his father "hated the deserters more than he did the Yankees" because of all the damage they caused. The problem of making a living was becoming increasingly a matter of concern.
for McMullen as well. Initially, he helped run cattle for the Confederacy to the starving armies fighting in the north. But Federal incursions into Florida were severely disrupting this vital lifeline until finally, in 1864, Confederate authorities were forced to act. A special unit known as the 1st Battalion of Florida Special Cavalry was formed to protect Confederate cattle supply operations to the north. Known as the "Cow Cavalry," this unit also served to protect local areas from raids by Federals and marauders alike.  

On September 4, 1863, McMullen had enlisted as a private in Capt. John McNeill's Independent Company of Florida Infantry at Brooksville, for a period of three years or for the duration of the war. Several weeks later, on September 19, Capt. Jim’s brother Daniel also enlisted in the same company. Shortly afterwards, Capt. Jim was detached from this unit and transferred to Capt. William B. Watson's Company (Company D) in the Cow Cavalry. With Capt. Jim also was his eldest son Bethel, now 17, and his brother Daniel, both of whom were transferred into the Cow Cavalry, due to their skills as cowmen.

In the Cow Cavalry, McMullen was assigned to lead cattle drives due to his experience on the frontier handling cattle before the war. For the remainder of the war, he led these drives to help supply desperately needed beef, tallow and hides to the battered Confederate armies to the north. Often these drives would go to Charleston and Savannah and would last as long as six weeks. A typical drive was described by one Confederate "cowboy soldier":

A detail of six men, under the command of Mr. James P. McMullen, was ordered to the cattle pens at Fort Meade to take charge of a herd of 365 beef cattle bound for Savannah. Early one morning the drive was commenced. The course was a northerly one, and in line with Orange lake in Marion County. The cattle were driven along at a "grazing rate" of speed, usually averaging around eight and one half miles a day. At night, if we were fortunate, we would reach a cattle pen, and here the beeves would be corralled until morning. With the coming of day, the drive was started again, the cattle slowly grazing over the country-side at a pace set by the animals themselves.

When we reached Orange Lake, the cattle were driven into one of the regular stopping pens. It was a good place to bed down, covering about four acres and hemmed up a rail fence 10 to 12 rails high. The "cowboy-soldiers," feeling that their herd was safe for the night, made camp about fifty feet in front of the gate and there lay down to sleep. But late that night, the cattle became frightened and stampeded right out of those pens onto the prairie. But fortunate for us, the melling of the beeves before they actually busted out woke us up
giving us all a chance to saddle up. We followed them about a mile, and before long they held up in a large swamp about a hundred yards from an old plantation house. A fence around the area had helped to direct them into swamp. When the cattle seemed ready to bed down again, we decided the pen was too far away to move them, so we built some large bonfires about 50 feet apart, hoping that would keep the restless bees there for the rest of the night. But the next morning when we got up, there wasn’t a cow in sight. Sometime during the early morning one of the leaders had evidently scented water and had led the rest of ’em through a space little more than 30 feet wide. All were found a mile or two away, placidly chewing their cuds at a bend in Orange Creek. Such was the perversity of the beast.

From Orange Lake we continued our drive to the state line crossing the St. Marys River near the ferry at Traiders Hill. All was uneventful until the herd came to the fording of the Altamaha River some miles northwest of Brunswick, Georgia. Here a crowd of several hundred people had gathered to see us cross at a point where the river was less than a fourth of a mile wide. All went well until two steers swam too far downstream and found themselves on the far side of the old flat, below the landing. They drowned. They were pulled ashore by ropes, and enough meat was butchered from one to supply the drovers for two or three days. The crowd collected by the river was then told that they could have the rest. Within the hour not one horn, hoof or tail remained of the beasts. It shows you how hungry folks were then. From there we drove the cattle on to Savannah where they were delivered. Three hundred and sixty-two head out of the original herd of 365 had made it. Besides, the two that were drowned, one as also lost somewhere between Fort Meade and Savannah. The herd was actually in far better condition than when they left their

William A. Belcher, 1846-1935
— From Pioneer Florida by D. B. McKay

Sarah Jane (McMullen) Hackney Belcher, 1850-1929
— From Pioneer Florida by D. B. McKay
The end of the war found McMullen a 2nd Lieutenant in Company D of the Cow Cavalry. After probably being paroled by U.S. forces in May or June of 1865, Capt. Jim returned to his home and family in Pinellas, and came back to an area shattered by war, neglect and looting. Many homes had been ransacked by Federal troops and Southern marauders alike. "When the Capt. Jim McMullen family returned to their home," according to local historian Gladys Booth Tucker, "Bethel, then a 16 year old boy [actually, he was 19], was delighted to find some syrup that he had hidden in a deep hole, in jugs and bottles, of course," — apparently one of the few remaining items in the house that had been successfully kept hidden from the looters.

As was the case elsewhere throughout the South, the end of the war brought hard times to the Bay area, but instead of giving up on the primitive life on the peninsula, the McMullens seemed to thrive there. In 1866, a fourth McMullen brother, David, moved to the Pinellas area and settled on Morse Hill in Safety Harbor. David stayed only a few years, and eventually moved his family to Lakeland. Then, in 1868, (or perhaps as early as 1865), Capt. Jim’s older brother Thomas Fain moved his family to Pinellas and settled about one mile west of Safety Harbor, at a location formerly known as Davey Place, which was directly adjacent to his brother David’s property. There, he built a large log cabin (which stood on the site until the 1970s) and raised vegetables, cotton and cattle until his death in 1888. Also about this same time the eldest McMullen brother, William, came and settled four miles south of Largo near Ridge Road, where he farmed and raised cattle. He is also purported to have developed the first commercial saltworks on the peninsula. He later moved to Polk County, where he lived between Lakeland and Mulberry for about 17 years. Then in the early 1890s he returned to Largo to live with his son Daniel. William died in 1898 at the age of 72, and is buried in Lone Pilgrim Cemetery in Largo, just south of his original homestead. And finally, Capt. Jim’s youngest brother Malcolm also came to the area, settling about 1871 on a homestead about one mile southeast of Daniel’s property, near present-day Belcher Road and East Bay Drive in Largo. The last of the seven brothers to come to the peninsula, he
outlived them all, dying in 1909 at the age of 69.\textsuperscript{25}

The year of 1868 also saw Capt. Jim re-enter the local political arena. On December 2nd of the year he was chosen as one of three delegates from Old Tampa to the Democratic convention at Brooksville to nominate a candidate for the State Senate from the 22nd District. Apparently disgusted by the excesses of the carpetbaggers, Capt. Jim switched his allegiance to the Democrats after the war and according to Chapin, "continuously supported the democratic party, which elected him to various offices of trust."\textsuperscript{26}

By 1869, he also began to recover from the economic effects of the war. Capt. Jim's prescription for economic recovery was to diversify his business interests to cover a broad range of ventures that appealed to his considerable energies. For example, the August 25, 1869 edition of Tampa's \textit{Florida Peninsular} carried two advertisements for McMullen-owned enterprises. The first announced "Florida brick! A splendid article of Brick is now being made at my yard on Old Tampa and for sale in any quantity. The Brick made at this Yard are as good as can be bought in any market- Samples can be seen at Grant & Crafts store, Price per M. [thousand] $15.00." A second advertisement in the same issue also stated that Capt. Jim "is now having made at his Shop at Turkey Hammock, 12 miles West of Tampa, [Cypress] Syrup Barrels of superior quality, which he will sell at $2.50 per barrel at the shop or $3.00 delivered at Tampa" as well as "a fine lot of fish barrels, made expressly for the South Florida fisheries. Price $2.00 per barrel at the Shop."\textsuperscript{27}

Evidence of his economic recovery during the post-war years may perhaps best be illustrated by an article which appeared in the first edition of the \textit{Clear Water Times} on July 12, 1873. In it, an editorial paid tribute to Capt. Jim, noting that: "One of the first settlers in this neighborhood, came here an invalid, supposed to be fast verging on a state of incurable consumption. He is now — and has been for years past — one of the most healthy and active business men in the country. He has more irons in the fire — without letting any of them burn — rides more, and endures more fatigue, than any other man in the community, and never shows any signs of flagging health or energy."\textsuperscript{28}

Two weeks later, a second article in the \textit{Times} announced that "Capt. James McMullen passed through this county last week with 1,200 head of cattle enroute to Punta Rassa. They were purchased in the counties of Levy, Taylor and Lafayette. Several hundred were lost in crossing the Suwanee River . . . The Capt. McMullen, mentioned above, is our neighbor, the recuperated invalid of whom mention is made in our first number and we will guarantee that he has more activity and is more fertile in resources than to lose that number of cattle in crossing the largest stream in Florida."\textsuperscript{29}

Then followed Capt. Jim's greatest and most ambitious project: the creation of his own community.

In 1874, after acquiring much of the surrounding land at 25 cents an acre, Capt. Jim founded the community of Bay View, just east of Clearwater Harbor at the spot he had admired more than 30 years before. As Nancy Meador tells it, the area was first known as "Eagles Nest" because "there was a huge pine with a mammoth eagle's nest high in its top branches. It stood as a sentinel keeping watch over the harbor." Later, it was renamed "Swimming Pen," due to the
fact that with its naturally deep harbor and its close proximity to Tampa, it was an ideal location to load cattle onto boats for market. At that time, it was common for the locals to herd their cattle down through the middle of the settlement to Clearwater Bay. There, they would be penned in the water and forced to swim out to boats waiting offshore, where they would be hoisted aboard and taken to market in Tampa. Then, when Capt. Jim established his settlement there, the name was changed to Bay View (probably by Capt. Jim, who no doubt realized that a more attractive name would entice more settlers).

At Bay View, Capt. Jim vigorously made new improvements. Two stores were built there, one of which was managed by Capt. Jim’s son Dan and the other by John C. White, who later served as Hillsborough County Judge. In order to encourage further settlement in the area, Capt. Jim also built a wharf to accommodate steamboats, and gave one or two acres of his own land to newcomers. Capt. Jim’s son Bethel was the first to build a frame house in the community that same year. Purportedly, it was made from lumber that came from an old home in Cedar Key. The home was dismantled, made into a raft and barged down to Bay View, where it was reconstructed as Bethel’s new home.30

The following year, on July 13, 1875, Bay View opened its own Post Office, with Capt. Jim as the settlement’s first Postmaster. According to Nancy Meador, "The mail came across the bay by boat and people from all over upper Pinellas . . . came here for their mail."31

That same year, Capt. Jim also led the way to establish a Masonic lodge on the peninsula. On August 14, 1875, a meeting was held in Bay View Hotel to charter a Masonic lodge for the Free & Accepted Masons in the area. In attendance were 11 of the leading members of the community, including Capt. Jim, his brothers John, Daniel, David, Thomas and his son Bethel. A charter for the Lodge was granted on January 13, 1876, and the meetings that followed were held upstairs at the hotel. Then, in 1889, the third floor of the hotel was converted into a lodge hall for the membership. Throughout these years Capt. Jim was an enthusiastic participant in all of the Lodge’s activities. In 1878, he served as Treasurer for the Lodge, and also served an additional 10 year term, from 1881 to 1891. (In 1899, the Lodge moved into new quarters in the Bay View School, then in 1908 was moved to Largo. Today, as Star Lodge No. 78, F&AM, it is the oldest Masonic Lodge in Pinellas County.)32

The year 1875 also marked a major milestone for Capt. Jim’s agricultural interests, for probably sometime during this year he converted his farm to a new cash crop, citrus. Odet Philippe first introduced citrus into the area in the 1830s, and Florida’s warm climate and sandy soil soon proved to be perfectly suited for raising the new crop. By the 1870s demand for the product in the north had created a strong market for citrus, and while many local farmers had been growing citrus for years, now they began to devote a greater portion of their lands to grow it.

McMullen marketed his citrus in partnership with Gustave Axelson, who owned a small fleet of boats in Pensacola. Together, they would sail to Cedar Key and points as far west as Pensacola and Mobile to market the crop. If any fruit was left over after selling at these markets, he would "put it in sacks or cotton baskets and ship it by train on to Montgomery." A grandson, Robert D. (Bob) Belcher later recalled that "Pa was the only
one who realized anything off his fruit in those early days. He was never a man to give up. He was a driving force, but always went along with the force, never expecting others to do things that he was not willing to have a part in." That Capt. Jim made a success of this new venture there can be little doubt, as evidenced by a notice which appeared in the January 4, 1879 issue of Tampa's *Sunland Tribune*, which announced that "Capt. Jas. McMullen, of Old Tampa, near Bay View, was in town Tuesday and presented us an orange, weighing 16 1/2 ounces."33

But Capt. Jim was not merely content to simply grow citrus and make a profit. In 1880, he made an important new contribution to the citrus industry in Florida. At the time, the only way to transport and market the crop was to load it into the hull of a boat or place it in barrels. Then it would be shipped to Cedar Key, put on a train and carried to markets in the North. Capt. Jim, however thought that there must be a better and more attractive way to market his produce. As a result, he designed the first orange crates in the state. According to Ward McMullen and Nancy Meador, he sent a "bunch of men in the woods and split three-foot boards and they used palmetto stems to fasten them down as wires." After he had perfected the crate, "he had the sawmill make the ends and he hewed the trees and split the sides himself." The next year, he marketed his citrus in Mobile, using the new crates, and he received $12.00 per crate, which son Bethel recalled "was mighty good money on those days." The crates quickly caught on with other growers, and helped make the fruit much more attractive to buyers in the North. The new cash crop prospered under Capt. Jim's care, and by 1890, he is said to have had one of the largest groves in Hillsborough County.34

Federal, state and local records for this period give us an interesting glimpse into the McMullen family at this time. U.S. census returns for Hillsborough County in 1880 listed McMullen as residing in Precinct No. 3 with his wife, four of their youngest children, an "adopted" child, a laborer from New Jersey and a man by the name of "John Saunders," from Mexico. Saunders, also known as Juan Patrecia, was said to have been a young Mexican boy who had escaped from a vindictive step-mother in the 1840s. He became a stowaway on a boat headed for Cuba, but was caught and sold into slavery. After a few years he managed to steal a boat and get to Florida, where he changed his name to Saunders. He was also said to have been quite fond of Capt. Jim, "because the latter never made fun of his small size." For a time, he lived with the McMullens, helping in the garden and tending the chickens, and was affectionately known to them as "Uncle Johnnie."

State census returns in 1885 also illustrate the degree of relative prosperity the family enjoyed during this period. Agricultural schedules for that year record Capt. Jim as owning 75 acres of tilled land, along with 100 acres of woodland and forest. His farm is valued at $2,500, and the estimated value of all farm production for 1885 is given at $600. In addition, the family, is recorded as owning two horses, two mules, 36 milch cows, 10 pigs, 62 poultry birds and 40 other livestock. Hillsborough County tax rolls for 1884 also show McMullen and his wife to have owned at least 457 acres of land valued at approximately $3,785 — all in all, a very prosperous homestead by the standards of that time and place.35

The 1880s also ushered in another period of intense activity for McMullen. In October of 1880, with the help of "Uncle Dick" Booth, McMullen began to cut a right of way from
the head of Old Tampa Bay to Bay View. This, according to Nancy McMullen Meador was the first road on the peninsula that was built according to surveyor’s specifications. Originally named Haines Road, the name was later changed to McMullen-Booth Road by the Pinellas County Commission, to honor the two pioneers who built it.36

The following month, 19 years after he had last served, Capt. Jim was elected to a third term on the Hillsborough County Commission. But once again, he lost a bid for reelection two years later, finishing a dismal eighth in a huge field of 25 candidates. It would prove to be his last bid for public office, a service that seemed to appeal more to Capt. Jim as an avocation than as a means to power or ambition.37

Educational pursuits also continued to interest McMullen. In 1882, Capt. Jim is said to have built a small log cabin schoolhouse at Bay View, to accommodate the growing demand for an educational facility in town. By 1889, a two-story frame building was built to replace this, with the upstairs serving as a Masonic meeting room and the downstairs serving as a large classroom.38

By the mid-1880s, with the promise of the coming of the railroad to the area, Capt. Jim stepped up his development efforts in Bay View, and by 1885 had completed a second series of improvements, adding a large hotel to the settlement. The hotel (known as the Bay View Hotel) was a two-story, 20-room structure with open double-tiered galleries which overlooked Tampa Bay. A year later, a second wharf was added to handle the increasing steamboat traffic coming to the area. As Bethel McMullen recalled: “steam-boats came in once a week, bringing passengers and freight and carrying produce that was raised here back with them. Mr. Bill Henderson [W.B. Henderson, a prominent Tampa merchant and banker] had a steamboat which ran regularly to Mobile. It carried interesting cargo from this vicinity, ranging from water-melons to gophers.”39

In making the improvements, McMullen clearly anticipated that Bay View would be a major stop on the railroad line into Pinellas. Therefore, he very early on became involved in efforts to bring a railroad onto the peninsula, as a notice which appeared in the January 1, 1887 edition of the Sea Breeze, published at Disston City (now Gulfport) reported that "A railroad meeting was held at Tarpon Springs, recently ... to solicit donations of land to the railroad." [The "railroad" is the proposed Orange Belt Railway, which eventually expanded its line from Oakland in North Central Florida into the Pinellas peninsula.] Capt. Jim attended the meeting, and was appointed to serve on a committee for township 29 (the Clearwater Harbor-Bay View area) to help solicit land donations. A month later, The Sea Breeze reported that representatives of the Orange Belt Railway "have spent two days with the people on the Point, inspiring considerable confidence that they mean business, and receiving some substantial guarantees in the way of help, in land donations."40

But when the railroad finally did come to Pinellas in the spring of 1888, Bay View was bypassed entirely. Capt. Jim had thought that the Orange Belt would naturally come directly through Bay View, as this was the most direct route. But instead, the railway ran down the Gulf Coast into the newly-named settlement of St. Petersburg, and although completion of the railway proved to be of tremendous benefit to the Pinellas peninsula as a whole, it proved to be a devastating blow to McMullen's little settlement. By bypassing Bay View, it drew settlers and development away from the
small community, which eventually spelled its doom. By 1900, Bay View had declined markedly, never to become the large commercial center which Capt. Jim had envisioned. Today, the remnants of the little community may still be seen, lying partly within the city limits of Clearwater, and partly within an unincorporated section of Pinellas County.41

The following years were largely ones of sadness and disappointment for Capt. Jim. On December 17, 1890, Elizabeth Campbell McMullen, Capt. Jim’s wife of almost 46 years, died at the age of 65, probably in the log house the family had built when first coming to the area. Then on December 27, 1894, the first of a series of devastating freezes hit the state, which produced frost and froze citrus fruit right on the tree in most groves throughout Central and North Florida. In Tampa, temperatures as low as 19 degrees Fahrenheit were recorded. Later, on February 7, 8 and 9, a second freeze hit, which killed countless numbers of young seedlings and older trees alike. The long-term effects of the "Great Freeze of ’94-5" on the citrus industry and the economy in Florida would last for years. On the Pinellas Peninsula, although the damage was generally less severe (the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico to the west and Tampa Bay to the east and the warm breezes they generated helped to protect the citrus crop somewhat), it still had an effect. The extent of the damage to Capt. Jim’s groves is not clear, but it must have taken its toll. At least some in his family however, appear to have come out of the freeze with relatively little damage to their crop. Capt. Jim’s son Birt was the luckiest local grower. At "Badwater" near Clearwater, where he owned a grove, the trees never froze at all. As Nancy Meador recalled, "Ordinarily citrus brought one dollar or a dollar and a half a crate; after the freeze he [Birt] got fifteen dollars a crate."42

This setback presaged the end for Capt. Jim. On April 17, 1895, he died at his son Bethel’s home in Bay View at the age of 71. According to the Clearwater Press, "His death, though anticipated by himself and family for more than a year past, came suddenly, was peaceful and almost painless. He had been able to ride, and was carried to his son’s residence only two days previous to his death, having no more unfavorable symptoms than had been indicated for several months. A disease of the heart, which had caused his long suffering, was the cause of his death," the article noted, and went on to pay a heartfelt tribute to both the man and his accomplishments: "We can truthfully say that to no one man in all this territory are we more indebted for the present favorable conditions surrounding us than to this veteran pioneer and promoter of every good enterprise. He was specially known as a friend to the friendless and a helper to every stranger seeking to establish a home in this section. His intimate knowledge of the country enabled him to point his followers to the most favorable locations for homesteads and general improvement, and he was always ready to perform such service without any hope of reward."43

The following day at noon, he was buried next to his wife in the McMullen Cemetery which he had established in 1881 and which today is located northeast of Clearwater on Coachman Road.44

But even after his death, Capt. Jim’s legacy to his adopted land continued to live on through the considerable achievements of his children. Capt. Jim’s oldest son Bethel was the first dentist to practice in South Florida, establishing his practice in Tampa
in 1871 and later near Clearwater in 1874. His practice at that time covered a vast area, from Monticello in Jefferson County south to Key West. He was also actively involved in the community, serving for a time as chairman of the Hillsborough County School Board. Bethel died in Clearwater on January 31, 1940 at the age of 94, and at the time was purportedly one of the oldest surviving soldiers from the Civil War in the Bay area. 

The second son, Daniel Campbell McMullen, lived his entire life in the Clearwater area and was, according to Florida historian George Chapin, "a prominent representative of horticultural interests, having about four hundred acres of land on which he engaged in stock-raising, and also in the cultivation of oranges and vegetables. He made a specialty of handling vegetables which he shipped extensively and also supplied to the local hotels. His labors resulted in transforming unimproved tracts of land into fields or rich fertility and success attended him in his undertakings." 

Another son, James Robert, also went into farming and planted citrus trees in the Bay View area. He also worked a big oyster bar in Old Tampa Bay, and for a time carried passengers and cargo in his sailing ship, the Carrie Bell (later renamed the Gypsy Maid). In 1889, he followed his father as Postmaster of Bay View, serving until 1897. One of his children, Nancy McMullen Meador, later became head of the Clan McMullen in North America and served on both the Pinellas County and Clearwater Historical Commissions. As the leading authority on the family's history in Pinellas, she wrote scores of articles on the early McMullen pioneers, and was for many years until her death in 1984 an invaluable source of knowledge on local area history. 

A fifth son, Birten Lee McMullen (affectionately known as "Uncle Birt" to his many friends in the area) attended the Sylvan Abbey schools and later went to Emory University in Atlanta. Like many in the family, he raised cattle and developed extensive citrus groves on the peninsula, most of then located near his home on Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard in Clearwater. He was also very actively involved in local politics, serving for over 20 years as a member of Pinellas County's Democratic Executive Committee.

And finally, Capt. Jim's youngest son George Ward McMullen also made his mark on the Pinellas community. Affectionately known as "Uncle Ward", he attended Smith Institute in Lexington, Kentucky and then returned to Pinellas to become a citrus grower. He also served as a Trustee of the Safety Harbor Elementary School from 1915 to 1920, and as a Pinellas County Commissioner from 1919 to 1921. Twice married, with 10 children and one stepchild, he was a popular and much-loved figure in Pinellas County for many years, often being sought out for his wisdom, wry humor and fond memories of his days as a pioneer in the Pinellas wilderness. He died in Clearwater on June 1, 1966 at the age of 95, the last of the surviving children of Capt. Jim and Elizabeth.

Capt. Jim's daughters also made significant contributions of their own, marrying into some of the most prominent families in Pinellas. The eldest surviving daughter, Sarah Jane "Sally" (or "Sallie") McMullen, first married Thomas B. Hackney, son of Dr. James Hackney, who was one of the earliest pioneers of St. Petersburg. After his death in 1881, she married William A. Belcher of Largo, who was the widower of Sarah's younger sister Mary. Belcher served in the 1887 State Legislature from Hillsborough
and was the first to introduce a bill in the Florida House of Representatives to separate Pinellas from Hillsborough — a proposal which eventually was adopted in 1911, creating Pinellas as Florida's 48th county. By Hackney, Sally had five children, and by Belcher, four. One of her children, W.L. Hackney, served as a Pinellas County Commissioner from 1925 to 1929.50

Another daughter, Lucy Marian "Aunt Lucy" McMullen, married DeJoinville J. Booth, son of "Uncle Dick" Booth. The couple had eight children and lived for most of their married lives in Safety Harbor, where they became prominent and much-loved members of the local community. There, Aunt Lucy helped to organize the first missionary society in the Sylvan Abbey Methodist Church, and was a charter member of the Safety Harbor Order of the Eastern Star.51

Today, with descendants in the local area numbering in the hundreds (if not thousands), the family of Capt. Jim McMullen continues to exert a powerful and lasting influence on Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay area, just as their forefather did so many years before.

Sometimes, in the still half-light of early morning, one can almost see Capt. Jim sitting on the porch of his grand old log cabin, surveying all that has come after him. And we, who have come after him, owe him a great debt of gratitude, for our area would surely not be what it is today without the influence of his forceful character. Though not the first to come to the Pinellas peninsula, he was by far the most energetic in promoting its virtues and as a result made a lasting mark on the development of the area. And in a sense his legacy – the legacy of an independent man who only wanted something better for himself and his family – lives on in us today, and in our hopes and dreams for this magical place we call home. Quite a legacy for a man who had become a pioneer only by accident after wandering, sick and alone, into the land of his dreams.52

1 Daughters of the American Revolution, Boca Ciega Chapter, "Pinellas County Florida Cemetery Inscriptions," n.p., 1971 (Mimeographed), 111; Donald Draper Campbell, The Descendants of John Campbell and Wife Mary Nicholson, Pioneers of the Florida Territory (Alexandria, Va., 1982), 59-61; Folks Huxford, Pioneers of Wiregrass Georgia, 6 vols. (Adel, Ga. 1954), II, 224; Harvey L. Wells Collection, 28 vols., n.p., n.d. (Typewritten), XIX, 5, 40, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo, Florida; D.B. McKay, "First of Pioneer Florida Clan Of McMullens Fought In Battle Of Bunker Hill As Drummer Boy," Tampa Sunday Tribune, 6 December 1953, sec. C, 14; and Robert C. Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers of Pinellas County," Tampa Bay History 1 (Fall/Winter 1979), 62-63. Harris is apparently mistaken in identifying James McMullen Sr.'s unit in the Revolutionary War as "Canburys Company." See letter from E.J. McMullen to Robert Harris, 2 June 1979, McMullen Family File, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo. Also, recent research conducted by McMullen family member Ernst Upmeyer III, suggests that the McMullens may have first arrived not at Halifax, Nova Scotia but at Halifax, North Carolina. See McMullen family papers in the possession of Mr. Ernst Upmeyer III, Largo.

2 Campbell, The Descendants of John Campbell, 59; Harvey L. Wells Collection, II, 96; and Nancy Meador, "Jim McMullen and Dick Booth Built First Road in Pinellas County in 1880," Clearwater Sun, 4 December 1949, 2.

Harris ("The Seven McMullen Brothers," 62) and Campbell (The Descendants of John Campbell, 61) give the year as 1841; but Nancy Meador ("Citrus, Cattle Raising," 2) and G. Ward McMullen (Interview, 8 October 1958) both give the year as 1842, which is to be preferred. Why exactly McMullen chose to come to the Tampa Bay area is also unclear, although some (Carroll, "The McMullens of Pinellas," 11) have suggested that he was instructed to go to Florida for the "salt air"- a common treatment for tuberculosis patients in the 19th Century. Others in the McMullen family have speculated that James' father may have come to the peninsula at an earlier date to either farm or to visit, but eventually returned to Georgia (Interview with Paul McMullen, great-grandson of James P. McMullen, Clearwater, Florida, 30 May 1995). There is no direct evidence for this, although we do know that the father did own for a time in the 1840s land in North Florida. See Campbell, The Descendants of John Campbell, 59.

4 Campbell, The Descendants of John Campbell, 11-14, 61; Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 62, 64; and Richard J. Stanaback, A History of Hernando County 1840-1976 (Brooksville, Fla. 1976), 18. The Melendez Settlement was located just southeast of present-day Brooksville.

5 Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 62, 64.


8 Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 64; G. Ward McMullen interview; and Dick Bothwell, "This Old House . . . Is 104 Years Old!," Sunday, 19 August 1956, 4-5.

9 The actual date of the McMullens move and the building of the log cabin has been the subject of intense speculation for years, and dates vary widely between sources. Ralph Reed, first Director of the Pinellas County Historical Museum and an accomplished journalist, believed that the family moved back to Pinellas shortly after the December 1850 census was taken- a date which seems plausible. In her history of the area, Nancy Meador makes no mention of the move back to Benton after 1848, and suggests in two separate articles that the log cabin was completed in 1848, a date contradicted by Ward McMullen, who stated in interviews that the log house was built in 1852. James P McMullen also planted a variety of crops on his land, including cotton, peas, corn, sweet potatoes and sugar cane. See Ralph Reed, "The McMullen Family of Pinellas," paper presented at the annual McMullen family reunion, Clearwater, Florida, 4 July 1963, in McMullen family file, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Meador, "Citrus, Cattle Raising," 2; "Sturdy Two-Story Log Cabin Built by Jim McMullen in 1848; It Still Stands," Clearwater Sun, 5 February 1950, 6 and "'Uncle Birt' McMullen, 84, Born in Log Cabin, Vividly Recalls His Childhood," Clearwater Sun, 14 May 1950, 21; G. Ward McMullen interview and "The Family of Capt. Jim McMullen," p. 1; Bothwell, "This Old House," 4-5; Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 64; and Tom Keyser, "House Tells History," Clearwater Sun, 26 November 1973, sec. B, 1. After James McMullen's death, the home was sold to the Coachman family in 1902. They owned citrus groves in the area, and used the popular landmark as a trademark on their citrus labels. In 1977, the cabin was moved to Heritage Village, in Largo, where as the oldest existing structure in the county, it is still a popular attraction.

10 William L. Straub, History of Pinellas County Florida (St. Augustine, Fla., 1929), 36-37.

11 Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 64-65, 73; Campbell, The Descendants of John Campbell, 57; and Bicentennial History Book Committee, Largo Florida Then 'til . . . (Largo, Fla., n.d.), 6.

12 Pinellas County, Florida Board of Public Instruction, The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools (Clearwater, Fla., 1962), 10; Nancy Meador, "When Pinellas Was Pioneer Wilderness Settlers Built First School in Bay View," Clearwater Sun, 18 December 1949, 6; and "Sturdy Two-Story Log Cabin," 6; Workshop in Resources Education, Pinellas Resources (Clearwater, Fla., 1945), 11; and Sunland Tribune, 18 June 1881, 3. McMullen also later helped to build the first publicly-supported school on the peninsula in 1855. Known as the Taylor School, it was built by John S. Taylor and McMullen together with their slaves on Taylor's land near Rousseau Creek. The first class held 19 students and lasted for 40 days. The first teacher was William
N. Campbell. Harvey L. Wells Collection, II, 89; and Pinellas County, *The Golden Anniversary of Pinellas Schools*, 10. Hillsborough County Commission records for this year also reveal that on December 7, 1855, McMullen, Taylor and Eli Hart were appointed trustees of Hillsborough County School District No. 1 (at Old Tampa) for 1856, to serve for 1 year. See Hillsborough County Commission records, 7 December 1855.

13 "Proceedings of the Alafia Convention, Held on the 15th. Sept. '55," *Florida Peninsular*, 29 September 1855, 2; Spessard Stone, "The Know-Nothings of Hillsborough County" *Sunland Tribune* 19 (November 1993), 3, 5; Hillsborough County election returns, 1853 and 1855, Record Group 150, Series 21, Carton 18, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee; Florida Historical Records Survey, *Roster of State and County Officers*, 142; and John Solomon Otto, "Florida's Cattle-Ranching Frontier: Hillsborough County (1860)," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 63 (July 1984), 78, 82.


15 McMullen Seminole War service records; and Nancy Meador, "Uncle Birt' McMullen," 21.

16 Hillsborough County election returns, 1859, Record Group 150, Series 21, Carton 18, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee; Florida Historical Records Survey, *Roster of State and County Officers*, 142; and Tampa *Florida Peninsular*, 14 April 1860, 2; and 12 May 1860, 2.

17 Ralph A. Wooster, "The Florida Secession Convention," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 36 (April 1958), 374, 377-378; and Chapin, *Florida 1813-1913*, 516. McMullen was however, no abolitionist. Hillsborough County Tax Rolls for 1855 show him to have owned two slaves. See Ralph Reed notes, McMullen family file, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo. This evidence directly refutes the statement of historian Walter Fuller, who claimed that the McMullens were "dirt farmers" who "abhorred slavery" (Carroll, "The McMullens of Pinellas," 11). Instead, McMullen probably based his objections to secession on the hardship and suffering it would cause local residents, as well as the unfair burden that fighting a war would place upon the poorer, small or non-slave holding Southerners- a common complaint of Southern anti-secessionists.


24 Civil War military service records of J.B. McMullen, Co. D, 1 Battalion Florida Special Cavalry (Confederate) and J.D. McMullen, Co. A, 1 Battalion Florida Special Cavalry (Confederate), Record Group 109, National Archives; Hartman, comp., *Biographical Rosters of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers 1861-1865*, III, 973, and Tucker, "Way Back," 6 June 1957, 1. Considerable confusion surrounds the last several years of McMullen's military career in the Cow Cavalry. Two possible service records have been found that might be his, one for a "J.B." McMullen, 2nd lieutenant of Company D of the Cow Cavalry (1st Battalion Florida Special Cavalry) and one for a "J.D." McMullen, private in Company A. Although it is unusual for a private to advance to the rank of 2nd lieutenant without holding any intervening ranks, such things were not unusual for the Cow Cavalry, an unusual outfit, and it seems most likely that Capt. Jim's service was with Company D. This is primarily because "J.D." McMullen's service records show his place of enlistment as Finholoway, near Perry in North Florida—suggesting that this might be another member of the McMullen family. However, all this still remains as pure speculation.

25 Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 70-71, 73; and Straub, *History of Pinellas County, Florida*, 34.

26 Tampa *Florida Peninsular*, 5 December 1868, 2; and Chapin, *Florida 1513-1913*, 516.


28 *Clear Water Times*, 12 July 1873, 2.

29 *Clear Water Times*, 26 July 1873, 2.

30 Meador, "Citrus, Cattle Raising," 2; and City of Clearwater, Florida, "Bayview: An Architectural And Historical Inventory Of The Built Environment" (Clearwater: Mimeographed, n.d.).

31 Harvey L. Wells Collection, "Pinellas County Post Offices," vol. 23; Appointment Book of Postmasters in Hillsborough County, Record Group 28, National Archives, Washington; and Meador, "Citrus, Cattle Raising," 2.

32 Star Lodge No. 78, Free & Accepted Masons, *Star Lodge No. 78 F&AM Centennial 1876-1976* (Largo, Fla., n.d.), 2, 4, 6, 10-17, 31, 36. Also, prior to this McMullen was one of the earliest members of Hillsborough Masonic Lodge No. 25 in Tampa. Records for this Lodge indicate that he was initiated on September 20, 1851, and demitted on March 16, 1867. See "Members, Hillsborough Masonic Lodge," *Florida Genealogical Journal* 18 (October 1982), 73.

33 Nancy Meador, "Bob Belcher, Oldest Living Grandson of Capt. Jim McMullen, Tells of Old Days Around Largo," *Clearwater Sun*, 24 September 1950, 21; "Uncle Birt' McMullen," 21; and Tampa *Sunland Tribune*, 4 January 1879, 3. Nancy Meador also suggests (in "Citrus, Cattle Raising," 2) that on first settling on the peninsula, Capt. Jim planted citrus on his land with the help of Odet Philippe, who is credited with being the first to introduce citrus seeds to this area. This probably is true, and we do know that by 1873 he had planted 75 orange trees on his property (Campbell, *The Descendants of John Campbell*, 63) but a full-scale move to citrus on his part was not made until about 1875. According to Ward McMullen, (who remembers picking cotton until the switch was made), the new crop was planted because, as he said "there was more money in citrus" (G. Ward McMullen interview).

34 Meador, "Dr. Bethel McMullen," 4; G. Ward McMullen interview; and Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 66.

35 Tenth United States Census, 1880, Hillsborough County, Florida, 397; Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 66; Hillsborough County Tax Rolls, t884, on file at the Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; and Florida State Census, t885, Hillsborough County, 15, 26.


37 Tampa *Sunland Tribune*, 11 November 1880, 3; and 16 November 1882, 3; and Records of State and Local Commissions 1880-1895, Record Group 150, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.

39 Nancy Meador, "Children Virtually Lived on the Water In the Early Days of Bay View History," *Clearwater Sun*, 29 January 1950, 9; and "Dr. Bethel McMullen," 4; and City of Clearwater, "Bayview." McMullen’s Bayview Hotel enjoyed a modest success prior to the turn of the century until it was razed in 1901. The lumber from the hotel was used to construct a large two-story residence, which presently stands on the original site of the hotel.

40 *Sea Breeze*, 1 January 1887, 1 and 1 February 1887, 2. According to research done by Ralph Reed, first Director of the Pinellas County Historical Museum, McMullen’s committee eventually raised $20,000 to buy rights of way for the railroad.


42 Harvey L. Wells Collection, XIX, 40; Family Bible Record of James and Elizabeth McMullen; Daughters of the American Revolution, Boca Ciega Chapter, "Pinellas County Florida Cemetery Inscriptions," 111; and Michael L. Sanders, "The Great Freeze of 1894-95 in Pinellas County," *Tampa Bay History 2* (Spring/Summer 1980), 7-13.

43 "Death of Capt. Jas. P. McMullen," *Clearwater Press*, 25 April 1895, 1; Harvey L. Wells Collection, XIX, 40; Family Bible Record of James and Elizabeth McMullen; and Paul McMullen interview. Curiously, no obituary for McMullen appeared in any Tampa paper at the time, showing perhaps the lack of regard which many felt those in Tampa had for Pinellas at that time. According to Capt. Jim’s great-grandson Paul McMullen, McMullen died after a visit to his brother Daniel’s homestead near Largo. After visiting with Daniel and his family, Capt. Jim refused an offer to stay overnight and instead rode his horse back home in a rainstorm, which resulted in his last illness.

44 Harris, "The Seven McMullen Brothers," 68; McMullen Cemetery file, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; and Daughters of the American Revolution, Boca Ciega Chapter, "Pinellas County Florida Cemetery Inscriptions," 111.

45 Family Bible Record of James P. and Elizabeth (Campbell) McMullen, The Holy Bible, *Containing the Old and New Testaments* (Philadelphia, n.d.), in the possession of Mrs. Mary Caldwell (Typed transcript of same in McMullen family file, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo); Florida Confederate pension application of Bethel McMullen, Record Group 137, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee, Florida; Nancy Meador, "Dr. Bethel McMullen First Graduate Dentist in Section", *Clearwater Sun*, 27 November 1949, 4; Tampa Florida Peninsular, 27 May 1871, 3; "Dr. Bethel McMullen Dies", *Clearwater Sun*, 1 February 1940, 1; and "Dr. Bethel McMullen, County Pioneer Dies; Funeral is Saturday," *St. Peters burg (Fla.) Independent*, 1 February 1940, 4.


47 Nancy Meador, “Sailboats Played Important Role In Lives of Early Bay View Settlers”, *Clearwater Sun*, 11 December 1949, 2; and "Death of J.R. McMullen" and "In Memoriam", *Clearwater News*, 27 July 1911, 1.


49 McMullen, "The Family of Capt. Jim McMullen," 1-3; McMullen family files, Heritage Village Library and Archives, Largo; Family Bible Record of James and Elizabeth McMullen; Harvey L. Wells Collection, XIX, 40; Nancy Meador, "Ward McMullen, Grandson [sic] of One of 7 McMullen Brothers, Recalls Early Days," *Clearwater Sun*, 16 July 1950, 21; Dick Bothwell, "Death of "Uncle Ward" Marks End Of An Era", *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times*, 2 June 1966, sec. B, 1; and Paul Davis, "Last Of Early McMullens", *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Independent*, 3 June 1966, sec. A, 15. According to Ward, Capt. Jim was out grinding cane at the mouth of Stevenson’s Creek when word reached him that Ward was about to be born. He rushed home just in time to witness the birth. "My daddy said I was the last and there never would be another one like me," he recalled fondly during his later years.

50 Family Bible Record of James and Elizabeth McMullen; Harvey L. Wells Collection, XIX, 40; D.B. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, 3 vols. (Tampa, Fla,
51 Nancy Meador, "'Aunt Lucy' Booth's Full Life", *Clearwater Sun*, 23 April 1950, 10; "Lucy Booth, Pioneer Safety Harborite, Dies," *Clearwater Sun*, 3 October 1951, 1; and "Mrs. Lucy Booth, 89, Dies; A Pinellas County Pioneer," *St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times*, 4 October 1951, 2.

52 In closing, the author would like to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of several people to this paper. First and foremost, I would like to express my thanks to the McMullen family, particularly Mr. Paul McMullen and Mr. Ernst Upmeyer, III, who generously gave of their time and supplied me with much valuable information. My thanks also to Gall Schueren, Janie Bridges, Ruth Pesich and the Pinellas County Historical Society for their untiring efforts to help me, which were all sincerely appreciated. Without their support and assistance, this project would have never been completed. And last, but certainly never least, I would like to thank my lovely wife Mylene for her undying support, patience, and love.
SOME OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING
THE HISTORY OF FORT BROOK
AND TAMPA

By James W. Covington

There were two periods in Tampa’s history that the availability of military land allowed the town situated on the river and bay to develop into a much larger center of commerce. The first period came between 1824 and 1883 when the town and later city was born and grew on what had been Fort Brooke land. The second came between 1945 and 1960 when Hillsborough Community College, the Tampa stadium, University of South Florida and the Busch complex developed on former military land, became elements that were essential to Tampa growing into a leading city in the southeastern part of the United States.

Military land was procured in the Tampa Bay area after the Seminoles had signed the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in 1823 and began to move into a reservation provided for them in Central Florida. So that a military presence would be useful to keeping the Indians on the reservation, the whites who had negotiated the treaty recommended that a fort be established on the western side of the reservation.¹

James Gadsden who had been in Florida marking the boundaries of the reservation came to Tampa Bay on January 8, 1824 and recommended to Colonel George M. Brooke "a point of land at the mouth of North Hillsborough river at the head of the Bay of the same name as the site for the military post."² The site appeared to be healthy place and the land seemed fertile.

After meeting with Gadsden on January 22, 1824, Brooke liked the place, for the land had been cleared and there was good land and water available for consumption and to power a grist and sawmill.³ After this selection Gadsden took off for other places but he would always be remembered in the area because he left a letter for Brooke attached to a post at a place that would become known as Gadsden Point.⁴

In their correspondence at this time neither Brooke or Gadsden mentioned the fact that the land selected for the fort had been cleared by Robert Hackley, who afterward erected a barn, house and planted orange trees and crops. Hackley believed that he owned the land for his father Richard Hackley had purchased the land under terms of a land grant made by the King of Spain in 1818 to the Duke of Alagon.⁵ The military authorities used the Hackley house as their base and no one notified the Hackley's but that was not necessary, for under the terms of the Adams-Onis Treaty such purchases made after a deadline were null and void, and Hackley's purchase fell after that deadline.

By January 24, 1824 men of the Fourth Artillery from Pensacola moved into Cantonment Brooke (name nominated by Gadsden in honor of Brooke), and began setting up tents to house themselves, supplies and medical needs. Although the actual limits of the Cantonment Brooke had not yet been established, settlers showed little fear of being removed by the Army and moved near the post. Levi Collar, wife and five children established a farm just across the Hillsborough River from the post. Under
terms of the treaty of Moultrie Creek the military allowed William Saunders to open a general store, but others soon began to use this opening to establish shoe repair shops, laundries, a boatyard and hotels near the store of Saunders. Of course no legal title to the land could be filed at this time and evictions could take place. Nevertheless, the town of Tampa City was laid out on Federal land and lots were sold through the efforts of one of Tampa’s first judges, Augustus Steele.

With these intrusions into the military reservation taking place, it might be well to question the legality of the military claim to the land. All that had been done at this time was the selection of a site by Gadsden and Brooke and the move of the troops into that site. Somehow there had been no survey or designation of the reservation boundaries and it appeared at that time to be part of the public domain and open to general settlement. When persons who settled on the land began to sell whiskey to the Indians, Colonel Brooke decided in January, 1829 to establish a firm claim to the land so that the purchasers could be removed from land that they did not own. As a result Colonel Clinch had the land about the barracks surveyed and it showed that the reservation included an area sixteen miles by sixteen miles with the barracks and officers’ home in the exact center. After Clinch submitted the survey, an endorsement was added by President Andrew Jackson creating the reservation on December 10, 1830. Still, civilians who took advantage of the land law of May 29, 1830 could file for land in the public domain until the General Land Office had surveyed the land in the area, but it appears that no claims were filed.

Part of the reservation was a beautiful place with orange and lime trees planted by Hackley, several springs, a winding creek and an Indian mound. Yet, there were few soldiers sent there in the period from 1827-1834 and at one time was virtually abandoned. The fort was reactivated in 1834 and within a short time Fort Brooke would be the command headquarters during the Second Seminole War 1835-1842.

When it seemed apparent that an Indian war would commence, four regular companies were added to the United States Army in Florida and five hundred volunteers enlisted in the militia and were taken into Federal Service, eight officers and one hundred enlisted men were sent towards Fort King at Ocala from Fort Brooke, but moved into an ambush and all but one were killed in the so-called "Dade Massacre" near present day Bushnell.

When news of the defeat reached Fort Brooke houses erected close to the fort were destroyed, pits with stakes in the bottom were dug along the fences and concealed with straw and the barracks fences were strengthened. The central defensive area in the fort was a block house built on top of the Indian mound. Brevet Major General Winfield Scott placed in charge of the Florida theatre of war planned that three columns of men would move into the Cove of the Withlacoochee which was the center of Indian resistance.

Acting under misdirected orders Brevet Major General Edmund Gaines moved with a large force to Fort Brooke and proceeded towards the Cove of the Withlacoochee where a battle took place in February 27, 1836 which lasted for eight days. When the battle ended, Scott’s men returned to Fort Brooke for supplies. With its excellent port and dock available, Fort Brooke had become the supply center for the war. When regular and volunteer soldiers moved out from the
fort in campaigns, marines and sailors became principal members of the garrison. As the pressure mounted on the Seminoles, Fort Brooke became one of several posts from which the Indians were shipped after they had surrendered to the soldiers. Usually the horses and cattle were brought along with the Indians to Tampa where they were sold to various bidders. Often hostile warriors had their arms and legs placed in manacles and chains at Brooke before they were loaded in small boats and taken to ships anchored in the bay.\(^\text{14}\)

When it became apparent that all of the Indians could not be removed from Florida, negotiations to end the war were begun at Ft. Brooke on July 21, 1842. Under terms of the agreement concluded at Tampa and Cedar Keys the Indians were given a hunting and planting reserve in southern Florida and allowed to visit a trading post that would be established at Fort Brooke.\(^\text{15}\) This agreement brought to an end a war that had lasted seven years and cost the lives from wounds and disease of nearly 1,500 white persons. The black and Indian people may have lost just as many persons.

Once the Second Seminole war was concluded Fort Brooke was exposed to elements that would ultimately cause its demise. Most forts erected as defenses against the Indians ultimately were closed by the military when the Indian threat diminished. Even during the Third Seminole War 1855-58, Fort Brooke was not very important as a base against Indians and Fort Myers located one hundred miles to the south took over as a major scene for operations.

The second force that would bring about a reduction in size of the reservation and ultimately its termination would be the growth of Tampa. When the officials of Hillsborough County were elected for the first time in 1845 they needed money for the construction of a courthouse and secured the grant of 160 acres which could be sold and money obtained used for the construction of the courthouse.\(^\text{16}\) The reservation was reduced in size to four miles by four miles, and the new borders marked by Major Whiting. Shortly thereafter, John Jackson laid out the town of Tampa and lots were made available for sale so that the courthouse could be constructed. Although the sale was completed, a hitch developed when President James Polk did not sign the bill on time, but everything was corrected by July 25, 1848 and lots sold had a firm legal basis for the first time.

The actions by the Legislative Council of the Territory of Florida in locating the county seat at Tampa and petitioning the Federal Government for 160 acres of the military reservation was not pleasant news to military authorities. Brigadier General William Worth claimed that the act passed by the council on February 27, 1845 that placed the courthouse one half mile from the mouth of the Hillsborough river would "defeat the purpose and object of said reservation."\(^\text{17}\) He concluded that it would be better to abandon the post. General Winfield Scott pointed out that Judge Steele had been allowed to erect a building on the post because he was a customs officer but subsequently became an agent of Hackley and his claim to the land. Steele strengthened his claim by filing a pre-emption claim to the land.\(^\text{18}\) Scott concluded his protest to the Secretary of War by maintaining that "the territory of Florida has legislated the U.S. out of our reserve and military post."

Virtually all of the buildings of the fort were destroyed in September, 1848, when a terrible hurricane hit hard at the warehouses,
horse sheds, officers’ quarters, barracks, wharf and hospital destroying or heavily damaging virtually all of the buildings. After the high winds had died, the standing buildings were repaired and other buildings including the wharf, barracks and officers’ quarters were rebuilt, but Fort Brooke had been greatly reduced in size both in extent of land and number of buildings by the storm and actions by Congress.19

By 1860 when there were no soldiers on the place, the area was placed under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department by the War Department. Anything that could be removed had been taken away by the military and Captain James McKay leased the reservation.20 McKay could not make much use of the leased land for the onset of the Civil War prevented any plans being made and units of the Confederate Army moved into the barracks. Several cannons had been sent to the fort by Jefferson Davis but the place was not much of a defense against Union forces that attacked Tampa several times.

When the Confederates withdrew from Tampa in 1864, the Union forces occupied the fort briefly and then left but returned when peace was declared. When the occupying troops left Fort Brooke during Reconstruction days, the land was declared part of the public domain. The military authorities regained control when the President of the United States set aside in January 22, 1877 and May 29, 1878, one hundred and fifty-five acres for military purposes and the remaining land transferred to the public domain which became known as the town of Fort Brooke when the sub-divided lots were sold to the public.

When yellow fever became a grave problem for the artillerymen stationed at Key West, military authorities searched for a nearby place where most of the men could be moved during the so-called "sickly season." During the winters of 1878-79, and 1879-80, the Key West garrison was moved to Tampa where it remained until traces of the disease had disappeared from Key West. Believing that the seasonal move from Key West to Tampa would become an annual event, the quarters at Fort Brooke were given a thorough evaluation by military authorities.21

The years had not been kind to the fort with its glorious history. During the time that the post had been deserted, people of Tampa had roamed through the grounds removing windows and doors so that they could be used in their homes. Such removals were commonplace and one of the most thorough sackings took place at Fort Myers one hundred miles to the south where the former military buildings were virtually wrecked by the townspeople. Insult was added to injury at Fort Brooke when citizens deposited their night soil on the grounds.

Captain Jacob Rawles of the Fifth Artillery made a thorough inspection of the one hundred and fifty-five acres with its rundown buildings, Indian mound, scattered live oak and orange trees, dock, cemetery, springs, winding creek and thick woods to the east of the buildings. In his report dated September, 1880 Rawles noted that there were no storehouses at all on the site. Quartermaster supplies for the troops from Key West were either placed under tents or in an old log stable and food stored in an old guard house building. Officers’ quarters likewise in poor condition, consisted of one building containing a hall and four rooms on the first floor, and four attic rooms on the second. Two kitchens to prepare food for the officers were located twenty feet from the building, but under a common roof that needed shingles.22
Only one large wooden building served as housing for the artillerymen from Key West. The doors and windows had been stolen and the sills under them were in a rotten state. New floors and a roof were needed. The hospital consisted of a small wooden building which contained a dispensary, beds for twelve patients and erected nearby was the kitchen. On December 24, 1880 the Secretary of War authorized the expenditure of one thousand dollars for the repair of the buildings and detailed sketches of proposed barracks buildings planned for Fort Brooke can be found in the military records at the National Archives. The troops from Key West remained in Tampa from May 1880 until 1882 when they were transferred during the "sick season" to St. Augustine and Mount Vernon, Alabama.

When the troops left Ft. Brooke and the land was put under the control for the Interior Department, Tampa citizens sought the help of Senator Wilkinson Call to change the military reservation into a public park. Their plans failed when Call conspired with Dr. Edmund Carew of Gainesville, Florida to file a homestead application that gave him the best part of the reservation.23

Carew and family moved into the officers’ quarters and the others who wanted the land erected tents and shacks on desired tracks, but soon businessmen purchased lots driving out the intruders, tearing down the ruined buildings and erecting buildings that served as bases for the many firms that were moving to Tampa.

Today one may dig into a vacant lot in downtown Tampa and find traces of the military occupation including buttons, bullets, shells and military equipment. Fort Brooke was given a lasting memory with a parking garage named in its honor, but little else remains of Fort Brooke. Many years ago it was James Gadsden who upon seeing the home of Hackley decided that the fort should be built there. Had he selected sites at or near Bradenton, Sarasota, Clearwater or St. Petersburg, Tampa probably would not have become the leading city of the Tampa Bay area.


2 James Gadsden to the Secretary of War, January 27, 1823 (1824), The Territorial Papers of the United States (Washington, 1956), edited by Clarence E. Carter, Vol 22: 841-842, hereafter cited as T.P.

3 George M. Brooke to the Commanding General T.P., 22: 844-846. The first heavy armaments requested by Brooke were two mounted six pounders. One was captured and destroyed by the Indians at the "Dade Massacre" in 1836.

4 Karl H. Grismer, Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida (St. Petersburg, 1950), 59.

5 Grismer, Tampa, 51-59.

6 Ibid., 61-67.


8 Brooke to the Adjutant General, Passim, January 2, 1829, T.P., 24:128.

9 It would seem likely that Jackson would issue a proclamation reserving the land but the only official action was the endorsement. Ibid., note 51.

10 Although there were two small springs located near the barracks, the soldiers depended upon a large spring located in present day Ybor City for water supplies.

11 Grismer, Tampa, 63. By 1838 Fort Brooke was one of the largest military establishments in the United States.

12 Frank Laumer, Dade’s Last Command (Gainesville, 1995), 39-47.
John Mahon, *History of the Second Seminole War* (Gainesville, 1967), 143-144. No one wanted the dogs that had accompanied the Indians to Tampa and as a result the canine population of Tampa was greatly increased.

The best account of the surrender and shipment of the Seminoles is found in Grant Foreman *Indian Removal: the Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*, Norman, University of Oklahoma Press.

Covington "The Agreement of 1842 and it's effect upon Seminole History," *Florida Anthropologist* 31, 8-11.

Grismer, *Tampa*, 106-108

Worth to the Adjutant General, May 12, 1845 *T.P.* 26: 1073

Scott to the Adjutant General, May 12, 1845, *T.P.* 26: 1073-1074

Grismer, *Tampa*, 112-113

The reservation which had been greatly reduced in size, included the limits of the military quarters, as stipulated by Congress, July 25, 1848. On July 24, 1860 what was left of the military reservation was relinquished by the War Department to the Interior Department and McKay was able to lease the land, which included approximately an area about one hundred and fifty acres.

Colonel H.J. Hunt, Fifth Infantry to the Secretary of War, March 7, 1882, Abandoned Military Reserve File, Fort Brooke, Office of War Department Records, National Archives.


"DEFEATED IN WAR AND PEACE":
THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY CAREER OF MAJOR EDMUND C. WEEKS

By R. Thomas Dye

The 1994 issue of the Sunland Tribune included a fascinating primary source document on the Civil War in Florida entitled "My National Troubles: The Civil War Papers of William McCullough." McCullough served as 1st Lieutenant, Company A, 2nd Florida Cavalry, stationed in the Cedar Keys and Fort Myers. In his diary, McCullough makes a number of disparaging references towards his commanding officer, referring to him as "my deadly enemy." It soon becomes evident that a major source of McCullough’s "National Troubles" was Major Edmund C. Weeks. Indeed, Edmund C. Weeks was a controversial figure in Florida history. He admittedly shot a sentry under his command, and the incident would forever mar his military and subsequent political career. However, Major Weeks was fully exonerated in a general court martial, and credible evidence existed that "refugee" troops, consisting of southern Unionists as well as deserters from the Confederate army, had conspired against him.

Rowland H. Rerick’s Memoirs of Florida contains the only published biography of Edmund C. Weeks. Rerick poetically concludes a brief, one-page essay stating, "the life of Major Weeks reads like a romance and his exploits and daring acts would fill a volume." Those exploits included surviving the Battle of New Orleans; narrowly avoiding capture by Confederate forces; and being tried for murder under a penalty of death. After the war, Weeks traded a colorful, though checkered military career for a similar record in state politics. During Florida’s long and difficult reconstruction period Weeks held a string of Republican patronage positions, including a brief and factious stint as Lieutenant Governor.

Edmund Cottle Weeks was born in Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, on March 10, 1829. His family was an old and prominent one in New England. Edmund’s father,
Captain Hiram Weeks, was a sea captain and his mother, Margaret Cottle, was related to New York Senator Thomas Platt. As a boy Weeks received the best education available by attending private schools in Colchester, Connecticut. On occasion, the young man had opportunities to sail with his father on cross-Atlantic voyages. By the time young Weeks packed his bags for college, he had sailed to South America, the Coast of Africa, and visited London.3

Weeks spent three years as a medical student at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York. The decision to withdraw from medical school, for reasons unknown, created a rift between young Weeks and his family. Unsure of his ambition, restless, and running short of finances, Weeks signed on with the clipper ship Nestorian as a common seaman. The life of a sailor suited young Weeks, and while in England he met Miss Mary Jones of London, whom he later wed. After three years at sea sailing clipper ships out of Boston and Savannah, Weeks’ education, sailing experience, and ability to navigate advanced him to the rank of master working for the shipping firm of Wallace Sherwood and Co. By 1860, he was no longer at sea and worked at company office headquarters in Boston as an accountant.

Like many young men, Weeks saw the coming of Civil War as an escape from otherwise dull employment and as an opportunity to advance his career. Soon after hostilities commenced at Fort Sumter, he resigned from Wallace Sherwood and Co. and applied for a commission in the United States Navy. Weeks was given the rank of Acting Master on the USS Pensacola, serving in Admiral David A. Farragut’s fleet.

Weeks’ Civil War career proved anything but dull. Within months of enlisting, he participated in the Union naval attack on New Orleans. On April 24, 1862, the Pensacola was struck nine times by shell fire from Confederate batteries guarding the mouth of the Mississippi.4 The ship sustained heavy damage and there were numerous casualties. Fortunately, the ship was not struck below the waterline. Acting Master Weeks commanded two large guns in the ship’s bow during the attack. While shelling Confederate positions, a nearby exploding shell blew the hammer of Weeks’ 80-pound cannon overboard. Weeks ordered a sailor aft to retrieve a replacement, and watched as a shell struck the man, "cut from the waist in three places."5 As action on the deck of the Pensacola intensified, Weeks remained at his post calmly reloading his guns and accurately sighting Confederate shore batteries. The Union fleet succeeded in reducing Confederate forts at the mouth of the river to rubble and Farragut’s fleet sailed victoriously up the Mississippi River capturing New Orleans. Executive Officer E A. Row wrote, "the forward division consisting of the 11-inch pivot and the 80-pound rifle gun was admirable served under the orders of acting Master E. C. Weeks."6 Weeks’ combat performance was exemplary considering the heavy gunfire absorbed by the Pensacola. The same could not be said for all of the crew. Row added to his report, "with pain," that the captain of the number-six gun gave up his position. In another "still humiliating instance," William Copper, shellman of the number-two gun, "deserted his station and was twice hauled from behind the forward bitts by the men of our ship."7

After the mayor of New Orleans surrendered the city to Union forces many of the Pensacola’s officers were parceled out to command captured vessels. Weeks served briefly on board a former Confederate steamboat and was assigned duty with
Union occupation forces in New Orleans. Damage to the Pensacola prevented Weeks from taking part in Farragut’s continued operations on the Mississippi River. He did take part in an attack on Fort Hudson, Louisiana and commanded troops on land in another amphibious operation at the Battle of Franklin, Louisiana.

In the fall of 1863, Weeks became ill with fever and received sick leave to New York. After recuperating, he returned to service and was reassigned to the East Coast Blockading Squadron as the Executive Officer on the USS Tahoma under Captain Semmes. Weeks reported to his new ship with some previous experience at leading coastal raiding parties and serving aboard the Tahoma. Weeks gained a reputation as an aggressive and competent officer at commanding ground operations.

On February 16, 1864, Weeks led a small assault team in an attack on a large Confederate salt works near Saint Marks, Florida. The works were defended by a small contingent of Confederate shore militia augmented by a company of Confederate cavalry. Weeks took the post by surprise, scattering the enemy forces. His surprise attack was assisted by a paramilitary group of 96 escaped slaves that he had formed a partnership with in his coastal operations. The facility was destroyed and twelve prisoners were taken, including a Confederate infantry captain. Weeks’ commanding officer reported:

I can not speak in too high terms of Master E. C. Weeks, who commanded the operation. This officer performed the duty assigned with alacrity and cheerfulness. I take great pleasure in bringing him to your notice as an officer of courage and skill, and most heartily recommend for promotion.

Ten days later Weeks led another raid. Under the cover of darkness, he slipped three small boats past the shore pickets on Shell Point, Florida, and rowed silently up Goose Creek. His assault team succeeded in surrounding the small village of Shell Point, "capturing everyone therein." Once again, Weeks’ raid was assisted by escaped slaves who gave him the location and whereabouts of enemy troops. Weeks destroyed another salt works and made off with several prisoners just moments before a Confederate relief force arrived. Weeks’ prisoners included a Confederate Lieutenant, J. G. Stephen who had lost a leg, "his wound not
yet healed, and two other men who were over 50 years old and sick." The prisoners were later paroled and put ashore.

Although Weeks was a seaman at heart, his abilities at commanding ground forces soon came to the attention at Key West District Union Army Headquarters. When General Daniel Woodbury began to organize a new regiment of Florida cavalry, Weeks became the logical choice for command. Woodbury requested of the Secretary of Navy that Weeks be permitted to resign from the U. S. Navy to accept a commission in the U. S. Army. Admiral Theodorus Bailey, Weeks superior, gave him a hearty endorsement for the promotion and transfer. On July 16, 1864, Bailey wrote to Weeks:

I trust that the good opinion of the officers and men which you seem to have won in the service you have already performed in connection with the portion of the army stationed on the Florida coast may be continued in your new appointment."10

Weeks resigned his commission as a naval officer to accept command of the U. S. Second Regiment Florida Cavalry, stationed at Depot Key, in Cedar Keys, Florida. Although the war was quickly winding down Weeks reasonably expected that with several aggressive raids into the Florida interior he might be promoted to Colonel before hostilities ceased. However, Weeks faced several challenges in organizing his new command. Weeks new regiment consisted of Southern Unionists, Confederate deserters, and a few escaped convicts and criminals.11 There was some discontent over Weeks appointment, and the men of the Second had hoped that one of their own, James D. Green would have been appointed to command their regiment.12

When Floridians enlisted in the Union army their families moved onto Depot Key and received provisions and protection from the U. S. government. The post was consistently short of provisions and Weeks was under the impression that many of his troops had enlisted in the Union Army simply to eat and/or steal government supplies. Weeks also viewed discipline in the unit as lax, below standards he had been accustomed to in the navy.

Like many new commanders Weeks wanted to make an impression on his new regiment. Soon after he arrived at Depot Key in the Cedar Keys, he reprimanded one of his company commanders for displaying an unprofessional and casual relationship towards the men in the regiment. The junior officers of the regiment retaliated by reporting Weeks to the War Department when they discovered that he did not yet hold a commission. As a result, Weeks was temporarily suspended from all duties. The delay in receiving a formal commission from Washington forced Weeks to return to Key West where he was temporarily placed in charge of the army commissary on Dry Tortugas until his paperwork was processed. Evidence too, suggests that Weeks may have grown despondent over his limbo status, no longer a naval officer and not officially an officer in the army. In his depressed state of mind, Weeks may have become a heavy drinker. Later, he would be accused of drunkenness and misappropriating military property during this period.13 Thus began a familiar pattern in Weeks’ military career. In combat he proved to be a brave and competent officer, yet he sometimes failed to exercise good judgment in the more mundane affairs of military command.

On September 1, 1864, Weeks received his long-awaited commission as a major in the U. S. Army. He had no sooner reported back
to the Cedar Keys, to "officially" assume command of his regiment when he was involved in an incident that would forever hinder his military and later, his political career.

Major Weeks returned to the Cedar Keys on the evening of September 9, 1864, celebrating his return to the command with the captain of the schooner Harriet. It's likely that the two men partook of the ship's whiskey rations to toast Weeks' return to command. Upon disembarking from the Harriet onto the long pier on Depot Key, Weeks was challenged by a sentry. Private James L. White offended his new commanding officer. Private White may have been asleep, failed to use proper military protocol, or have been out of uniform. The exact offense is difficult to determine given the conflicting testimonies. What is known, is that Weeks began to berate the private. An argument escalated and Weeks allegedly struck and kicked Private White. The stunned private reeled backwards from the blows falling off the pier onto the beach. Weeks grabbed his rifle as he fell. White recovered from the fall, leapt to his feet and began running away from his irate commanding officer. Weeks yelled an order to "halt" but the frightened private failed to respond. Taking careful aim with White's Enfield rifle, Weeks shot him through the leg from a distance of 25 feet.14

The shot alarmed the entire post. Several men and officers arrived on the scene, including two of Weeks' company commanders, William Strickland and William Stebbins. Captain Strickland placed Weeks under arrest. The two officers later testified that when approaching Weeks he aimed a rifle at them before submitting to arrest and that en route to headquarters for questioning, Weeks and Strickland engaged in a physical altercation. Two days later Private White died, and Weeks was charged with murder.15

A general court-martial convened in Key West on November 1, 1864. Weeks was accused of "conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman" and "conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline," in that he called Captain Strickland "a damned rascal and a damned rebel spy or words to that effect." Week's struggle with Strickland and threats made towards his guards prompted a number of additional charges. He was accused of "attempted murder" for pointing a loaded revolver at Second Lieutenant Stebbins and saying, "You had better shut up; you are a goddamn coward arresting your superior officer." The officer preferring charges was Colonel Benjamin R. Townsend, commanding the Second Regiment, United States Colored Infantry.16

The case against Weeks looked strong, and some of Weeks' fellow officers suggested he should plead guilty so that the court would spare his life in exchange for a long sentence, but Weeks was determined to prove his innocence. The prosecution began its case with the testimony of Private Samuel Green, the only eyewitness to the shooting. Green recalled:

He [Major Weeks] kicked him [Private White] three or four times. I don't know how many. He turned him loose and he fell off the wharf onto the ground. He stumbled a piece, . . White recovered himself, got up on his hands and feet. Major Weeks says to him "Halt" and about that time he got straight on his feet to run, he told him "Halt" again, and shot him.17

The trial lasted over three months. The prosecution's case sounded convincing, with
several officers and post doctor testifying that Weeks was drunk that evening.

Weeks hired two private attorneys from Boston to handle his case, and his own medical training helped to build a credible defense. When Weeks’ attorneys began their argument, they introduced evidence that the post physician, Doctor Samuel Wilcox, was incompetent, and that his negligent treatment of Private White’s wound was the actual cause of his death. Expert medical testimony revealed that White’s wound was relatively minor. The bullet had not struck bone or any major arteries, and an autopsy revealed that White had died from infection. In addition, Doctor Wilcox had been severely reprimanded on previous occasions. The Army’s Office of Surgeon General had recommended his dismissal finding his post hospital, “filthy and filled with bed tics.” Wilcox’s own testimony detailing his qualifications as a physician revealed he had received his training at Augusta Medical College in two four-hour courses; (Weeks himself, was more qualified as a surgeon than Wilcox). The prosecution’s next witness was Captain William Wilson Strickland. Strickland had served as acting commanding officer of the regiment in Weeks’ absence and it was evident in the testimony that Weeks and Strickland had engaged in some earlier disagreements. Strickland’s testimony accusing Weeks of resisting arrest was inconsistent with the testimony of other witnesses. Most damaging of all, Captain Strickland admitted that before joining the regiment he had served as an officer in the Confederate Army. The provost guards that placed Weeks under arrest were also deserters from the rebel army, and one man testifying for the prosecution was a convicted cattle rustler. Weeks’ defense team constructed a credible case that a conspiracy existed in the camp. Defense witnesses testified that there was a plot among some of the men in the regiment to assassinate Major Weeks. Weeks never took the stand; consequently, his version of the events that occurred that evening were never fully explained. However, by the time the defense rested, Weeks’ guilt was in doubt. The jury of officers adjourned to reach a decision, but not before Weeks’ defense team succeeded in disqualifying one of the officers for expressing a preconceived opinion as to Weeks’ guilt.

When the verdict was rendered, the jury concluded that the prosecution lacked the
necessary evidence to find Weeks guilty, and he was acquitted on all counts, and Captain Strickland’s commission was revoked after the trial. Nevertheless, considerable doubt remained regarding Weeks’ behavior that evening.

Major Weeks was fully restored to his command and he returned to Depot Key wanting to erase the stain of the court martial from his record. Combat performance was what counted in the military and Weeks initiated numerous raids out of the Cedar Keys into the Confederate-held interior. His Second Regiment of Florida Cavalry raided nearby hamlets and plantations, liberating slaves and capturing cattle, wagons, and property. Among the property seized were many slaves and their disposition soon became a concern. In February 1865, Major Weeks reported, “We have some 30 or 40 able-bodied Negroes here. Shall I enlist them, and for what regiment?”

Eventually, Weeks’ forays became enough of a local irritant to be dealt with seriously by Confederate forces in Florida. On February 8, 1865, Weeks’ regiment, augmented by elements of the Second U. S. Colored Infantry marched out of the Cedar Keys on yet another raiding expedition. Confederate Captain J. J. Dickison, “the swamp fox,” ambushed Weeks five days later. Weeks’ forces were returning from a patrol that had gone as far as Levyville, capturing 100 head of cattle, 50 slaves and 13 horses. Captain Dickison’s plan was to cut Weeks’ troops off from their base in the Cedar Keys, but Dickison arrived too late to properly execute his plan. Weeks and most of his cavalry had reached Cedar Key when Dickison attacked his trailing infantry about a mile east of the Cedar Keys at a location known as the Number Four Station. In the opening moments of the skirmish, Union forces were scattered. Weeks heard the gunfire and dashed back to Number Four Station and found his men “flying in all directions.” Weeks rallied his troops and repulsed the attack, at a cost of five killed and 18 wounded. Weeks reported: “I kept my men down, and when they were within short musket range I opened fire. They stood two rounds and then left. They tried us three times, my men behaved all the time with the utmost coolness . . . I ordered the Negroes to charge, which they did in fine style led by Sergeant William Wilson, who behaved very bravely.”

Confederate forces also lost five men and suffered an unknown number of wounded. Captain Dickison’s official report boasts of having killed or wounded over 70 of the enemy. His report was exaggerated, as was Weeks’. However, the Confederates were successful in recapturing most of the stolen booty as Dickison reported, ”recapturing all which they had stolen on their thieving expedition.” Weeks’ forces accomplished their goal as well by returning in good order to Cedar Key.

In early 1865 the scene of Weeks’ operations shifted to the Panhandle coast. In mid-February, General John Newton, commanding the District of Key West and Tortugas, and Admiral C. R. Stribling, commanding the East Coast Blockading Squadron, decided to cooperate in a plan to capture Saint Marks, Florida in preparation for a possible assault on the state capital at Tallahassee. The raid would fall short of both goals as Confederate forces were successful in rallying a force strong enough to prevent the crossing of the Saint Marks River at the Battle of Natural Bridge.

On February 27, 1865, Major Weeks loaded three companies of his Florida Cavalry along with three companies of U. S. Colored
Troops on board the steamer *Magnolia* and sailed North from the Cedar Keys. Before arriving at the designated rendezvous with the fleet, Weeks landed six men, including Private William Strickland, at the mouth of the Aucilla River with orders to burn the railroad trestle over the river. The mission was a dangerous one and it was well known that Confederate militia regularly patrolled the river and the rail line. Weeks may have secretly harbored an ulterior motive in assigning the mission to the former Captain Strickland. Strickland’s testimony in Weeks’ court martial and their previous disagreements made for an uncomfortable relationship for two men serving in the same unit. Weeks was also fully aware that if Strickland was captured he would most likely be executed as a traitor and deserter from the Confederate Army. After leaving the men at the mouth of the Aucilla, the *Magnolia* continued to steam north but a similar operation at the Little Aucilla River was aborted because Weeks felt the mission was too dangerous due to sightings of Confederate militia.

When the *Magnolia* joined the fleet on March 3, Weeks was given his familiar role of leading a small force ashore to secure a beachhead. With 60 of his own men and another 30 seamen under acting Ensign Whitman of the schooner *O. H. Lee*, Weeks landed at the Saint Marks Lighthouse. Surprising the Confederate guards at the East River Bridge, Weeks captured the bridge, along with a cannon and a horse. The next morning Weeks’ small advance team was counter-attacked by Confederate cavalry. Weeks repulsed the attack, but was unsure how long he could hold the captured bridge without support from the main force. Making good use of the captured horse, Weeks dispatched a rider back to the Saint Marks Lighthouse to see if the troops were unloading from the Union ships. Upon being informed that several vessels had run aground and troop landings were delayed, Weeks withdrew to the lighthouse under attack from skirmishers.26

General Newton and the main force landed later that afternoon and began their advance on the afternoon of March 5. The bridge that Weeks had briefly held had to be recaptured from an enemy cavalry unit. The expedition was further delayed while the 99th Regiment New York Colored Infantry repaired the damaged structure. Feeling frustrated by the numerous delays in the operations, Weeks dashed across the repaired bridge and pushed rapidly up the east bank of the Saint Marks River hoping to reach Newport before Confederate forces could prepare defensive positions. Arriving at Newport, Weeks found the bridge across the Saint Marks on fire and partially destroyed. He ordered an immediate attack in an effort to save the much-needed crossing, but was held in check by heavy fire from the west side of the river. He then ordered concentrated artillery fire on the enemy positions in an effort to drive Confederate forces from their entrenchments on the opposite bank. When General Newton arrived at Newport with the main force it was obvious that a crossing over the damaged bridge would be impossible. Assisted by collaborators, Newton learned of another crossing at Natural Bridge where the Saint Marks River runs underground for several hundred yards. General Newton left Newport with the main force and continued on to Natural Bridge, while Weeks remained behind to prevent the Confederates from crossing into the Union rear across the damaged but still standing bridge. Weeks spent the rest of the day exchanging artillery and small arms fire with the enemy and preventing one attempt by Confederates to throw planks across the damaged Newport Bridge and
cross it. Newton’s force was unable to break the hastily assembled Confederate line at Natural Bridge. Numerous delays in the operation had allowed Confederate General Sam Jones enough time to mass a force large enough to defend the crossing, consequently Union forces withdrew. In the Saint Marks operations Weeks was again cited by his commanding officer:

I have the honor to submit the following recommendations for the gallant and distinguished services. . . Major E. C. Weeks, Second Florida Cavalry, for gallant and distinguished conduct on February 9 and March 4, 5 and 6, and for general conduct. Recommended for brevet to Lieutenant Colonel.27

Weeks’ court martial made the possibility of promotion impossible. In his last military campaign, he had been forced to retreat, but Weeks had not given up on the idea of capturing Tallahassee. His next assault on the state capital would employ political tactics. As for Private Strickland, he was captured attempting to destroy the Aucilla railroad trestle and executed before a tiring squad as a deserter.28 Major Weeks could not have been grieved to hear of Strickland’s demise.

In the aftermath of the Civil War accounts of "no-good Yankee carpetbaggers" responsible for heaping even more pain, suffering, and sorrow upon a nearly destitute people of the South became a familiar theme in Southern history. The demise of the carpetbaggers is generally attributed to the rise of the Bourbons and the final re-establishment of the Democratic Party after the presidential election of 1876. Republican carpetbaggers then returned to the lands of snow and Ice. In fact though, many remained in the South. Edmund C. Weeks, for one, put down his roots and made Florida his permanent home.

After a few weeks of occupation duty in Tallahassee, Major Weeks was mustered out of the service on September 30, 1865. During his wartime raids into the interior of Florida, he had been impressed by the luxurious plantation homes of Southern planters. Weeks decided to become a Southern plantation baron and emulate the lifestyle of his former foes. Accordingly, Weeks began to buy up property in Tallahassee at depressed post-war prices. His most ambitious acquisition was Tuscaliila, a large and once prosperous cotton plantation east of Tallahassee.29 The former owner, Doctor G. W. Parkhill, had been killed at Gaines Mill in the Seven Days Battle defending Richmond. Weeks leased the property from the surviving family agreeing to pay the taxes owed on the land and allowing the family to maintain ownership. Before the war, the Parkhills employed over 300 slaves at Tuscaliila.30 Weeks, like other planters during Reconstruction, could not afford to pay for agricultural labor and therefore subleased it to sharecroppers.

Weeks was wholly unprepared for a career as a planter. He had no experience in cotton farming and he underestimated the investment needed to operate a 3,000 acre property.31 The price of needed equipment, seed, and labor made it necessary for Weeks to take out a number of loans. His timing couldn’t have been worse. The agricultural situation in Leon County after the war was disastrous. In 1866 and 1867, the Leon County cotton crop was attacked by caterpillars. To combat the insect, the Tallahassee Sentinel advised lighting small fires in the fields to destroy the flies that produced the destructive larva, but these
measures proved futile at Tuscawillia. Where Weeks had hoped to harvest over 250 bales of cotton in 1866, he harvested less than 100. In addition, cotton prices fell to nine cents per pound. Weeks personal finances were in shambles by 1869, and he would spend the next 20 years repaying debts he incurred during this period.

Weeks’ financial failure was later used as ammunition by his political enemies. In the 1872 Congressional Ku Klux Klan hearings, one of the issues addressed was the non-payment of agricultural contracts to freemen. John Williams, President of Leon County’s Democratic Club, recalled a casual encounter with Major E. C. Weeks:

I met Major Weeks on the road and he spoke to me in reference to buying cotton. I said, "Major, see the men at Clairvaux place." The next day I returned to Clairvaux and asked one of my head men if Major Weeks had been there. He said, "Yes, but Burton would not sell his cotton, preferring that you should have it." Major Weeks was to get cotton at 25 cents on 90 days time. To this time Major Weeks owes those boys $1,125.00. He had never paid them.

Williams’ testimony was prejudiced in that he had attempted to shift blame of mistreating former slaves into the Republican camp, but doubtlessly Weeks was experiencing financial problems. In 1875, Tallahassee lots 3, 4, 5, 6, and 12 owned by Weeks were scheduled for sale at public auction for back taxes owed. A similar notice appeared in 1876, advertising two more of Weeks’ downtown lots for sale.

In spite of Weeks’ financial difficulties, he maintained the admiration of powerful Republican friends in Tallahassee. During his first two years in Leon County, he formed close relationships with future Governors Harrison Reed and Ossian Hart. He most likely secured personal loans from these prominent Republicans. His obligations at Tuscawillla prevented him from attending Florida’s 1868 Constitutional Convention; however, he was active in the Leon County Republican Party at this time.

Florida’s Republican Party during Reconstruction suffered from divisions within the ranks. Weeks aligned himself with the radical elements in the party led by Josiah T Walls, and by 1869 Weeks was becoming more active in party politics; having lost his property, he sorely needed a state or federal appointment that might provide him with a steady income.

Florida’s first Republican Reconstruction Governor, Harrison Reed, belonged to the moderate wing of the party. He attempted to pacify political resistance by appointing a number of Democrats to his cabinet, but no matter how fairly Reed attempted to govern the state, the Democrats never fully cooperated. Reed was subjected to four separate attempts at impeachment during his term in office. Efforts to oust Reed from office came first from the Democrats for Reed’s support of the Republican platform. He then came under attack from his own party, accused of being overly conciliatory toward Democrats. Throughout Reed’s stormy term of office, Weeks remained loyal to the Governor, and attempted to maintain black support for Reed’s administration.

During one attempt by the Florida Legislature to remove Reed from office, he appointed Major E. C. Weeks as Lieutenant Governor. The office was vacant at the time, owing to an election dispute involving the previous office holder. Reed hoped that in the event Democrats succeeded in removing
him from office he would choose a radical as his successor. The Governor may have felt that a former Union officer who had fought alongside black troops would leave the Democrats in an even more unfavorable political position. Weeks’ appointment was vehemently opposed by the Democrats. The Democratic press labeled the appointment “the most extraordinary act that was ever perpetrated under the Republican Governor. Clearly it is an attempted usurpation.”

In the summer of 1870, Florida's Legislature met in special session for the purpose of rectifying the state's poor financial condition. At the opening of the session, Weeks attempted to exercise his right as Lieutenant Governor and preside over the Senate. Walking boldly up the podium, Weeks seized the gavel and called the Senate to order. At that point, Senator John A. Henderson inquired of the other senators as to "what was that in the President's chair?" Weeks replied that he had been appointed Lieutenant Governor by Harrison Reed. Henderson declared that the senate would not recognize such an appointment, and he was sustained by a vote. The Senate Sergeant at Arms was then instructed to place Weeks under arrest until released by the Senate. In Weeks' defense, "two colored senators remonstrated against this incident," and Weeks was permitted to retire "in good order." One of the black senators remonstrating on Weeks' behalf was Josiah T. Walls, who later represented Florida in the U. S. House of Representatives.

Although the Legislature had refused to recognize him as Lieutenant Governor, Weeks continued to hold the office, and in March 1870 he applied to the state comptroller's office for his much-needed salary. State Comptroller Robert H. Gamble refused to recognize Weeks' appointment or issue his pay. To obtain his salary, Weeks filed a Writ of Mandamus with the State Supreme Court. On June 9, the writ was granted by the court and Gamble was ordered to show just cause for his refusal to compensate Lieutenant Governor Weeks. Gamble countered that Weeks was unqualified to hold office as the court had not yet ruled on the election dispute involving the former Lieutenant Governor. Sitting on the court was Weeks' friend and future governor, Associate Justice Ossian Hart. Hart wrote in a concurring opinion:

Here there is a conflict by a subordinate officer of the executive department against the action of its head, the governor who granted this commission.... If questions of this kind are allowed to be tested in the manner attempted in this case, insubordination and confusion might follow, to the great embarrassment of the government. . . . All the official acts of the Governor should be considered legal, respected, and obeyed, until decided by constitutional tribunal to be illegal.

The court concluded that Gamble was the Governor's subordinate, and therefore he was obliged to pay Lt. Governor Weeks his salary.

As reward for suffering the slings and arrows of the Democrats, Governor Reed appointed Weeks to a vacant position on the Leon County Commission in 1871. The office hardly provided the compensation Weeks needed to remedy his financial situation, but it offered political experience and Weeks looked forward to a bigger and better political future. As a county commissioner, Weeks was sympathetic to local citizens requesting that their property
taxes be lowered, and was concerned with exterminating the bats in the Leon County Jailhouse. Weeks spent less than six months on the commission.

In the summer of 1872, Weeks sought his party's nomination for Governor. In Leon County he had strong support from black leader John N. Stokes. In attempting to gain the nomination, Weeks locked into a bitter political struggle with Governor Reed's State Treasurer, Simon B. Conover. Conover had aided attempts by Republicans to impeach Governor Reed. At the Leon County Republican Convention, Weeks and Conover fought to a deadlock over delegates. Unable to reach an agreement, both Weeks and Conover delegations attended the State Convention in Monticello on August 7, 1872. The State Central Committee offered a compromise, allowing both the Weeks and Conover delegations to be seated with six and one half votes apiece, but Conover walked out, unsatisfied with the arrangement. The two men would remain bitter political enemies for years to come struggling for control of the Leon County Republican machine.

On the convention's first ballot for governor, Weeks pulled a scant seven votes, with 44 for Stearns, 32 for Ossian Hart and 13 for Reed. Stearns won the nomination, but Weeks joined with the majority of the black delegates in threatening a walkout in favor of Hart, whom they preferred. To preserve party unity, Stearns agreed to decline the nomination and accepted instead the lieutenant governorship. Hart was elected the next Governor of Florida.

For supporting Hart, Weeks was appointed Leon County Sheriff on February 4, 1874. Federal troops stationed in Tallahassee insured that Sheriff Weeks had plenty of support in his new position. Sterns' unselfish act at the convention cost him very little, as Governor Hart died 13 months after taking office. Sheriff Weeks served as a pallbearer at his friend's funeral.

The 1877 Hayes compromise allowed Democrats to Reestablish control over the majority of Florida counties, but Leon County, with its large black population, remained firmly in Republican hands. In 1876, Weeks was elected to the first of two terms as a state representative from Leon County. He was relegated by the Democrats to serving on committees of relatively minor importance. He sat on the Postal Committee, and his military experience placed him on the Militia Committee. Representative Weeks never succeeded in sponsoring a bill that passed. His bill for the care of lunatics failed, but did result in some compromise legislation being passed. Weeks' legislation had been prompted by a local physician who advised him that the state prison incarcerated the insane, indigent, deaf, dumb, and blind along with the convicted criminals. Weeks’ bill No. 39 proposed the establishment of separate facilities for the less than fortunate. The Democrats had returned to power pledging to restore financial responsibility in state government and opposed the bill on the basis of cost. Week’s bill was defeated in the Education Committee. Democratic Representative P.P. Bishop wrote:

There is much to commend in the plan, but the necessity of making up during the present year, a deficiency of $200,000 appears to the committee to be an insurable objection to the present increase of State Charities. It is therefore recommended that the bill not pass.

The Democrats’ compromise was to lease out convicts to private companies and convert the prisons to facilities for lunatics.
Weeks and his fellow Republicans opposed this measure, fearing that Florida’s convict lease system would be used as a tool of the Democrats to intimidate blacks with long sentences under harsh and dangerous conditions. In spite of efforts by Weeks and Republicans to defeat the Democrats’ plan, the measures passed into law.

Leon County Republicans convened July 10, 1878, in Tallahassee, to nominate candidates for state senate and house. At this meeting Weeks performed the role of peacemaker between various warring factions. Solidifying his local support, Weeks considered a run for Congress. The local paper noted, "Whispers are heard on street corners that the Major has a strong local backing for Congress."47 In the 1878 district convention, Weeks and other radicals once again opposed the nomination of Simon Conover for U.S. Representative. Conover was completing a term as United States Senator and was now running for U.S. Representative from the first district. A majority of Republicans viewed Conover as a moderate who offered the best possible chance at defeating the Democratic nominee, but Weeks adamantly refused to support the nomination. His personal dislike of Conover motivated Weeks to enter the race as an "Independent Republican" with no other purpose in mind than to split the Republican vote and insure Conover’s defeat.48 His run for Congress served that purpose, and Conover adhered to the career path of a more typical carpetbagger. With no prospects for a continued successful political career in Florida, Conover returned to the North.

Weeks reached the zenith of his political career at the time Republican power in Florida was rapidly declining. Democrats succeeded in intimidating or disqualifying blacks from voting, and when those measures failed they readily engaged in outright voter fraud to win elections. The rise of the Populist movement further diluted Republican strength, leaving the Democrats the only viable party in the state by 1890.

With the military no longer available to enforce Federal law in the South, that responsibility fell to a thinly stretched United States Marshal’s office. In Florida the job was a thankless and dangerous position. In early 1890, Florida’s U.S. Marshal resigned out of frustration and fear from whites who had recently killed one of his black deputies in Ocala. Weeks was nominated as a replacement, and immediately his selection was challenged by the Bourbon Democrats. A smear campaign was launched resurrecting Weeks’ past as having killed a private while in a drunken stupor. President Benjamin Harrison ignored the prejudiced letters that bombarded his office and E.C. Weeks was hired as U.S. Marshal for the Northern District of Florida.50 For a brief time, he served as both U.S. Marshal and Tallahassee’s Postmaster before resigning from the latter which was then filled by Weeks’ old friend former Governor Reed.

In April of 1890, President Harrison wrote to his Attorney General, outlying what he expected from the new Marshal:

You will instruct United States Marshal Weeks, as soon as he qualified to proceed, at once to execute such writs of arrest as may be placed in his hands. If he apprehends resistance, he will employ such civil posse as he may seem to be adequate to discourage resistance or to overcome it. He should proceed with
calmness and moderation which should always attend a public officer in the execution of his duty, and at the same time firmness and courage that will impress the lawlessness with a wholesome sense of the danger of futility of resistance.\textsuperscript{51}

Weeks responded enthusiastically to the President's instructions and reported that when necessary he would meet force with force.\textsuperscript{52}

The selection of Weeks for U.S. Marshal matched the right man with the right job. He had the necessary military and law enforcement experience and was strongly committed to black voting rights. His reputation in Florida had grown to that of a well respected individual—stern, fearless, and uncompromising in his demeanor. Since his court-martial acquittal 25 years earlier, Weeks had sworn off alcohol and was active in his church. Weeks' first wife, Mary, had died during that war years, and so on June 6, 1890, Weeks took the final step towards respectability marrying a wealthy Tallahassee widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Hunt Crafts.\textsuperscript{53} His new marriage allowed him to recover financially. Tallahassee banker GeoWge Lewis endorsed him for Marshal as a man who had made good on all his debts. Weeks was 61 years old in 1890, with a new job and a new wife. The marriage notice in the Democratic press tipped a hat to their long-time adversary, writing, "Marshal Weeks has had a big run of luck recently, and the \textit{Floridian} extends him a cordial congratulations."\textsuperscript{54}

Marshal Weeks set out immediately to bring law and order to Florida. He served long outstanding arrest warrants on criminals accused of civil rights violations, murders, and voter fraud. He put down a minor rebellion in Cedar Key where the Democratic mayor had rejected federal authority in election procedures and assaulted the Republican customs house collector.\textsuperscript{55} The limited resources of Marshal Weeks' office made it impossible to fully restore law and order in Florida, and blacks continued to be deprived of their voting rights, or even worse, lynched for the simplest offense. But Weeks' efforts were admirable. His office was often used by freedmen and white Republicans seeking sanctuary from mob violence, and Weeks was not deterred by threats or intimidation. When refused hotel accommodations he slept under the stars and his wife endured the bricks tossed through the windows of their private residence.\textsuperscript{56} While serving as Marshal, Weeks maintained meticulous records and expense reports, and he demanded the same from his deputies. In 1892, he came before the Supreme Court once again, charged by one of his deputies with non-payment of services.\textsuperscript{57} Weeks prevailed in the case, demonstrating that his former employee had failed to file the proper paperwork for reimbursement.

After 13 years of dedicated service as a U.S. Marshal, Weeks was appointed Surveyor General of Florida in 1903 by Theodore Roosevelt. The appointment rewarded Weeks' government service. Ill health forced his resignation two years later, and he died in Tallahassee on April 12, 1907.\textsuperscript{58}

Weeks' place in Florida's history is focused on his role commanding the Second Regiment Florida Cavalry in the Civil War. In that capacity he was a first-rate combat officer. Had he not been arrested and confined for months in Key West, his regiment might have achieved fame and glory, and most assuredly Weeks would have been promoted before the war ended. The events that took place on that cool clear
night in Cedar Key still remain clouded in mystery.

Weeks failed in his post war attempts at raising cotton. The idea of belonging to the planter elite was appealing, but the realities of plantation management were altogether different. His contribution to Florida's Reconstruction also remains somewhat clouded. The Republican party might have extended its reign past 1876 had it been able to maintain a united front. The party's lack of unity and bitter internal political wars prevented it from achieving the successes in education and civil rights it had promised Floridians. At times Weeks was guilty of adding to the party's disharmony. His differences with the party leadership cost him gubernatorial and congressional bids. His mentors had been Harrison Reed and Ossian Hart. Had Hart survived his term in office he may have passed the gauntlet down to Weeks, and today his name would be more than a footnote in Florida's history. But Weeks never really had the personality of a glad-handing politician. He finally found his proper place in life as a United States Marshal, and he executed the duties of that office responsibly.

Weeks' experience is not untypical of many Northerners that came as carpetbaggers and then slowly acclimated to the land, climate, and culture of the South. Weeks remained in Tallahassee, and his final resting place is in Tallahassee's historic Old City Cemetery. His legacy remains in the town he called home. The house that Weeks and his wife Elizabeth resided in is still standing on Park Avenue and is owned today by Weeks’ great-grandson.


2 Rowland Rerick, Memoirs of Florida 2 Vols. (Atlanta, 1902), 715.

3 Ibid.; Rerick mentions that Weeks first enrolled at Yale University, but there are no records of Weeks ever being admitted or attending Yale. Letter to the author, Yale University Office of the registrar, December 1, 1993.

4 Charles Lee Lewis, David Glasgow Farragut; Our First Admiral (Annapolis, 1943), 62.


6 Ibid., 203-204.

7 Ibid., 203.

8 Ibid., 650.


11 Buker, Blockaders, Refugees & Contrabands, 100-114.

12 Ibid., 162.


14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 For more on William Strickland see: Buker, Blockaders Refugees & Contrabands, 98-115.

20 Court-Martial Records.

22 Charles C. Fishburne Jr., The Cedar Keys in the Civil War and Reconstruction. (Cedar Key, FL, 1982), 15-18. Also see: R. Thomas Dye, "Race, Ethnicity and the Politics of Economic Development: A Case Study of Cedar Key, Florida," (M.A. Thesis) Florida State University, 1992, 30-31. The engagement at Number Four is still a source of local pride in Cedar Key. Levy County residents describe it as a "whippin" by Captain Dickison that prevented Union troops from penetrating Levy county, but in truth Union troops were returning from a raid. The myth of the skirmish can be traced to: Diary of Eliza Hearn, Historical Records Survey, Jacksonville; (State Archives Survey W.P.A.), 1937; on file at the Cedar Key Public Library.


24 Ibid., Vol. 49: 43.


26 Edwin C. Bearess, "Federal Expedition Against Saint Marks Ends at Natural Bridge," 381.


28 Boker, Blockaders, Refugees & Contrabands, 169.

29 Weeks Papers, Box 1, Florida State Archives, Tallahassee Florida. Hereafter referred to as Weeks Papers.


31 Mrs. Parkhill-Mayes, interview with the author. Monticello, Florida, March 1, 1993. (notes)

32 Tallahassee Sentinel, April 3, 1869.

33 Weeks Papers.

34 U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Testimony Taken By the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, Florida. 42nd Congress, 2nd session, (Washington, D.C. 1872), 239.

35 Tallahassee Sentinel, January 2, 1875.

36 Tallahassee Sentinel, February 19, 1876.


38 Tallahassee Weekly-Floridian, January 25, 1870.

39 John Wallace, Carpetbag Rule in Florida (Jacksonville, 1888), 118.

40 American Annual Cyclopedia, 299-300.

41 Florida Reports, Vol. XIII, 32.

42 Leon County, Minutes of the Leon County Commission Meetings, Tallahassee: Leon County Courthouse, 1871.

43 Jerrell H. Shofner, Nor Is It Over Yet (Gainesville, 1974), 278.

44 Ibid.

45 Weeks Papers.

46 Florida, House Journal (Tallahassee, 1877).

47 Tallahassee Weekly-Floridian, August 13, 1872.


49 Weeks Papers.

50 Ibid.


52 Weeks Papers.

53 Tallahassee Weekly-Floridian, June 9, 1890.

55 George Murphy, Interview with the author, Tallahassee, Florida, March 5, 1993. (Notes in collection of the Author.) Mr. Murphy recounted stories told to him by his grandmother of racially motivated vandalism perpetrated on the Murphy house, Marshall Weeks' Tallahassee residence. Mr. Murphy is the great grandson of E.C. Weeks. Also see: Williamson, *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age*, 166: "Marshal E.C. Weeks was refused horse-hire and hotel accommodations while in the execution of ordinary civil cases."

56 *Florida Reports*, Vol. XLIII, 616.

57 Tallahassee *True Democrat*, April 18, 1907.

TORIES OF THE LOWER PEACE RIVER VALLEY

By Spessard Stone

The settlement of eastern Manatee County, now Hardee County, commenced in the fall of 1854. By April 1861, when the Civil War began, the region was populated largely by yeoman farmers, few of whom had slaves. Many had served in federalized companies during the Seminole wars and had a strong attachment to the national government. Most, however, appeared just not to want to be involved in the conflict and preferred to tend their farms and market their cattle. Cattlemen, furthermore, had a financial incentive as the Union garrison at Fort Myers (established in early 1864), paid for cattle in gold, not worthless Confederate paper money. These conditions would be further complicated by the conscription acts of 1862, and their enforcement by local Confederate agents, which alienated many area residents. Ultimately, repeal of draft exemptions for cattlemen by the Conscription Act of February 17, 1864 forced local men to choose one side or the other.¹

Some early citizens openly and warmly supported the Confederacy in the war’s early stages. When the Bartow-organized Company E, 7th Florida Infantry, C.S.A. was mustered in April 1862, lower Peace River enlistees included: David Brannon, brothers Reuben and Wright Carlton, James M. Hendry, brothers William J. and Stephen P. Hooker, Lewis H. Parker, brothers William C. and David H. Platt, E.W. Thompson, brothers Maxwell and John W. Whidden; brothers John A., James W. and Nathan Williams. William N. Hair enlisted on May 14, 1862 in Company E, 8th Florida Infantry, C.S.A.²

Despite recent scholarship, the legend of a Solid South persists among many descendants of pioneer families of South Florida, who express amazement or denial when confronted with Union ancestry. The Lower Peace River Valley, below Fort Meade and encompassing present-day Hardee County, was a region with an inordinate Union allegiance during the Civil War.
Others took the opposite path. For example, on December 2, 1863, Enoch Daniels of the Charlotte Harbor area disembarked at Key West where he proceeded to engage in talks with Federal officers to raise a volunteer force among refugees to conquer the country between Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay, a supplying area of beef cattle for the Confederate Army. General Daniel P. Woodbury was receptive and on December 14 informed the Federal commander at New Orleans that rebel army deserters and conscription evaders hiding in the woods between Charlotte Harbor and Lake Okeechobee were estimated from 200 to 800, many of whom would join if a military post was established in the area. He hence established the Florida Rangers with nineteen refugees in Key West.3

Soon the Union men were back on the mainland. On December 17, a slightly supplemented troop under Lt. James E Meyers of the 47th Pennsylavnia, with Enoch Daniels as guide, proceeded to Useppa Island. Daniels with fifteen men and Lt. Jenks with fifteen men, thereafter, moved in three boats inland to the mouth of the Myakka River on December 25. Leaving Jenks and his men to guard the boats and await his return, Daniels proceeded thence to Horse Creek, with a dispatch on December 27 of four men to Fort Hartsuff. After being advised by a Union man that only seven men engaged in cattle driving would pen cattle the night of December 28, Daniels laid plans to capture the cow drivers. The mission was thwarted when six sentinel Rangers deserted and guided a Confederate attack on the Union boats. This forced their evacuation and a later rendezvous on December 31 with Daniels and they then sailed back to Useppa Island on January 1, 1864.4

Union authorities were not dissuaded from their plans by the setback. On January 5, 1864, General Woodbury was authorized to commission Henry A. Crane, then serving in the U.S. Navy and former publisher of the Tampa Herald and editor of the Florida Peninsular, as captain of the Florida Rangers, hereafter the 2nd Florida Cavalry. With the occupation of Fort Myers on January 10, the forcible removal of all inhabitants to the north side of the Peace River, and repeal of the draft exemption for cattlemen on February 17, 1864, Union activity in the region intensified.5

The enlistment of two prominent men, William McCullough and James D. Green, signified the changing of the status quo. McCullough, a veteran of the Seminole wars, had lived southwest of Fort Meade, but had laid out to avoid conscription before finally seeking refuge in Key West. On February 22, 1864, he was enlisted by Capt.
Crane as 1st lieutenant of Company A, Second Florida Cavalry. Green, whose home site in 1856 had become known as Fort Green, was another veteran of the Seminole wars, and the political leader of eastern Manatee County. He, subsequently, became 1st lieutenant and captain of Company B, Second Florida Cavalry.6

The new volunteers brought helpful information to Union officers. Green and William McClenithan of Fort Meade, on arriving at Fort Myers on March 10, 1864, informed Capt. Crane: "That since the battle near Lake City, & great loss of provisions the Confederates were compelled to have cattle, and had stored supplies for that purpose at that point (Ft. Meade). That the forces or most of them had been ordered to Gainesville." In response on March 13, Crane dispatched troops led by Green to Fort Meade where on March 21 they proceeded to the homesteads of Confederates Willoughby Tillis and Thomas Underhill where at the former they confiscated supplies and at the latter killed Thomas Underhill.7

A second raid with over 100 men was ordered by Capt. Crane, in which he in part instructed Actg. Lt. Green: "Let your whole energies be exerted to Capture (or kill if necessary) – Tillis, Parker, Lanier, Henry, Summerlin, Durrance, Tillman, Bogges, & Seward, as these are the leaders of the Guerillas – this being done, South Florida is ours . . . To those families who may wish to accompany you, advise them one & all to remain at home . . . I cannot tax our government further in receiving families . . . At Ft. Meade you will know from our spies the true state of affairs in Tampa.–Old Capt. Mizzell will meet you there, & if he thinks you strong enough, move upon that point & capture it." On April 7 at Bowlegs Creek, Green and McCullough's troops skirmished with James McKay, Jr.'s forces, killing Confederates James Lanier and wounding Henry Prine, but the Union's drive to Fort Meade was checked. The departing Second Florida proceeded to the Willoughby Tillis' place where they seized supplies and then burned his homestead.8

Green and McCullough's commands, thereafter, participated in the May 6-7 occupation of Tampa. The Confederate response to the Fort Meade incursions had been an order on May 11 to "drive the deserters and tories before you." Receiving intelligence of the mistreatment of Union families and to secure beef cattle, Capt. J.W. Childs of the 2nd U.S.C.T., with the advice of Capt. Crane and Capt. Green, ordered an attack at Fort Meade. A 212-man troop, with Capt. Green commanding 100 men of Co. A and others colored troops of companies D, G and 1, crossed the Caloosahatchee River on May 14. After avoiding an ambush by crossing Peace River below the mouth of

Francis C. M. Boggess, 1833-1902. Although he was a "Union Man," he stood with the Confederacy.

— Courtesy Florida State Archives
Bowlegs Creek, Capt. Green with fifty men went in advance and took possession of the fort without meeting any resistance on May 19. Sixty mounted Confederates an hour later presented themselves, but retreated. After seizing considerable forage and supplies and destroying the barracks, the Second Florida left. Accompanying them included seven prisoners of war, seventy women and children, and over one thousand head of beef cattle. They returned to Fort Myers on May 27.\(^9\)

Capt. Crane triumphantly noted:

The intelligence from the interior is that the Rebs to the number of 150 are stationed near the Alafia River, having fallen back 25 miles from their former position, leaving all south of that River to our paternal care & affection. Small squads occasionally make raids towards us a few miles, and secure any one, whether friend or foe, for their special malediction. The last one was the person of the notorious "Jake Summerlin" the great cow–driver, Indian agent &c, & one who has done more for the confederates, & more injury to us, than any other in his position. They have actually driven him from his home, and threatened death & destruction to his family. This is as I would have it, & the poison works finely. Driven to desperation he will come to us.

Another case is that of old Mr. Carlton, who drove his sons in the Rebel Army, with shouts of exultation. The Rebs have we heard, carried him off in Irons northward. One of his sons at home on furlough, seeing his father treated thus, came to us & I have the pleasure to–day of seeing him bear arms directly under our glorious old "Banner." The Florida Cavalry are respected even by their bitterest enemy. To–day I shook hands with a man, who offered a $1,000, for a horse to meet me in battle, at Tampa last December–his name is John Collier; he enters as a Soldier, under his old flag. In the ranks of our guard to–day stands the greatest Guerilla extant, "Frank Ivey" the despoiler of the whole Eastern Coast of Florida – he is obedient, & I expect to make him a corporal. – I feel an inward exquisite satisfaction in all this, without the smallest spark of resentment.”\(^{10}\)

J. J. Addison, sheriff of Manatee County, in July 1864 reported, "there is over half the Tax payers of this County gone to the Yankees and left no agent behind ... one of our County Commissioners has gone to the Yankees two of the authers taken and Prisiners and disqualified from doing any business ... we are in quite a critical situation in this County we don’t know what day or hour the Tories will be on us and
destroy all we got . . . I think it would be a good idea for the Governor to appoint another County Commissioner in Jesse Alderman place." In March 1865 Addison bemoaned "the Yankees & Tories are strolling around trying to capture all level officers."11

Elected to the Manatee County Commission on November 9, 1863 were L.P. Johnson, John Henry Hollingsworth, Jesse Alderman of Fort Green and Henry Langford of Fort Hartsuff. Alderman and Langford deserted to the Union while Hollingsworth was believed to have been captured but later managed to resume his office.12

An atypical pro-Union man was William Alderman who had moved to Manatee County in the early 1860s and after enactment of the Conscription Act of 1862 had laid out in the back county to avoid the Confederate agents. But in February 1863 he accepted the Manatee County Commission’s appointment as agent to purchase supplies for the aid of Confederate families whose husbands were away at war. Then he enlisted in Capt. John T. Lesley’s Company B, First Florida Cow Cavalry. Later he supplied beef cattle and hunted deer for the Union garrison at Fort Myers.13

More prevalent were the anti-secessionists of Fort Meade: F.C.M. Boggess, Francis A. Hendry, John Levi Skipper, and Jacob Summerlin. Skipper "was opposed to secession and voted against secession and did not voluntarily aid, abet or engage in the
rebellion." Yet he and the others ultimately gave their allegiance to the Confederacy. Surnmerlin was a contract beef supplier to the Confederates and, as did Boggess and Skipper, served in Company A, First Florida Cow Cavalry, captained by Hendry who previously had served in the Confederate Commissary Department.\textsuperscript{14}

Boggess, 1st lieutenant and quartermaster in Capt. F.A. Hendry’s Company A, presented the dilemma:

Captain Boggess had been through the Mexican War and loved the flag. He was opposed to secession as he thought the only way was to fight for his rights under the stars and stripes. He had an opportunity of engaging largely in the cattle business and he thought by moving off on the frontier that he would not have to go in the war. He moved near Fort Ogden . . .

What a delusion! A man was hunted, no difference where he went. There was a great deal of bad management and prejudice, one neighbor against the other. The people were poor, they were not able to move and maintain their families. If they joined the Confederate army they would have to move their families. They could go to Fort Myers and join the Federal army and be with their families. The woods were full of [Confederate] conscript officers. They allowed a man no time to prepare to move his family. He was arrested and carried off at once. He had no choice; he had no rights. At the beginning a good many volunteered. They were jealous of any one remaining at home and they were the foremost men to arrest and carry any one. Age nor anything else had nothing to do with it. They were afraid that the man at home would mark more cattle than they did. He had to go. All had to go.

Captain Boggess had a family but he was not able to support them and go to the front. He had no thought of going in the Federal army, although a strong Union man. There was a blockade put on in Charlotte Harbor. [Union r]efugees would make raids in boats, go to a man’s house in the night time, arrest him and carry him to the vessel to take the oath. If he took the oath and returned and it was found out he was hung as a spy at once. A man was between two fires and he did not know what to do. A party of refugees went to Captain Boggess’ house one night to capture him. He had just left and they missed catching him.

Captain Boggess was elected a member of the Legislature and he had to go. He left his family – told them to move at once to Fort Meade – which they did. That move kept them from catching him, or of his killing some one, or they killing him.

There was a battalion enrolled that was subject to the [Confederate] Quarter Master Department. It was their duty to gather and forward cattle to the Western army. Beef cattle brought $150 each.

The troops at Fort Myers would make raids up as high as Fort Meade. There was a skirmish at Bowlegs Creek. One man was killed and one wounded. The Yank’s went at once to Fort Myers.

The Confederates kept up gathering and forwarding cattle until the war was ended. The war here was with refugees and negroes. There was no general engagement. Major William Footman
endeavored to capture Fort Myers. He made a complete failure . . .

The ordinance of secession was carried by a large majority. And any one advocating the cause of the Union was in danger of his life. Captain Boggess had been a Mexican Veteran and he loved the flag and was bitterly opposed to seceding and advocated fighting for their rights under the flag.

To be situated as a Union man was in the South was anything but pleasant. If a man’s sympathies were with the Union he could not forsake his family and all he possessed. Captain Boggess let everything shape its own course and abided by chance. He remained out of the army until he was driven in to it by force of circumstances. He, as it happened, came out honorably. He did but little fighting, and, in fact, it was a war distinct from the real war. They had a war among themselves. Those that had been neighbors fighting with the Confederates. It was a war against refugees and for the possession of this country. The Federal troops, mostly negroes and refugees, were stationed at Fort Myers and the Confederate troops were stationed at and above Fort Meade. About 100 miles apart, and but one or two families living between the two stations. The refugees at Fort Myers had a regular line of communication to the Confederate lines.  

After May 1864, the Union forces redirected their energies to raids at Brooksville in July and Manatee in August. Illness and then internal dissension developed between the white refugee families and colored troops, as well as alienation among the loyalist soldiers and officers and their Yankee officers. Especially demoralizing was the election, held at Depot Key on September 21, 1864, in which Capt. James D. Green was by a 317-0 vote unanimously elected Major of the Second Florida Cavalry, only to be rejected on the recommendation of Col. Benjamin. Townsend who critiqued: "[Green] is a man of very limited education. In my opinion he is not competent to fill the position of 2nd Lieut. and is altogether unworthy of an appointment as Major." Meanwhile, the cow cavalry had reasserted the authority of the Confederates in the Peace River Valley. The emboldened Confederates subsequently on February 20, 1865 launched an attack on Fort Myers, which was repulsed. Thereafter, a holding order prevailed until the South’s surrender.  

Those enlisting in the Second Florida from December 1863 to March 1865 included from Fort Meade: Thomas J. Hilliard; Francis A. Ivey; William McClenithan Sr. and sons Tobias, William Jr., and Norman; William McCullough. Fort Green area enrollees included: James D. Green, James M. Hendry and his brothers, Charles and Robert C., and their cousin, Archibald W. Hendry. Fort Hartsuff enlisted: David J.W. Boney; brothers Calvin C. and John Collier, Jr.; brothers William M. and Dempsey D. Crews, Jr.; brothers William N. and Streety A. Hair; Berryan Summerall; Edward Whidden; John L. Whidden; Maxwell Whidden and his brothers Jesse, James E. and William; Wade Hampton Whidden and his sons Charles H., David D., Dempsey N. and John H. From Troublesome Creek came Reuben Carlton and his brother Albert, and from now Brownville: Simeon B. Williams. Lily enrolled: James A. Albritton, Henry Messer, and the Platt brothers: John W., Joshua A., Lewis B., and Nathan C., and at Horse Creek: George C. Mizell, brothers Henry and Riley Summeralls, and Thomas L. Thigpin.
These soldiers were described in early 1865 while stationed at Punta Rassa after the abandonment of Fort Myers:

The 2d Florida Cavalry differed hardly more in color than in character from the others [2d and 99th U.S. Colored Infantry]. Cavalry they were called, and as cavalry they were paid, but they were never mounted, much to their disgust. This was a regiment not to be lumped. Each man had a history of his own, sometimes more startling than fiction. In some the burning cottage, the destruction of home and household goods, the exposure of a wife and children to cold, penury, and starvation, if not a worse fate, filled the background of a picture not colored by imagination. Nearly all had been hunted, many by dogs. It's not a pleasant thing for a man to be hunted as though human life was of no more value than of fox or a wolf, and it leaves many bitter thoughts behind. Finally, through many perils, after lying for weeks in swamps and woods, they had straggled one by one into the union lines. Happy were they who carried no corroding recollections of sudden deaths to friends, nor of fearful and bloody work to avenge them. Tall, thin, and loose-jointed were these men, incapable of rigid discipline, and of all ages; but the best shots, guides, and scouts in the army. They freely traversed at night the enemy's country; were gone weeks, and safely returned with their families. Bitter experience had made them familiar with every outlying track and swamp; had taught them their friends and their foes, and established in the country a sort of masonic brotherhood in danger. Some, it is true, attached to neither side, and alternately deserting from each, intent only on plunder and villany, were among the rarest scoundrels and cutthroats which unsettled and perilous times produced; but the greater number were stanch and true.18

On May 29, 1865, a spokesman for the refugee citizens of Florida belatedly forwarded to President Andrew Johnson resolutions of a convention at Fort Myers on October 22, 1864, in accordance with Abraham Lincoln’s Proclamation of December 8, 1863. They, the Union citizens of Florida, stated they constituted more than ten percent of votes cast in Florida in the Presidential election held in 1860, necessary then for readmission. Resolutions included: Florida be a free state, confiscation of property of secessionists actively engaged in conscription of Unionists and those who ill treated them, separate townships for coloreds who may wish to farm, trials of those who forcibly inducted Union men into the Confederate Army or pursued and killed fugitives, ineligibility for office or militia duty of civil or military office holders in Confederate or state governments active in the oppression of Union men, compensation for property confiscated.

He continued:

The loyal citizens in Florida numbered about 4000 . . . 2000 more were secretly attached to the Union cause . . . We were driven to the frontiers, and, when we would not join the Confederate army, lay out in the swamps till we could enter the Union lines — our homes were burned, our property confiscated, our stock and crops consumed, our wives and children when left behind driven to work in the _____[?] _____[?]. The Conscript officers tracked us with bloodhounds, shot us in the swamps like wild beasts, and when they had decoyed Refugee soldier by a flag of truce gave no
quarter. Let me mention an incident. Leslie, a Presiding Elder of the Methodist Church, and John Knight — the former Captain of the Guerillas in Hernando Co. Florida, the latter his lieutenant tracked a Refugee soldier named Duncan to the swamp, gave him no quarter, shot him down, and as he was dying, stamped on his head, a brutal act of savage barbarity. Yet such as these would escape by the oath of amnesty; I implore your Excellency by the rights of justice and humanity, of justice the ablest attribute of your exalted office, and of humanity, which forbids man made in the image of God to be treated like a savage beast, not to allow such offenders as these to live in the secure enjoyment of their ill gotten gains, but visit them with deserved punishment. The property of the Refugees in Florida amount to $1,000,000; these losses should be repaid by an income tax on the property of Rebels . . .

Following the war, a state of political turbulence existed with local government in Polk County being largely dominated by Conservatives (Democrats) while in Manatee County the Unionist Republicans for an interval were ascendant. The Constitutional Convention, convened October 25, 1865 at Tallahassee, reflected the coming order with Francis A. Hendry and James D. Green, representing respectively Polk and Manatee counties. Governor William Marvin's restoration of all civil officials on November 10, followed by the election on November 29, 1865 of James D. Green as Manatee's Representative and Dr. Daniel Stanford, a former slave owner, and Francis A. Hendry as senator from Polk–Brevard, mirrored the direction to come.

The Conservatives' control of the local courts and the difficulty in obtaining attorneys to represent them resulted in Union families being rebuffed for claims for losses incurred during the war. For example, Hillsborough and Manatee Union men, James A. Jones, John W. Platt, and James W. Jackson were advised by Capt. James D. Green and C. R. Mobley to engage, respectively, Judge A. A. Allen and John A. Henderson of Tampa to file suits against their rebel neighbors. They were stonewalled, however, when Judge Allen, whom they labeled "a leading Rebel [and] an open enemy of the Union party," demanded an unreasonable fee in advance. They then approached John A. Henderson, "but he also refused to aid us in obtaining our fights, he said that if he was to prosecute cases for the Union party that he would consider that he had sold himself away from his party." In utter despair they concluded that "there are no lawyers in the county who are able to complete with Allen and Henderson in short the lawyers are all implicated in the taking of our property it is impossible for us to get our rights in the courts of this state . . ."

F.C.M. Boggess corroborated the judicial situation. He recounted that after the refugees had left and joined the Union forces "the Confederate officials gathered their hogs and cattle and sold them." After the war when they returned home, he continued, "The refugees at once went to the commanding officer at Tampa and they made out many fictitious claims and had the settlers summoned to Tampa to court." Boggess especially berated the claim of his stealing a black stallion horse of Matthew P Lyons, who, along with Andrew Garner and David E. Waldron, had been captured by Boggess during the war. Boggess succeeded in having the cases dismissed: "Col. John A. Anderson [Henderson] went with Captain Boggess and introduced him to Major Cumbee, who had only a few days previous
relieved Lieutenant Smith, the officer who issued the summons. Capt. Boggess explained how matters stood to major Cumbee and he told him to go and tell all of those who were summoned to go home.”

Matthew P. Lyons became the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Hillsborough County, appointed by Governor Reed. Lyons and C.R. Mobley were the leaders of the Republicans in Hillsborough County, which position they reluctantly had to share with James T. Magbee, who in August 1868 was appointed Judge of the 6th Circuit, which included Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Polk and Monroe counties.  

To add insult to injury, not only did Loyalists have property confiscated or destroyed by Confederates, but also were not always reimbursed for assets appropriated by the Second Florida. A case was Thomas H. Albritton of Lily who petitioned:

I took the oath of allegiance to the United States . . . I left the Conf. States about January 1865, and went to Fort Myers . . . Went for protection from the Rebels . . . Was occupied as a Teamster in the U. S. Quartermaster Dept. while gone . . . the Confederate authorities drove off my Beef Cattle, tore up my place, and injured my orange trees for which I never received pay. I was threatened with death if I remained home and for that reason left and went into the Union lines. I had two sons in the Rebel Army— one of whom was conscripted. George & Arthur both now in Manatee County . . . I was always opposed to the cause of secession, voted against it throughout with the cause of the union. I was present when the property described in my petition was taken— near Fort Myers, Fla. in 1865. The horses were taken by Lt. Ames, Acty Qr Master at Fort Myers, who said he would see they were taken care of . . . The condition of the horses was good, value Four Hundred dollars. The horses were kept in the service of the United States, and I have never receive any pay therefor.  

John M. Bates, who had moved to Lily in 1860, also filed a belated Union claim in which he stated in part:

My Sympathies was on the Union side they were from the beginning to the end . . . I was employed tending horses in 1864 at Fort Myers . . . I was in that employment until Fort Myers was abandoned when I was sent to Sea Horse Key with my family who came to me about that time . . . I took the oath of allegiance at Cedar Keys, Florida . . . I was made to break up and leave home in 1864 in Manatee County. By Citizens but not regular forces. I was threatened with being taken up and sent to the Confederate army . . . I had a horse taken about 25 head of cattle and about (100) one hundred head of hogs. My property was taken in 1864. My horse was taken by John Collins Hogs by Wm Collins Cattle by Confederate agents. I was never paid therefor. Never filed for the same to the Confederate government or any office . . . I never had any property confiscated except a yoke of oxen . . . I carried the horse for which this claim is filed to Fort Myers with me and she was taken possession of by the officers of the United States for the use of the United States Army at Fort Myers . . .

The Reconstruction Acts of March 1867 and the constitutional convention of January 1868 brought dramatic changes to Manatee County and to a lesser extent Polk County. In May 1868 James D. Green was elected as
Representative in Manatee County while Democrats prevailed in Polk County legislative races. Despite the power of appointment, Republican Governor Harrison Reed and his successors, Ossian B. Hart and Marcellus L. Stearns, with a few notable exceptions, probably for lack of Unionists and political expediency, chose to appoint Conservatives in Polk County.25

Manatee County was led during Reconstruction by two former Union captains, James D. Green and John F. Bartholt. Green initially was the power broker, with his influence felt, not only regionally but state-wide. Eventually though, intraparty battles with James T Magbee and Governor Reed wounded Green and the party, then a disastrous race-marred state senate election to succeed Henry A. Crane in November 1870 ended Green’s legislative career although he continued to serve in local offices. A native of New York who served in South Florida during the war and who since 1869 had served as clerk of the circuit court, Bartholf superseded Green. Under Bartholf, Republicans maintained county control but lost legislative races. Finally in 1876, the local and state Democrats phoenix-like completed their rise to send the Republican Party into ashes, yielding the electoral votes to the national Republicans, who in turn agreed to end Reconstruction. A Democrat contemporary exulted, "The refugees held a high hand... but all of their schemes have fallen to the ground and good feeling prevails today."26

I wish to thank Kyle S. VanLandingham and Canter Brown, Jr. for their research assistance.


4 Ibid; Brown, 158-159; Enoch Daniel to Lieut. Meyers, January 2, 1864, National Archives. Enoch here signed his name Daniel; other references has Daniels. The deserters were: Miller Moody, Daniel J. Parker, John E McMullen, Brown (given name not stated, he was sergeant of the guards), John Weeks, and John Freeman.

5 Proctor; Brown, 159; Crane, Feb. 24, 1864, RG 393, Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, 1821-1900 [Vol. 1], Entry 2269; Letters Received, t861-68, National Archives [microfilm @ P. K. Yonge Library, Gainesville].


7 Crane to Bowers, March 16, 1864, Brown, 162-163.

8 Crane to Green, April 2, 1864; Crane to Bowers, April 13, 1864; Brown, 162-165; Richard Livingston, "Enoch Everett Mizell 1806-1887," South Florida Pioneers 3 (January 1975), 13-17. The Fort Meade men included: Willoughby Tillis, Strety Parker, Francis A. Hendry, Jacob Surmerlin, Francis M. Durance, F. C. M. Bogges. "Old Capt. Mizzell" was Enoch E. Mizell, who had commanded militia companies in the Second Seminole War and 1849. He had moved from Hernando Co. to now Pine level Ca. 1862. His son, George C. Mizell, enlisted April 15, 1864 in Co. B, Second Florida Cavalry.

9 Childs to Bowers, May 27, 1864; Brown, 166-169.

10 Crane to Woodbury, June 18, 1864; Brown, 169; Stone, Lineage of John Carlton (1991). "Old Mr. Carlton" was Daniel Wilson Carlton (1823-1891) of Troublesome Creek whose family was illustrative of the changing status of the war. His sons Reuben
(1842-1917) and Wright (1843-1929) served in Co. E, 7th Fla., CSA. It was Reuben, home on furlough, who enlisted in Co. B, 2nd Fla. Cav. Wright served in Co. E until captured Dec. 16, 1864 at Nashville and was a prisoner of war until released in June 1865. Albert Carlton (1845-1925), Daniel’s third son, also served in Co. B, 2nd Fla. Cav. (Doyle E. Carlton, son of Albert, served as Governor of Florida from 1929-33.) Martha Jane Carlton, Daniel’s daughter, was married to James E. Whidden, another enlistee in Co. B, 2nd Fla. Cav. Daniel’s brothers-in-law, Ell English and Stephen P. Hooker, respectively, served in Capt. E. A. Hendry’s Co. A and Co. E, 7th Fla., C.S.A.

11 Addison to Gwynn, July 5, 1864 and March 20, 1865.


15 F. C. M. Boggess, A Veteran of Four Wars (Arcadia, FL, 1900), 67-71; pension file of Boggess, N. A.; Brown, 162, 399. Francis Calvin Morgan Boggess (1833-1902), a native of Madison County, Alabama, enlisted February 3, 1848 in Capt. Blanton McAlpin’s Company of the Alabama Battalion commanded by Col. Seibles, for service in the Mexican War, served at Vera Cruz, and was mustered out of service June 26, 1848 at Mobile, Alabama. He also served as first sergeant in Gen. Lopez’s expedition to Cuba in May 1850, and from December 29, 1855 to December 1857 as first sergeant in Capt. F. M. Durance’s Co. After Manatee County residents determined Representative William T. Hall had left the county and, thereby, vacated his seat, Boggess was elected representative on October 5, 1863, but was prevented by Tallahassee officials from replacing Duval. Boggess was, however, in November 1863 elected a justice of the peace.

16 Brown, 170-175; Volunteer Organizations, Civil War, “Florida 2nd Cavalry,” RG 94, Box 199, AGO, N.A. In the election the inspectors were: Capt. William W. Strickland of Co. D, 1st Lt. John W. Platt, 1st Lt. M. H. Albritton of Co. C; clerks were Sgt. Samuel J. Pearce of Co. B and 2nd Lt. James B. Sheffield of Co. C.

17 Hartman and Coles, V, 1782-1806, 2032, 2066; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census 1860, Hillsborough & Manatee counties; Richard Livingston, “John Platt 1793-1874, South Florida Pioneers 29/30 (July/Oct. 1981), 19-21, & "Willoughby Whidden 1799-1861," South Florida Pioneers 11 (January 1977), 8-11. Hartman & Coles list these additional Union soldiers, buried in Hardee County, Friendship Cemetery: Nathan Lowe and William Lowe (both born Colquitt Co., Ga.), Daniel May, George W. Williams, Thomas E. Williams; also James M. Powell in Gardner Cemetery. John Wesley Platt (1833-1920) was a son of John Platt of Lily. Hartman & Coles, 1797, list John W. Platt’s father as 1st Lt.; in fact, John W., the son, was the officer. Henry, Riley and Berryan “Sumroles” enlisted May 27, 1864 in Co. B, 2nd Fla. Cav. and deserted June 20, 1864. Henry and Riley then served in Company B, First Florida Cow Cavalry, C.S.A. The family of Willoughby Whidden was a family with divided loyalties. Sons, Maxwell and John W., and son-in-law, E. W. Thompson, served in Co. E, 7th Fla., while Maxwell also served in the Union Second Florida Cavalry, as did his brothers, Jesse, James E., and William. Son-in-law, James D. Green, was an officer in the Second Florida Cavalry. Son-in-law, Henry Langford, reportedly served in the Cow Cavalry, but was also the Manatee commissioner who deserted.


19 I. D. Parkinson to President Andrew Johnson, May 29, 1865, New York, Andrew Johnson Papers, series 1, Roll 14, L.C. “Leslie” is Leroy G. Lesley, formerly of Tampa. An ardent Confederate, he had a plantation and was captain of a cow cavalry company. For more on the Lesley Case see “L.G. Lesley,” Compiled Service Records . . . Confederate . . . Series 982, Roll #14 [1st Batt., Spec. Cav., Fla.], microfilm, N.A.

20 Brown, 182, 183.

22 Brown, 186; Boggess, 74-75; Kyle S. VanLandingham, "James T Magbee 'Union Man, Undoubted Secessionist, and High Priest in the Radical Synagogue,' " *Sunland Tribune* 20 (November 1994), 13.

23 Thomas H. Allbritton to John E Bartholf, ca. 1874, Southern Claims Commission, RG 233, N.A. in the petition his name was spelled "Allbritton," with an "X" for his signature. All other sources have his surname Albritton.

24 John M. Bates to Robert S. Griffith, January 18, 1879, Southern Claims Commission, RG 217, Case files 1877-83, Box 123, N.A.

25 Brown, 188-190, 208.

26 Brown, 184, 190, 200-203, 209, 225; Boggess, 75. Green had initially backed Josiah Walls, an African American, for Congress, but the ensuing firestorm among his heretofore loyalists constituents resulted in Green repudiation of Walls, but he had inadvertently burned political bridges and never recovered in the race. Bartholf continued as clerk until his resignation in August 1876. From 1869 to July 1876, he was also superintendent of public education in most of the Peace River Valley.
THE ESCAPE OF JUDAH P. BENJAMIN

By Rodney H. Kite-Powell, II

In 1935, the McKay family of Tampa presented the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) with a sword which once belonged to Judah P. Benjamin, Secretary of State of the Confederate States America. The sword was then placed on display in the newly renovated Gamble Mansion in Ellenton, Florida. How the sword made it from Benjamin's steamer trunk in June, 1865 to the Gamble Mansion seventy years later is still a matter of some debate. Even more uncertainty surrounds how Benjamin made his way from Richmond, Virginia to Manatee, Florida, and then out of the country, at the end of the Civil War. One particular aspect of Benjamin's escape, the events between his arrival at Brooksville and his arrival at the Gamble Mansion, is at the center of this uncertainty. The sword, along with two prominent Tampa families, are inextricably linked to this leg of Benjamin's journey. Both the Lesleys and McKays lay claim to the honor of helping Benjamin on his trek through central Florida. The Lesleys have a more plausible story, but the McKays had the sword. The families agree on all other points of Benjamin's escape except concerning who helped Benjamin from Brooksville to the Gamble.

Benjamin served in three different cabinet positions for the Confederate States under President Jefferson Davis. In February of 1861, Benjamin took the post of Attorney General. In September of that same year, he moved to the office of Secretary of War. After a brief tenure at that position, he changed again, this time becoming Secretary of State (March, 1862), a post he would hold until the end of the war. Benjamin received both praise and condemnation in his capacity as Davis’ trusted adviser. Historians would later dub him the "Brains of the Confederacy."

Perhaps the New York Times best summarizes Benjamin's escape. On page four of the August 3, 1865 edition,
Benjamin is said to have arrived in Havana on July 25th, after "a mythical escap[e] from Florida." The writer stated simply, "The truth is he got out of Dixie somehow." The "mythical" story of Benjamin's escape was told by everyone from United States soldiers searching for him to twentieth century biographers writing about him. One man who helped Benjamin get out of Florida, Hiram A. McLeod, wrote his own version nearly thirty years after the fact.

Also, descendants of some of the participants and alleged participants have written from their families' perspective. Finally, there is Benjamin himself, who wrote to his sister from the Bahamas just after arriving there from Florida. None give a complete record of Benjamin's trail, but when taken together, with some reasoning added, an accurate account takes shape.

Benjamin broke away from President Davis's escape party on May 3, near the South Carolina/Georgia border. From there, he traveled south, with Florida as his goal. It is known that the group, including Benjamin, passed through Abbeville, South Carolina, as they made their way south. Some historians say Abbeville was the site of "the last Cabinet meeting". Benjamin himself says that the group remained together until they reached Washington, Georgia.

While traveling through Georgia, Benjamin took on the disguise of a Frenchman seeking land on which to settle. He was able to speak broken English like a Frenchman, and he wore a disguise of a hat, goggles, cloak, and full beard, which he had recently grown. This disguise is cited in almost every work dealing with Benjamin's escape. What is sometimes also cited is the fact that he had a Colonel H. J. Leovy with him as a travel companion through Georgia. It is also alleged that before he left Richmond he had a Confederate passport made which stated he was a Frenchman traveling through the south. Most sources also note that he used an alias as part of his Frenchman ruse, either M.M. Bonfals, Monsieur Bonfals, or just Bonfals. If he really did use this alias, it shows that the fleeing Benjamin, who lived most of his adult life in New Orleans, Louisiana, still had a sense of humor. Bonfals is French/Cajun for "good disguise."

After entering Florida, Benjamin shed the disguise of a Frenchman in favor of another — that of a farmer. To complete this disguise, he had "a kind farmer's wife . . . make [him] some homespun clothes just like her husbands. [He] got for [his] horse the commonest and roughest equipment that [he] could find." This quote is repeated in almost every version of Benjamin's escape. It originated from a letter Benjamin wrote to his sister shortly after arriving in the Bahamas in July of 1865. Benjamin's first major biographer, Pierce Butler, was the first to publish these letters. Butler had
access to what little of Benjamin’s papers still existed. The letters Benjamin wrote to his sister, Mrs. Kruttschnitt, are of immense importance. In an effort to dissuade historians from writing his biography, Benjamin, throughout his post-Civil War life, destroyed all of his personal and business papers. Butler was a friend of a descendant of Benjamin, and she allowed him access to what papers of his remained.

Benjamin traveled through north Florida alone. He probably entered the state in late May, and headed toward Brooksville. It is at this point of the story where the Lesley and McKay theories split. That Benjamin was secreted through central Florida in early June is generally accepted as true. The debate lies in the question of who helped him. The simplest explanation is that Captain Leroy G. Lesley, and his son Major John T. Lesley, took Benjamin to Manatee, and the Gamble Mansion. The more complex theory involves the McKay family.

According to the Lesley family, while Benjamin was in Abbeville he approached, or was approached by, the Lesley family, who informed him that they had family members in Florida who would assist in his escape. Benjamin made his way south, finally reaching Brooksville, likely in late May or the first week of June. In Brooksville, Benjamin was to contact Captain Lesley. When he finally located Lesley, plans were quickly put in place to spirit Benjamin to a port on the Gulf of Mexico, his first step in leaving the country.

Captain Lesley immediately sent for his son, Major John T. Lesley, then at his home in Tampa. Upon his arrival at Brooksville it was decided that without further delay the Secretary must set out for the Florida coast near Manatee where a boat would be provided to commence the recommended journey to Cuba. Here, or later at Manatee, Benjamin objected to the Cuban destination with the reason that he had little confidence of finding protection there under the weak Spanish government, and preferred chancing it to one of the British islands of the Bahamas, a government that had unofficially professed friendship for the Confederacy.

Most of coastal Florida had been occupied by Union troops since the middle of the war, so finding a suitable port would prove difficult. It was decided that the small community of Manatee would be best. The Lesley’s knew Archibald McNeill, who was living at the Gamble Mansion with his family at the time. Most sources place Benjamin in Major Lesley’s care on the trip south, while others name his father as
Benjamin’s guide. Benjamin was passed off as Mr. Howard, a friend of the Lesleys.

When Benjamin and the Lesleys arrived at the Gamble Mansion, McNeill was ready to take in his new border. A room was prepared in the house, where Benjamin could keep an eye out for Federal boats on the Manatee River. While Benjamin was at the Mansion, it was raided by a Federal search party looking for the fleeing Confederate. Benjamin and McNeill barely got out of the house and into some bushes in time.

The Lesley side of the story was promoted by Theodore Lesley, who served as Hillsborough County’s official historian in the 1960s and 70s. Several local writers use the Lesley’s explanation of events in their histories. Lesley himself gives a brief historiography of Benjamin’s escape in a 1957 letter: "Much later, in the 1920s, there began to appear other accounts, written by members of the second generation, which brings in new names and episodes which, of course, are open to question." Perhaps he is referring to the McKay theory, which first appears in the 1920s.

The McKay argument, a more complex and less believable explanation of Benjamin’s voyage to Manatee, involves Captain James McKay and his son, Major John A. McKay. This story has Major McKay traveling to Brooksville to bring Benjamin to Tampa, where he would stay for a week while further arrangements were made. Benjamin allegedly stayed in the McKay home, which stood less than half a mile from Fort Brooke, which was by this point occupied by Union troops. While it is possible that this did occur, it is highly unlikely. In his letters to his sister, Benjamin wrote that he stayed away from populated towns as much as possible. Why would he let himself be brought to Tampa, and then stay for a week before moving on?

The McKay theory has been advanced, for the most part, by Donald B. (D. B.) McKay, who was also at one time Hillsborough County’s official historian. The theory has undergone some changes over the years, evolving to include the Lesley family. At first, the McKays were the only ones responsible for Benjamin’s safe passage from Brooksville to Tampa. This story was advanced in an article in the April 5, 1927 Tampa Daily Times. The writer states that Captain James McKay received word that Benjamin was in hiding, so he brought him to Tampa. After staying at the McKay home for about a week, Benjamin set out, with James McKay as his guide, for the Manatee River. McKay took Benjamin to the Gamble Mansion, but McNeill would not allow Benjamin inside, fearing a Federal search party would discover the fugitive. Instead, "a huge pile of cordwood was arranged with a small vacant space inside that became Benjamin’s ‘home’ while he awaited the
arrival of a small schooner in which to escape to the Bahamas."\(^7\)

The \textit{Times} writer added another detail to back the McKay side of the argument.

At the end of that stage of the flight which took him [Benjamin] to McNeal's wood-pile, Mr. Benjamin presented to the senior Captain McKay the sword he was wearing and it was a prized possession of his for several years.\(^8\)

This was the first mention of a sword in Benjamin's escape. D. B. McKay was the publisher of the \textit{Tampa Daily Times} when the aforementioned article was published.

There was a time, In the 1920s, when the McKays did not have the sword. It was in the possession of Colonel H. C. Spencer. The sword was given to Spencer by Donald S. McKay, one of James McKay's sons, as a "token of friendship."\(^9\) It is not known how or when the sword returned to the McKay family.

The sword again gained attention, in June of 1935, when the \textit{Tampa Daily Times} ran a story featuring D. B. McKay holding the sword under the headline "Museum to Be Given McKay Heirloom."\(^10\) The museum was the Museum of the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia. For whatever reason, the Museum of the Confederacy did not get the sword. Instead, it went to the UDC and the Gamble Mansion.

Through the efforts of Robert Perry, Park Manager of the Gamble Plantation State Historic Site, the author was able to examine the sword. The sword's scabbard was signed, in ink, "To James McKay Senior from Judah P. Benjamin." Written in pencil, also on the scabbard, is the name "Capt. Tresca," the date "1865," and "[illegible] sword made for [illegible] states in Richmond, Va." While the sword is from the Civil War era, it is impossible to tell if it was, in fact, Benjamin's.
In 1956, D. B. McKay, in his "Pioneer Florida Page" from the Tampa Sunday Tribune, restated the family position. "A McKay family legend is to the effect that Secretary Benjamin spent a week in Tampa concealed in the home of Captain James McKay before going to Ellenton." He further states that Benjamin gave James McKay his sword in appreciation for his efforts. It is interesting to note that McKay referred to the story as a "family legend."

By 1950, a combination version of events appeared. In Karl Grismer's Tampa, edited by D. B. McKay, both fathers, Captain James McKay and Captain Leroy G. Lesley, take Benjamin to the Gamble Mansion. In 1959, the softened McKay story again appeared, this time in Pioneer Florida. Both the McKays and the Lesleys are credited for guiding Benjamin to the Gamble Mansion. "At Brooksville, Florida, he [Benjamin] enlisted the aid of Captain Leroy G. Lesley, whose son, Major John T. Lesley, took him to Tampa, where he was hidden for several days in the home of Captain James McKay." As to what happened after the McKays drop Benjamin off in Manatee, the Lesley theory continues, as do the ideas of other historians.

After about two weeks, and one Federal raid, Benjamin left the Gamble Mansion for a more secluded hiding place. Some sources place him at the home of Captain Frederick Tresca, who was one of the two men who took Benjamin to the Bahamas. This is as likely as any story. By his own account, Benjamin spent almost a month in central Florida waiting for a boat to take him to Cuba or the Bahamas. A boat was finally found, probably in Clearwater, and Benjamin was taken overland to Sarasota Bay to meet it.

The two men who agreed to sail Benjamin to the Bahamas were Captain Tresca and Hiram A. McLeod. They left, according to Benjamin, on June 23. The trip was necessarily slow; they had to resupply often, remain vigilant for Union gunboats, and the weather did not always cooperate. On two separate occasions their boat was chased by Federal ships. The first time, they were able to hide near Gasparilla Island. The second time they were not as fortunate. While still on the west coast, they were boarded by a Union search party. Benjamin was able to avoid detection by donning a cook's apron and smearing himself with grease. It is sometimes reported that one of the Federal troops remarked he had never seen a Jewish cook before.

The three men finally arrived in Bimini on or around July 10. Benjamin's voyage, and the risks inherent in it, were not over yet. Even before reaching the Bahamas, they were struck by a terrible storm, which gave Benjamin his first view of a waterspout. After arriving in Bimini, Benjamin sought passage to Nassau. He was told that a sponge boat was making the trip, and on July 13, he set off in the sponge-laden boat, bound for Nassau. After a day at sea, the sponges, which were wet when the boat left Bimini, had begun to dry and expand. The boat soon split apart and sank. Benjamin, along with three deckhands and a pot of rice, were able to get into the skiff the boat was towing behind it. They were picked up that evening by the British Lighthouse yacht Georgina, which itself was bound for Bimini. Back in Bimini on the 15th of July, Benjamin once again sought passage to Nassau. One source says he found Tresca and McLeod and had them take him. Regardless, Benjamin probably arrived in Nassau on July 21, after six storm-filled days at sea.

Fate was not through with Benjamin yet. He finally arrived in Havana on July 25, and
from there he left for Britain. His first attempt was cut short by a fire onboard his steamer. The ship was able to return to port on time, but had the fire not been noticed when it was, the ship would have been lost. His second attempt at crossing the Atlantic was successful, and on August 30, Benjamin arrived in Southhampton, England.\(^{17}\)

Benjamin could only look back in wonder over the events of the past four months. In that short span of time, Benjamin had gone from the position of Secretary of State of the Confederacy to fleeing fugitive to American ex-patriot in England. Back in Florida, nobody spoke openly about the stranger who so recently passed through their midst. While Benjamin did send some gifts of fabric and the like, his lasting legacy is his sword, enclosed in a museum’s plexiglass case, not ten miles from the point where he touched American soil for the last time.

No story of Benjamin’s escape is complete without the inclusion of some of the stranger assertions made by some authors of Benjamin’s escape. The McKays are a source of two oddities, both mentioned above: Benjamin staying a half a mile from Fort Brooke for a week and Archibald McNeill not allowing him inside the Gamble Mansion. Other authors have different notions about Benjamin’s stay at the Gamble, and how he got there. In Gussie Turner’s *Turners and Allied Families*, she asserts that her relatives took part in helping to hide Benjamin. Before Major Lesley took Benjamin to the Gamble he enlisted the aid of Major William I. Turner. Major Turner hid Benjamin in a swamp on his property for several days. According to Turner’s history:

> The swamp was hot, steamy, and full of mosquitoes. It was quite a trial for Benjamin who was used to a life of luxury. The Turner Family was so afraid that he would be discovered that they gave him food only once a day. This was late in the afternoon when they went into the swamp to feed the hogs. They never went into the swamp in the same place, but entered from a different direction each time they carried food to Benjamin and the hogs.\(^{18}\)

Perhaps the best story centers around how Benjamin found the Gamble Mansion. Two of Benjamin’s biographers, Meade (1943), and Evans (1988) have similar stories about Benjamin finding a parrot. In both stories, Benjamin is resting on the side of the road when he hears a voice say, "Hi for Jeff." At first he thinks he is just tired and hearing things, but the voice repeats itself several times. He finally notices a parrot in a nearby tree. He throws some stones at the bird, in an effort to make it take flight, hopefully leading him to the bird’s owner. In Meade’s version, the owner is a Confederate sympathizer who gives Benjamin some clothes and food.\(^{19}\)

In Evans’s book, an implication is made that the bird’s owner lived at the Gamble Mansion. He states that the owner of the bird let Benjamin stay for a few days at his house, and while he was there, the house was raided by a Federal search party. Benjamin was forced to run out of the kitchen door and into the nearby thickets. The homeowner’s dog followed him, and Benjamin had to scoop the dog into his arms to hold his mouth closed. This is very similar to a story which appears in other sources, only the Gamble Mansion is mentioned, and it is McNeill who has to pick up and quiet the dog.

How exactly did Benjamin get out of Dixie? Authors have been writing about his journey for over one hundred and thirty years. Whatever the content, the stories of
Benjamin’s escape from the United States are very interesting. More importantly, they all add something to our understanding of the past.


2 Hiram A. McLeod was interviewed by a reporter from the Galvaston *Daily News*, and that interview appeared in the May 27, 1894 edition of that paper. The Historical Records and State Archives Surveys of the Works Progress Administration compiled this interview into a history of Benjamin’s escape, published in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1937.


4 Ibid., 363.

5 Excerpt from a letter from Theodore Lesley to Mr. C. H. Schaffer of the Florida Park Service, dated March 1, 1957. Theodore Lesley wrote to many people on the topic of his family’s role in the escape of Benjamin. Lesley Collection, University of South Florida Library Special Collections. For another account of the Lesley version, see Donald J. Ivey, "John T Lesley: Tampa’s Pioneer Renaissance Man," *Sunland Tribune* 21 (November t955), 8. Also, Hernando pioneer, Samuel E. Hope, backed up the Lesley version in a letter to the *Confederate Veteran* magazine in 1910. See *Confederate Veteran* 18 (June 1910), 263.

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 *Tampa Daily Times*, June 3, 1935.

11 Donald B. McKay, "The Pioneer Florida Page," *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, December 16, 1956. A Gamble Mansion brochure, prepared by the Florida Park Service in the 1950s (?), states: "Later on, from abroad, he [Benjamin] sent a bolt of silk dress goods, buttons, needles and thread to Mrs. Lesley. He sent similar gifts to Mrs. McNeill, Mrs. Tresca and to others to show his gratitude. To Captain McKay he sent an inscribed sabre which is on exhibit at the Memorial." (emphasis added)


14 The following sources use the 'cook disguise' in their treatments of Benjamin’s escape: Lillie B. McDuffee, *The Lures of Manatee: A True Story of South Florida’s Glamourous Past* (Manatee, 1933); Grismer; Hackney; McKay, *Pioneer Florida*; Eli Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York, 1988); Robert Douthat Meade, *Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate Statesman* (London, 1943); and a letter written to the *Savannah Morning News*, April 15, 1877 (April 20, 1877 edition) by E.M.G. It is interesting to note that McLeod never mentioned the disguise in his account of Benjamin’s escape. A. J. Hanna’s *Flight Into Oblivion* does not mention this episode. Hanna remains impartial in the Lesley/McKay debate, stating the Lesley side and referring readers to an *Atlanta Journal* (March 10, 1935) article which covers the McKay theory.

15 Meade, 321.

16 Evans, 318-320.

17 Meade, 325.


19 Meade, 319.
"DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS":
TAMPA’S CRISIS OF LAW AND ORDER IN THE
ROARING TWENTIES

By Michael H. Mundt

In 1920, after forty years of continuous population growth, Tampa stood poised to meet the challenges of a new decade. But the change the city soon faced rocked the community’s foundations. Tampa’s 1920 population of 52,000 burgeoned to 119,000 in just five years.1 While city leaders praised Tampa’s boom, this dramatic demographic change brought considerable tensions to the city in the roaring twenties and earned the city an undesired reputation. Shortly after the close of the decade, sociologist Harrington Cooper Brearley noted that the stupendous growth of U.S. cities in the early 1920s was almost invariably accompanied by an increase in crime.2 Tampa exemplified this trend. Property, violent, and moral crimes swelled substantially in the 1920s, confronting citizens with a crisis of law and order in their community.

In the first few years of the decade, property crime in Tampa evolved from an occasional annoyance to a chronic plague. From pickpocketing to large heists, Tampans suffered as criminals capitalized on a booming city flush with cash. Automobile thieves were perhaps the most visible. Tampans despised these crooks not only for the great number of vehicles they stole, but for their astonishing audacity. Of the stolen automobiles recovered, many were being driven openly by thieves on Tampa’s streets. The car thieves’ choice of vehicles also surprised many. In 1925, a deputy sheriff’s car was stolen from Tampa’s courthouse. Between 1923 and 1925, thieves stole six vehicles belonging to Tampa’s federal prohibition agents. In 1924, a Tampa police officer’s personal vehicle was stripped by thieves, and a "nervy" thief stole a police car from police headquarters, prompting the Tampa Tribune to announce in bold headlines: "Even Cops’ Possessions Not Safe."3

Other bold criminal acts mounted. Highway robbery had plagued automobile travellers in rural Hillsborough County prior to 1920. But in the early part of the decade, this crime drastically increased on the many miles of desolate county roads, usually leaving the victim stranded miles from Tampa. In 1923, some highwaymen moved their trade to urban areas, perpetrating a series of daring incidents in Tampa’s better neighborhoods, which relieved residents of jewelry, cash, and cars. Despite two gunfights with Tampa Police Department detectives, these culprits were never apprehended.4

Car thefts, highway robberies, and other property crimes frequently struck the city in waves. Tampans periodically faced "epidemics" of street muggings and citywide "raids" and "invasions" by home burglars. As news of a crime wave spread in 1924, the Plant City Courier nonchalantly noted, "Tampa is staging another crime wave." But the frequency of property crime heightened Tampans’ sensitivities, and residents were shocked by especially violent incidents, such as one in 1924 when thugs broke into a middle-class Tampa house, drugged its two residents, ransacked the home, and fled with money and jewelry, leaving the couple unconscious for over twenty-four hours.
While such spectacular incidents were rare, Tampa’s media ensured that these stories received great attention. But the local papers also recorded the prevalence of less spectacular burglaries; the Tribune lamented: "A number of homes are entered practically every night. . . . And the burglars get away with it. . . . Tampa seems to be a free field for this variety of criminal." A citizen whose home had been robbed seven times concurred, noting, "We have no police protection. . . . A man hardly feels safe to go to sleep at night."5

Despite the prevalence of property crimes, the frequency of homicide in Tampa proved more distressing. Between 1920 and 1925, the number of murders in Tampa increased by 420 percent. Even adjusted for Tampa’s phenomenal population growth, this figure still indicates more than a doubling of Tampa’s homicide rate. By 1925, the city’s murder rate had swelled to 44.26 occurrences per 100,000 residents, a figure several times greater than the nation’s urban rate. (Tampa’s 1992 murder rate was 16.8 occurrences per 100,000 residents)6 Tampans’ proclivity for murder plagued the city with a high incidence of mysterious disappearances, suspicious suicides, and unsolved murders, a fact which did not escape the attention of other Florida communities. In 1924, the Arcadia News sarcastically remarked of Tampa: "If the murder orgy . . . keeps up[,] the next census will show a decrease in the population." That same year, the Plant City Courier noted that scarcely a week passed without

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Hillsborough County’s courthouse around 1926. Constructed in the 1890s, the courthouse’s Mediterranean Revival architecture reflected that of the Tampa Bay Hotel. City leaders hoped this grand structure also would become a recognizable landmark for the growing city. However, by the 1920s the courthouse symbolized serious shortcomings in the area’s judicial system.

— Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System
mention of a new murder in Tampa, an observation which more accurately depicts the city's exploding homicide rate.\textsuperscript{7}

While property crime threatened Tampans' possessions and violence shattered their sense of personal security, crimes which tore the community's moral fiber also increased in the 1920s. By 1923, narcotics had become a serious concern among Tampa citizens. The \textit{Tampa Times} published an expose revealing what most Tampans already knew: the city was plagued by morphine and cocaine dealers and addicts, or "dope fiends." Tampa police estimated that at least five hundred addicts wandered the streets of Tampa: a "dope army" which the police blamed for half of all thefts within the city. The substantial costs of arresting and sustaining these addicts in jail fell upon the city; the state of Florida was unwilling to sponsor rehabilitation programs sufficient for these addicts. In fact, the state hospital had directed a reform-minded Hillsborough County judge to stop sending addicts for treatment, as Tampa's problem was overwhelming that facility. The drain on city coffers and city manpower prompted this judge to warn: "Something is going to have to be done and done quickly."\textsuperscript{8}

Federal narcotics agents based in Tampa added to the alarm. In 1923, they revealed to the press that drug prices were falling as Tampa's dealers waged a "dope war," flooding the city's streets with greater amounts of narcotics to maintain profits. These agents observed that Tampa was rapidly becoming a "notorious" drug selling and smuggling center, drawing addicts from across the south. Residents feared the agents' admonitions that Tampa threatened to surpass New Orleans—the traditional "mecca for the dope fraternity"—in the narcotics trade. Federal agents continued to feed the fire by warning: "The dope fiends are flocking this way." The importation and use of narcotics "remained a serious problem" in Tampa throughout the 1920s.\textsuperscript{9}

Less physically destructive—but no less offensive to many Tampans—was gambling. Tampa and Hillsborough County were riddled with gambling houses where patrons allegedly fell into financial and moral ruin. In 1924, Tampa's police chief claimed there were over 1,000 slot machines within the city limits, which constituted "a menace to the health and morals of school children[,] who frequently lost all their lunch money" playing the slots. Many citizens similarly decried both the widespread bolita numbers game and the numerous small underground casinos in Ybor City, and the \textit{Times} lamented the prosperity of the city's "gambling 'industry.'" Many proprietors of gambling houses were repeatedly implicated in other crimes including larceny, fraud, and prohibition violation, thus adding to the widespread opinion of the low character of these purveyors. Additionally, many Tampa citizens linked gambling to governmental corruption. Local law enforcement officers—from patrolmen and deputies to the chief of police and the county sheriff—repeatedly were accused of accepting payoffs and protection money from gambling dens. In the 1923 mayoral race, the media and the opposition candidates condemned the incumbent administration for tolerating the city's deplorable gambling conditions, allegations which implied a vested interest by the mayor in the continued existence of gambling establishments.\textsuperscript{10}

As in many other cities, the most widespread moral offense in 1920s Tampa was the distribution and manufacture of alcoholic beverages in violation of federal and state prohibition laws. The buying, selling, smuggling, distilling, and brewing of alcoholic beverages were all highly visible
in Tampa and surrounding counties, as many residents "made a mockery of prohibition laws." Boats laden with liquor from Cuba and the British West Indies entered Tampa Bay and the many secluded inlets and coves along Florida's west coast. Hundreds of moonshine stills dotted the swampy backwoods areas around Tampa, and many citizens of rural Pasco and Hernando Counties made a comfortable living by quenching Tampans' thirst. But large stills also operated in the heart of the city under the nose of enforcement officials, and speakeasies and "soft-drink stands" lined the streets of Ybor City, West Tampa, and many parts of downtown, including Franklin Street. In 1923, one resident determined that 142 places within the city limits sold alcohol "more or less openly," and a survey of the local media correspondingly suggests that prohibition-era Tampa indeed was swimming in liquor.\footnote{11} The Tampa Police Department, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, and federal prohibition agents made frequent arrests, but to little avail as low court fines and short jail sentences allowed repeat liquor offenders to ply their profitable trade with only minor interruptions. Many of the violators' names habitually appeared on county and city court dockets, which the local newspapers printed so all Tampans could observe the ineffectiveness of the community's prohibition efforts; their city became known as one of the wettest in America.\footnote{12}

In this atmosphere of criminality, Tampa citizens turned to law enforcement officials to subdue vice and violence. But the city's rapid population increase had left Tampa's law enforcers woefully unprepared for the law and order crisis of the 1920s. For much of the decade, the city's police force remained understaffed and underfunded. As late as 1924, Tampa's chief of police lamented that only nine policemen patrolled the entire city on any given shift.\footnote{13} Not until well into the decade did the community sufficiently increase expenditures to provide for law enforcement commensurate with the increase in Tampa's population.

This shortcoming allowed the criminality and violence raging in Tampa to engulf the city's law officers. The theft of police vehicles proved a repeated embarrassment, and more than once, police headquarters was burglarized by those seeking to destroy evidence in prohibition cases. Law officers frequently faced assaults and gunfire when making arrests. One Tampa officer was killed while arresting a disorderly lush; the city's chief of detectives received a severe gunshot wound after a shootout with bank robbers; another officer was shot during a cigarworkers' strike; a city detective survived a drive-by shooting which the
media labeled an assassination attempt. Within the period of one year, an unfortunate city officer fell victim to a mob, was stabbed, knocked unconscious in a pool hall brawl, and survived a blast from a shotgun. Clearly, Tampa's law officers found themselves in the tumultuous center of the city's ongoing crisis.  

The illicit liquor trade in particular sparked a high level of violence around Tampa. In 1922, two federal prohibition agents for Tampa's district were killed by Pasco County moonshiners who laid in ambush on a lonely road. The incident shocked many, and two thousand Tampans attended the funeral of one of the slain agents, who had family in the city. The state director of the Anti-Saloon League declared that the two agents were the first killed in Florida's ongoing "whisky rebellion." Three years later, a moonshiner wounded another Tampa prohibition officer in a shootout near neighboring Plant City. 

This "whisky rebellion" also flared on the streets of Tampa as liquor purveyors assaulted police officers attempting to apprehend suspects. In one incident, a Tampa undercover officer monitoring a business for liquor violations was attacked with a hall of fists and gunfire by the proprietors and employees of the establishment. Similarly, when a Hillsborough County deputy raided an Ybor City cafe, Sunday-morning drinkers threw wine bottles at him, and the establishment's proprietors assaulted him. In another case, a prohibition violator literally held up a police officer at gun point, demanding that the officer return the liquor he had just seized from that proprietor's establishment. When four officers returned to arrest this assailant, he held a gun to the officers while his wife destroyed evidence. Two years later, an African-American undercover officer who had been "instrumental" in convicting several liquor dealers and gambling operators was shot five times and his body dumped in the Hillsborough River. Gun battles repeatedly broke out between bootleggers and police officers; these skirmishes wounded several Tampa officers, and a few lost their lives in the line of duty as Tampa's liquor war raged. One area resident recalled the fate of those who challenged the bootleggers' trade: "My God they would do away with you." Such violence demonstrated the liquor dealers' resolve, but also offended many law-abiding Tampans.

Amid Tampa's thievery, wandering drug addicts, seedy gambling dens, freeflowing
liquor, and rampant violence, three well-known personalities—a liquor dealer, a criminal attorney, and the unlikely mastermind of a massive heist—concisely illustrate the magnitude of the law and order crisis Tampans faced.

Cafe owner Leo L. Isaac serves as a prototype of the city's liquor distributors. In his mid-forties and a father of three, Isaac worked as a clerk after his arrival in Tampa around 1919. Two years later, he opened the Nebraska Cafe on the corner of Nebraska and Sixth Avenues. In 1922, he changed the cafe's name to the more suggestive Isaac's Nest, an establishment that quickly gained great notoriety in Tampa. From his place of business, Isaac sold alcohol and ran a liquor distribution service. So profitable was Isaac's establishment that in just two years of operating, the former clerk was wealthy enough to own a home near the bay in posh Hyde Park. Considered an impure dive by many Tampans, Isaac's Nest was frequented not only by drinkers, but by some of the city's least reputable and most infamous citizens. In 1922, a teenage girl – loaded with illicit liquor – committed suicide in one of the back rooms of Isaac's Nest after sharing the company of a notorious Tampa criminal and suspected underworld figure. The Times published the girl's dramatic last words for an outraged citizenry: "I did it because I had been drinking." This well-publicized incident confirmed many Tampans' suspicions of the fundamental immorality of liquor joints and the danger such operations posed to the moral health of the community.

Leo Isaac was repeatedly arrested and tried for liquor offenses, although he generally escaped punishment through the shrewd actions of his attorney. Thus, Isaac – like most liquor dealers – found it only mildly dangerous and highly lucrative to disregard community laws. Continued success flaunting the law increased Isaac's impudence. In 1923, he rudely introduced two investigating police officers to his bodyguards and threatened to notify his attorney of this violation of his rights. Isaac's hiring of gunmen lent him the appearance of a small-time gangster. The brazenness of Isaac typified the exploits of many local liquor dealers and illustrated the city's inability to curb extensive prohibition violation.

But Isaac's illegality was facilitated by defense attorney Pat Whitaker. Whitaker had built a successful Tampa law practice largely by defending liquor and narcotics violators. Whitaker repeatedly had charges against Leo Isaac dropped, had his convictions overturned, and had his fines and jail sentences reduced. Perhaps no attorney in Tampa understood the law's intricacies so well as Pat Whitaker. Keen and flamboyant, Whitaker's histrionics irritated prosecutors; his challenges to judicial objectivity and his motions for change of venue annoyed municipal judges, and his courtroom machinations earned him the audible wrath of many Tampa citizens. But these legal maneuvers secured dismissals and overturned convictions for his often unsavory clients. Whitaker's actions on his clients' behalf became notorious. In 1923, when the county sheriff's actions threatened Whitaker's legal tactics, he attempted to have the sheriff removed from office for neglect of duty. Two years later, Whitaker secured a dismissal of charges against a client by successfully challenging a city-wide annexation election, thus removing his client from both the city limits and the jurisdiction of the city police.

In the 1920s, the "noble experiment" flooded America's courts with prohibition
violators, although the trade in illicit liquor was not suppressed. Many Americans held maneuvering attorneys responsible for the courts’ ineffectiveness and derth of convictions. In Tampa, Pat Whitaker symbolized the shrewd attorney who manipulated the law and abused the judicial system for the benefit of the guilty. Whitaker’s publicized audacity reaffirmed many Tampans’ notion that the courts were becoming favorable to the obviously guilty, whose behavior threatened community law and order.

But a single incident may have done more than the combination of the city’s skyrocketing crime rate and the actions of men like Leo Isaac and Pat Whitaker to undermine Tampans’ confidence in the justice system and to make citizens realize the extent of the law and order crisis facing their community.

In April 1924, two armed men robbed Alonzo C. Clewis, president of the Bank of West Tampa, of $24,000 as he made a transfer to the Exchange National Bank. When the Tampa Police prematurely suspended their investigation, Peter O. Knight, attorney for the Exchange National Bank, hired private detectives to investigate the massive heist. Four months later, these detectives discovered the principal of the crime and supplied his name to the Tampa Police. Upon his arrest, the principal confessed and implicated four others as part of a conspiracy to rob Clewis. One of the implicated was a local private detective and former Hillsborough County deputy sheriff. Another was the former fingerprint specialist for the Tampa Police Department. Yet another was a former police undercover man. Investigators soon revealed an unlikely mastermind of the operation: Edith M. Conway. A widow, Conway had lived in Tampa only two years. She had served as a Tampa police officer and secretary to the chief of police, maintaining ties to many of the area’s former and contemporary law enforcers. But a family connection proved more beneficial to her criminal plot. Her son was an accountant for the Exchange National Bank, and he had passed the information to his mother which resulted in Clewis’ robbery. Conway confessed after police revealed the strength of their evidence against her, which included the testimony of the two holdup men and the discovery of part of the loot underneath her house. But she soon hired an attorney, recanted her confession, and asserted her innocence. In August, a special grand jury was impanelled to investigate the crime. They indicted Conway and five others for varying offenses, and revealed to the press an "astounding" conspiracy; included in the indictment was former Chief of Police Frank M. Williams. The involvement of the chief (a married family man) in the crime arose from an apparent romantic tryst with Edith Conway.20

The court proceedings dragged on for two months. Two of the six defendants pleaded guilty, two were convicted; all four were sentenced to prison. However, the much publicized trial of Conway resulted in an acquittal despite her previous confession and strong evidence against her. As Conway’s verdict was announced, Williams (whose trial had been severed from that of Conway) pushed his way through the overcrowded courtroom to embrace and kiss Conway, lending credence to the increasingly common rumors regarding Williams and Conway’s relationship. Four days later, the assistant county prosecutor asked the presiding judge to terminate the case against Williams, because the evidence against him and Conway was closely interwoven and the prosecutor’s office did “not care to enter into a further farcical procedure.” However, the
prosecutor’s office – realizing the political ramifications of the case – was not ready to concede defeat on the Conway matter. Within one hour of this action, the prosecutor charged Conway with receiving stolen property and issued a warrant for her arrest, in an attempt to thwart Conway's plans to leave the city. But Conway was quickly released as a judge granted her attorney's plea of prior jeopardy. Adding insult to injury, less than a week after this prior jeopardy plea, Conway attempted to retrieve her share of the Clewis loot (only a small portion of the funds from the robbery was ever recovered). She turned to the circuit court seeking an order mandating that Hillsborough County return to her the recovered money which it still held as evidence.\textsuperscript{21}

The brazenness of the Clewis crime, the involvement of several former members of the area's law enforcement agencies, and the lack of punishment for the principal player angered crime-weary Tampans. One resident proclaimed that "laws, courts and juries mean absolutely nothing to the people of Hillsborough county." Another citizen heaped "discredit and disgrace" on the jurors and suggested that the defense attorneys were accessories "after the fact." The \textit{Times} lamented the "court house fiasco," and the \textit{Tribune} similarly proclaimed: "Justice is only a name in this county – a discredited impotent thing, which, with the aid of influential friends, smoothtongued lawyers, and a jury deaf to law and evidence, any criminal may laugh and scorn!" The editor continued: "A person who pleads guilty to a crime even though caught red-handed in its commission, when he has a chance to put his case before a Hillsborough County jury, is a fool." The \textit{Tribune} also suggested that the money recovered from the Clewis robbery – part of which was now claimed by Edith Conway – should be used to fund "a home for feebleminded jurors."\textsuperscript{22}

For many Tampans, this entire six-month-long incident symbolized the magnitude of the problems confronting their community. The Clewis case heightened residents' frustrations with the excessive crime in their community, the lack of justice for the guilty, the grotesque ineptitude of juries, the motives of defense attorneys, and the questionable ability and integrity of Tampa's law enforcers, who so readily engaged in criminal activity.

The Clewis case also brought Tampa unwanted publicity from across the state. The \textit{Sarasota Times} noted that "in Tampa one can confess to handling and receiving $24,000 of stolen money taken at a point of a gun, and be acquitted with acclaim." The \textit{Palmetto News} observed: "The worse a criminal is in that county [Hillsborough], the more liable he is to be turned loose when caught." The \textit{Plant City Courier} sarcastically remarked that Edith Conway must have been "tried by a jury of her peers." The \textit{Bradentown Herald} refused to be surprised by the Conway decision, insisting that such verdicts were typical in Hillsborough County. A Manatee resident recommended community ostracism of the jurors, while a Clearwater citizen suggested the abolishment of the jury system in favor of a judge; if this judge's verdict was fallible, the citizen warned, vigilantes should dutifully mete out justice.\textsuperscript{23}

The concerns Florida residents expressed regarding Tampa's Clewis case reflect the significance of the law and order issue throughout the state. The \textit{Plant City Courier} asserted that criminality had assumed "formidable proportions" and claimed Florida was "not protecting the lives of its citizens." The \textit{Bradentown Herald} wrote of
a "wave of crime" in the state. The Florida Advocate noted: "It is a self-evident fact that something is wrong in dealing with law breakers, and that our courts are becoming a game of chance, rather than courts of justice," a situation which "encouraged crime." The Plant City Courier opined that never in Florida "has crime been more prevalent, or life and property less secure, than it is today. . . . [Crime threatens to] penetrate every part of our national life, poisoning . . . our whole system of civilization." Governor Cary A. Hardee condemned the ease with which men "commit criminal acts and escape consequences of their criminality. . . . The enforcement of law, of all the laws, is the great question before us at this time."24

Tampa's crisis of law and order served as a poignant reminder to Floridians of the extent of the judicial system's decay in their state. When writing of Tampa, the state's newspapers repeatedly referred to "crime waves" and "murder orgies." In 1924, the Plant City Courier noted that one need spend but a day in Tampa to realize the severity of the problem. Several months later, the Palmetto News sarcastically observed: "Hillsborough County is planning to build a bigger and better court house. What for? Why not sell the one you've got and quit business?"25 Clearly, Tampa had become notorious in Florida for its lawlessness and "court house fiascos."

Tampa's notoriety put the city's reputation as a business and tourist mecca in jeopardy, but for those who had to live and work in Tampa, the conditions had greater relevance. In 1923, the Tampa Times admonished that it was "high time that decent, fair-minded people of Tampa give attention to these conditions."26 But this editorial lagged behind public sentiment. By the early 1920s, the magnitude of Tampa's problems had fueled a growing lack of faith in traditional judicial processes and generated political and social turmoil as citizens blamed community leaders for the deterioration of Tampa's law, order, and morality. Throughout the roaring twenties, Tampans would explore a variety of social and political options – both legal and extralegal – to address this crisis of law and order.

1 Tampa Tribune, July 23, 1921, 4a; Tampa Times, December 31, 1923, 2b; January 16, 1925, 13b; April 27, 1925, 4a. Hereafter cited as Tribune and Times.

2 Harrington Cooper Brearley, Homicide in the United States (Montclair, NJ, 1969), 149.

3 Times, May 25, 1925, 9a; November 23, 1925, 19b; November 24, 1924, 12a; Tribune, May 13, 1924, 9b. Quote from Tribune.

4 Times, June 26, 1923, 1a.

5 Tribune, May 13, 1924, 9b; February 19, 1924, 4A; reprinted in Tribune, August 28, 1924, 6a; Times, September 22, 1922. Quotes from Tribune reprint, Tribune. February 19, and Times.

6 Times, May 24, 1923, 1a, 8a; Brearley, 19, 149-150. 1922 homicide rate is courtesy of the Tampa Police Department Records and Statistics Bureau.

7 Reprinted in Tribune, April 22, 1924, 6a; September 20, 1924, 8a.

8 Times, October 31, 1923, 1a, 14a; August 27, 1923, 1a. Quotes from August 27 and October 31, 1a.


10 Tribune, May 6, 1924, 1b; October 5, 1947, 1a, 6a; Times July 31, 1922, 1a; September 11, 1923, 4a.

11 Frank Alduino, "Prohibition in Tampa," Tampa Bay History 9 (Spring/Summer 1987), 20; Richard Cofer, "Bootleggers in the Backwoods: Prohibition and the Depression in Hernando County," Tampa Bay History 1 (Spring/Summer 1979), 17-23; Times, February 14, 1923, 1a; October 1, 1923, 16a.

13 Tribune, April 24, 1924, 10a.

14 Ibid., June 27, 1924, 4b; June 14, 1924, 5a; June 13, 1924, 1b, 12b; Times, June 26, 1925, 1a; July 2, 1925, 2a; March 25, 1924, 3a; June 27, 1925, 1a, 2a; June 26, 1924, 1a; May 4, 1926, 3c.

15 Times, October 5, 1922, 1a; October 6, 1922, 20a; October 7, 1922, 1a; December 18, 1922, 9a; March 27, 1925, 1a. Quote from October 7.

16 Tribune, March 7, 1924, 3b; March 24, 1924, 14a; March 25, 1924, 3a, 10a; March 26, 1926, 2a; Times, August 17, 1925, 1b; Cofer, 22. Quote from Cofer.

17 Tampa City Directory, 1920-22; Hillsborough County, Florida Cemeteries, 1840-1985 (Tampa, 1990), 6: 297; Times, December 11, 1923, 10a; April 6, 1922, 1a; Tribune, January 16, 1924, 2a.

18 Tribune, October 21, 1923, 14e; Times, December 11, 1923, 10a; January 12, 1923, 1a.

19 Times, August 26, 1922, 1a, 8a; January 30, 1923, 1a; May 24, 1923, 8a; January 13, 1925, 2a; January 15, 1925, 12a; May 19, 1923, 8a; Tribune, October 22, 1926, 13.

20 Tribune, July 20, 1924, 7e; July 24, 1924, 1b; July 25, 1924, 1b; July 31, 1924, 10a; August 12, 1924, 2a; August 13, 1924, 10a; Tampa City Directory, 1922, 1924.

21 Tribune, August 28, 1924, 10a; August 31, 1924, 13e; September 3, 1924, 11a; September 9, 1924, 1b; September 11, 1924, 1b; October 1, 1924, 1b; October 4, 1924, 15a; October 7, 1924, 1b. Quote from September 3.

22 Tribune, September 1, 1924, 6a; September 3, 1924, 6a; September 5, 1924, 6a; September 6, 1924, 6a; Times, March 18, 1925, 4a.

23 Reprinted in Tribune, September 14, 1924, 8e; September 4, 1924, 6a; September 6, 1924, 6a; September 10, 1924, 6a; Tribune, September 6, 1924, 6a; September 3, 1924, 6a.

24 Reprinted in Tribune, August 30, 1924, 6a; reprinted in Times, October 24, 1923, 4a; March 5, 1923, 4a; reprinted in Tribune, September 20, 1924, 8a; Tribune, November 30, 1923, 9a.
RUTH ELDER:
ALL-AMERICAN GIRL OF THE JAZZ AGE

By Hampton Dunn

The year Nineteen Twenty-Seven has been dubbed The year the World Went MAD. In fact, free-lance writer and editor Allen Churchill wrote a book with that title about the exciting times that climaxed the decade of the Roaring Twenties.¹

The blurb on the dust jacket flap explained:

"1927 — peak of the Age of Wonderful Nonsense, ear of Prohibition and Peepholes, jazz babies and ukuleles, Clara Bow and Ramon Navarro, tabloids and portable victrolas . . ." Want more? Try the Year of the Big Shrick.² Or, would you believe, the

Whoopie Era, the Lawless Decade, the Age of Hoopla, and on and on?³

Think not that Florida escaped being "touched" by this hurricane of madness. Actually, the multimillion-dollar boom in local swampland had burst unhappily the year before — but the speculators, the opportunists, and the fat cats just didn't realize it. In Miami, the temperature climbed from 48 degrees to a pleasantly warm 71 at noon.

And America — and the world — was in a daredevilish, record-setting mode. Indeed, that was the year Charles "Lucky Lindy" Lindbergh courageously pioneered and flew — alone — from New York across the Atlantic Ocean and landed in Paris.⁴

And then the world went MAD, trying to set new records in the air; attempting to be "first" in this or that. Raymond Orteig, a St. Louis businessman, had started the non-stop trans Atlantic steeplechase, and setting the entire aeronautical world in a tizzy back in 1919, when he posted a $25,000 — a large sum in those days (and not bad even today) prize for the first non-stop flight from New York to Paris. In Jacksonville, Fla., a hotel operator sweetened the pot by adding another $1,000 to the prize pot.

In obscure little Lakeland, Fla., a true pioneer in the business of flying, a man named George Haldeman, caught the fever and itched to become that first flier to cross the ocean in a "flying machine." On a visit to Daytona Beach, Fla., he had seen the first Pitcairn airplane equipped with the new Wright J-5 engine. Ervie Ballough, who was
piloting the aircraft, made the prophetic statement, in Haldeman's presence, that the first man who could have an airplane built around that engine and get off the ground with 400 gallons of gasoline would be able to make a non-stop flight from new York to Paris and collect Orteig's prize. That prediction was made several years prior to 1927. Even, then, George Haldeman was making plans to reach for the plum. Ballough's estimate of what it would take to fly the Atlantic was made months before Lindbergh accomplished his world famous feat on May 20-21, 1927, in a Ryan monoplane equipped with ... you guessed it: a Wright J-5 engine and carrying between 300 and 400 gallons of fuel! "Lucky Lindy" did this before George had been able to complete his own plans, to say nothing of raising funds for the trip. So, Haldeman put his dream on the back burner.

Enter: A pretty young lass named Ruth Elder, a one-time dental assistant and beauty contest winner. Ruth Elder also was a student pilot of Haldeman. One day she came to her instructor with a novel idea: She wanted to be the first woman to fly the Atlantic! Her name began appearing in headlines all over the world. Ruth became and overnight, international celebrity. The headline writers had a field day. She was called the "Flapper Flier," a "Flamboyant beauty," "The All-American Girl," "Miss America of the Air," also "Miss America of Aviation." Author Allen Churchill even dubbed her "a nifty Jane."

And the staid, ever-so-proper New York Times got familiar enough with the charming Florida lady that it dared to break its own rules — and unprecedentedly referred to the plucky Lakeland miss simply as "Ruth" in its stories! The Stinson monoplane she made famous with flight was named American Girl.

Ruth Elder "migrated" to Lakeland from Anniston, Ala. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Elder, later followed. Hers was a large family. She had two sisters and five brothers.

Allen Churchill recorded that the prim New York Times was "smitten" by the good-looking gal from Alabam'. The author wrote: The newspaper "reported in warm detail that she was smaller than her photographs made her seem and that she spoke with a soft Alabama drawl."

Churchill added this description of Ruth: "With her wide smile, she looked exactly like the Pepsodent ads in contemporary magazines."

Haldeman himself became as enthusiastic about the daring adventure as his beautiful understudy was. Before his death in 1982, this author interviewed him while re-searching the book Yesterday's Lakeland. There was one glitch: Ruth was married. Her husband, Lyle Womack, had departed for

Tampa Mayor Charles H. Brown poses beside George Haldeman's plane at Drew Field.
— Courtesy Hampton Dunn Collection
Panama on business. He thought he had persuaded his glamorous wife not to attempt the flight.17

When Ruth first approached George with her idea, he told her to forget the thought of going alone.

"I shook my head and shot back at her, 'No, no, Ruth, you can't do that — you have only 100 or 150 hours in the air, and I will not let you go alone.' Whereupon, she begged for him to go as pilot and she as co-pilot.

"Ruth was applying for a divorce at the time," George continued. "I insisted I would not fly her across the ocean until she got her divorce. She got it, and we moved fast to begin the flight."18

Others also had objected. "Even if she succeeds, what will she have accomplished for the common good?" asked an eminent woman sociologist of the day.19 Other women joined in the chorus and newspapers like the New York World editorially suggested that the 23-year-old flapper be officially restrained. There were reports that Ruth's mother back in Alabama opposed the risky adventure. But on the day the fliers took off from New York for Paris, the United Press in a dispatch printed in The Anniston [Ala.] Star in her hometown quoted Ruth as saying, "her mother had given her approval to the flight." The UP news story stated that Ruth had with her a Bible sent by her mother.

In her new role as America's heartthrob, the aviation-struck Miss Elder found herself as the style-setter for the young ladies of the nation. The possessor of one of the first boyish bobs in recorded history, she decided to let her hair grow back into a full bob.20 While this happened, she wound a scarf around her head gypsy fashion, and soon girls all across the country were doing the same. And, Churchill noted, the Lakeland lady also wore plus fours and golf socks "in the Clarence Chamberlin manner."21 Altogether, observers say, she added up to the image of an attractive, intrepid aviatix — which she surely was.

The Elder-Haldeman odyssey started like this, in the words of George: "We left from old Drew Field in Tampa (the Lakeland airport was not finished at the time). Congressman Herbert J. Drane came over to Tampa to tell us good-bye and to wish us luck."22

They stopped in Wheeling, W. Va., to greet some business men who were backing the flight. Then it was on to New York to await ideal weather. It came on October 11, 1927. The plane was at Roosevelt Field perched on a ramp to help the craft, heavily laden with gasoline, get off the ground.

Well-wishers put a "care" package, a hamper of food aboard. Included were a vacuum bottle of hot bouillon, three turkey sandwiches, two bottles of coffee, one of
tea, a gallon of water, and some sweet chocolates. Ruth’s comment: "At first we were going to take a whole lot of stuff to eat. But we’ll be in Paris soon, and they have plenty of food there."

Besides, Ruth had had a hearty breakfast: a slice of honeydew melon, two soft boiled eggs and toast, and two cups of coffee.

The American Girl took off at 5:04 p.m., and back in Anniston, Ala., the afternoon Star put out an "EXTRA" to announce the news to the folks in Ruth’s hometown, with a "streamer" in box car letters shouting: RUTH ELDER OFF TO PARIS. Thus The American Girl added another roar to "the Roaring Twenties."

The wire story mentioned that Miss Elder’s "costume" for the flight consisted of gray knickers, a plaid sweater and a white, starched sport shirtwaist under her flying suit. Under the flying helmet she wore, the United Press reported, the scarlet bandanna "which has become as much a part of her as Helen Will’s eye shade." The UP (now United Press International) also reported that "in the pocket of her flying suit, (Ruth) admitted, she was carrying a complete vanity case, with lipstick, rouge, and all."

The Lakeland lady was quoted as saying: "I want to get out of the plane at Le Bourget as cool and neat as I did at the start. Surely, I’ll powder my nose whenever I feel like it — flying or not flying."

Spoken like the good-looking beauty queen that she was.

The flight would follow the "Lindbergh Trail" from New York, along the New England and Maine coast, over Old Orchard, Maine, over Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and across the Atlantic to Ireland, England, and France.

The American Girl flew far south of the Great Circle Route, which one historian noted was "cold and hazardous in October." But the southerly course would be near shipping lanes — which proved to be fortunate as we shall see.

The historian added: "American Girl ran into heavy squalls several hundred miles after takeoff and flew straight into the teeth of them for eight terrifying hours. At one point the plane heaved so dangerously that the comely Ruth Elder crept out on the tail to balance it. Other times she relieved Haldeman at the controls. At one danger point, Haldeman was forced to dump gasoline to help the plane in its fight against the storm. Next the oil pressure began to fail. ‘Look for a ship,’ Haldeman finally ordered. Five hours later Ruth spied the Dutch tanker Barendrecht.

Miss Elder dropped a note to the ship, weighted by a spark plug, asking how far to land, and which way? On deck, in large letters, the captain answered that the nearest land was Terceia, Azores, 360 miles away, or more than 500 miles from the coast of Portugal. Haldeman decided to ditch the plane, and brought it down into the choppy ocean. He and Ruth climbed out on the wing from which a lifeboat rescued them. For a moment the American Girl bobbed in the water, then gasoline ran over the steaming engine and caught fire. An explosion followed and the plane went down. In Paris a week later, Ruth sadly said, "It was like watching an old friend drown."

Back home, the Lakeland Evening Telegram spread the good news in a streamer in box car letters: FLIERS RESCUED BY SHIP. Next morning, the Tampa Morning Tribune
headlined RUTH ELDER SAFE ON SHIP
In Lakeland, the populace was "electrified" by the happy word and Mayor William S. Rodgers issued a call "for all" citizens to celebrate in Munn park. Ex-husband Lyle Womack turned up in the Panama Canal Zone, calling Ruth "the bravest girl in the world."

The New York Times credited the plane flown by the two Lakeland celebrities with "the longest flight over water ever made" until then, 2,623 miles.

The captain of the tanker was captivated by the real American girl, Ruth Elder, and told this story about her: "When she stepped on the deck of the ship, worn and wet and with her hair plastered to her head she very politely thanked me and then reached into a bag for a mirror and lipstick to repair some of the damage that had been done to her makeup."
The Barendrecht changed its course to drop off the aviator passengers in the Azores.

There Ruth met an established Viennese actress who had flown over from Lisbon in a German Junkers flying boat. After resting a few days in the Azores, the Florida fliers then boarded a ship for Lisbon where they were met by the American Minister. They were escorted by Portuguese officials to the Government Palace where President Carmono congratulated them on their thrilling rescue. There were flown to Madrid by a military plane where they were greeted by the American Ambassador. But their odyssey was not yet over. They made an overnight train trip to Bantiz and a commercial flight to Le Bourget Field in Paris, arriving there on October 28.

Good-bye, New York, Hello, Washington! Haldeman and Elder got back to the States to be invited by President Calvin Coolidge — "Silent Cal," he was called — to a luncheon on November 13, 1927, at the White House, joining other airmen who had attempted to fly the Atlantic, including Charles A. Lindbergh, Clarence Chamberlin, Richard E. Byrd. Social note: Ruth was the only female at the luncheon — and she wore that warm and fuzzy coat! She posed for a
picture, front row, center, standing between tall, lanky "Lucky Lindy" and the President.

After the noisy homecoming, beauteous Ruth signed up for a 25-week tour at the rate of $5,000 a week. She was in vaudeville for six months, reputedly receiving more than $100,000 for personal appearances. She starred in two silent movies with Richard Dix and Hoot Gibson. Her bank account stood at $250,000.

But easy come, easy go. Ruth blew her nest egg. "The money slipped through my fingers, and soon there was nothing," Miss Elder said in an interview years later.

Ruth continued to "dabble" in aviation, even flew in the first National Women's Air Derby in 1929 and came in fourth.

For years, Ruth lived in Honolulu, then moved to San Francisco where she died in 1977. Shortly before Ruth's death, this writer happened to be in San Francisco. He called up the former Floridian and made an appointment for an interview. She called my hotel and left a message, saying she didn't feel well and begged off the interview date.

In an obituary on Ruth, the Associated Press summed up her life after the flight: "In the half century after the flight ... Miss Elder made movies, met a President, hobnobbed with royalty, married six times, made a lot of money — and spent it all."

Her husbands included New York socialite Walter Camp, Jr. At one time, there were rumors that Ruth Elder and Howard Hughes had a "relationship" going.

She was 74 when she died on October 9, 1977, almost 50 years to the 50th anniversary of her aborted flight. Her husband of 21 years, Ralph King, 79, told reporters his flamboyant wife had been suffering from emphysema for several years. She was bedridden for the last two weeks after complications from a broken hip. She was cremated and her ashes were scattered over San Francisco Bay.

"She was a beautiful person, a real woman," said King.

She had divorced her six husbands, including King, whom she remarried. King also was wed six times. When Ruth divorced King in 1953, she claimed he had called her a "gray-haired old bag."

Haldeman continued in aviation to his dying day. Eighty-four when he died in Lakeland in 1982, Haldeman was at the time a consultant on the controversial B-1 bomber. This writer had the honor of being an honorary pallbearer at his funeral.

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2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Charles A. Lindbergh, *We* (New York, 1927), 224.
6 Churchill, 246.
7 *Philadelphia Record*, undated.
9 Churchill, 247.
12 Churchill, 247.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Hampton Dunn, *Lakeland: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA, 1990), 41.

17 Interview, Hampton Dunn and George Haldeman, Tampa, 1976.

18 Ibid.

19 Churchill, 248.

20 Ibid., 247.

21 Ibid.


24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Churchill, 248.

28 Ibid.

29 Warren J. Brown, *Florida’s Aviation History: The First One Hundred Years* (Largo, FL, 1980), 126.


31 Ibid.


34 Ibid.

35 Brown, 128.


37 Brown, 130.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 126.

41 Ibid.

42 Dunn, *Yesterday’s Lakeland*, 132.

43 Ibid., 49.


45 Brown, 131.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.


49 Brown, 131.

50 Sawyer, *Lakeland (FL) Ledger*, June 10, 1987, 7C.


It was the summer of our discontent. In Washington, a Democratic President hurled thunderbolts against a "do nothing" Republican Congress, while the GOP maintained that the liberal Democratic Party had lost touch with mainstream America. In Hillsborough County, residents cursed Dale Mabry Highway while abandoning mass transit. July rains swamped the Interbay and Sulphur Springs but the first sign of summer practice augured promise for football fans. Boosters unveiled a new bowl game, sure to put Tampa on the map. An epidemic struck young Floridians while critics prophesied that failure to fund schools threatened the future of the state. And in the worst cut of all, Tampeños complained that the classic Cuban sandwich had gone to white-bread hell. Yet many Americans contend, that like the film produced that year, it was the best year of our lives. It was the summer of 1946.

Tampa struggled to redefine itself. Everyone still recognized Tampa as "Cigar City," but the fabled cigar industry never recaptured its lost markets. World War II had hooked a new generation on cigarettes. But Tampans wished not to dwell on the past. In the
summer of '46, Americans were bent on establishing new lives. V-J Day was a memory. New priorities demanded attention: everywhere, veterans looked for jobs, enrolled in college, and built homes. A heady optimism prevailed, punctuated by the Baby Boom. Veterans quickly became part of Tampa's leadership.

Across America, a grateful America offered laurels for Ulysses, electing war heroes to public office. In 1946, Bostonians elected John E Kennedy to Congress. In Miami, "the Fighting Leatherneck," George Smathers also went to Washington. Tampa's war heroes, Sam Gibbons and Julian Lane, achieved later success in the political arena.

Returning veterans, touched by the genuine camaraderie of the foxhole and buoyed by the optimism of victory and prosperity, eagerly joined voluntary associations, reinvigorating the American Legion, the Moose Lodge, and Knights of Columbus.

In the year following the end of WWII, consumers confronted a confusing world of free markets and price controls. Americans scrambled frantically to find suitable housing, a new car, or even a T-bone steak. Americans discovered in the summer of '46 that reconverting a wartime economy from guns to butter was excruciatingly slow. When local merchants located a horde of butter—even priced at $1 a pound—shoppers snapped up supplies. In September the Tribune reported, "Tampa Is Nearly Meatless, Soapless." Housewives who frequented Frank Pardo's Market on Eighth Avenue or Snow Avenue's Woodward Grocery recoiled in horror to discover "dressed and drawn" fryers at 64 cents/lb. Turkeys at the downtown City Market fetched a mind-boggling 95 cents/lb. Patrons of Tampa's Fulton Fish Market at Platt and Magnolia found more tempting bargains: flounder sold for 35 cents/lb. and large shrimp at 65 cents/lb.¹

Nothing is more illustrative of 1946 Tampa than the neighborhood grocery. Tampans purchased foodstuffs from neighborhood markets and the county supported fully 500 individual stores. El Recurso Co-Operative Grocery, Mench's Complete Food Store on Grand Central (now Kennedy Blvd.), and Hosegood Grocery Company at Highland supplied community needs. In addition, the city supported eighteen coffee roasters, when a cup of coffee (hold the mocha decaf) sold for a nickel.²

In 1946, Tampans enjoyed an Indian Summer devoid of franchised restaurants, interstate highways, and shopping malls. Shops and businesses tended to be small, family-run affairs. To see a hint of the future shopping center, one drove across the Gandy Bridge to St. Petersburg's Webb's City. Begun by a modern Horatio Alger, "Doc" Webb brought his marketing flair to Tampa Bay in the 1920s. Shoppers waited in lines for bargains and entertainment at the "The World's Most Unusual Drug Store," a sprawling complex of stores. Webb's ability to deal in huge volumes allowed him to secure "scarce" goods in the summer of '46. In just a few hours on July 25th, 30,000 shoppers stripped the counters of 3,600 pounds of oleo margarine, 8,000 cans of peaches, and 4,800 boxes of pudding.³

Fifty years later, American presidents and candidates demand the end of big government, but in 1946 citizens hailed the GI Bill of Rights as the greatest piece of legislation in American history. Passed at the end of the war, the GI Bill of Rights rewrote the American dream, enabling a generation of veterans to finance a home and receive a college education. Across Florida, veterans poured into near empty universities,
so overwhelming the University of Florida that surplus students enrolled at a nearby military field near the Florida State College for Women. In 1947 FSCW became Florida State University. The University of Tampa, threadbare from the lean years, welcomed a record 900 students, most of them veterans. In Temple Terrace, Florida Christian College opened its doors.²

The GI Bill fueled a housing boom that reshaped our cities and expanded the suburbs. The housing boom unwittingly undermined older neighborhoods. Since the GI Bill only subsidized the construction of new homes, the value of older and deteriorating homes in Ybor City and Tampa Heights fell as young families fled the old neighborhoods for the new American dream. Post-war housing abandoned the bungalow and up-scale Mediterranean Revival styles. A new architecture, notably the California-style, concrete-block, one-story tract house, predominated. These homes emphasized economy and efficiency, and proved readily adaptable to the residential air-conditioning revolution of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1946 Jim Walter began marketing shell homes in Tampa, introducing the idea of modular construction to the housing market. Critics
lamented the absence of sidewalks and front porches in many of these new developments.

Many families found it cheaper to buy a home rather than renting. In 1946, a three-bedroom home in Forest Hills went for $5850. A home in Hyde Park, "splendidly located...lovely condition" sold for $9,000. A beachfront lot in Pinellas County went begging for $4,000. In St. Petersburg, the city offered free lots to veterans.5

The GI Bill helped to democratize Tampa, but it also reinforced racial and class barriers. For decades, Ybor City and West Tampa had housed the great majority of the city’s Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians—"Latin" in the vernacular. But 1946 witnessed the first great breakout, as young Latins, liberated by the war, moved to take advantage of new opportunities. Left behind were older and poorer residents. African Americans, who did not enjoy the liberty of unrestricted mobility, began moving into Ybor City to fill the housing vacuum. The portents for the urban renewal of the 1960s had been foreshadowed in 1946.

Economically, Tampa struggled to find a new niche in the postwar world. Tampa Bay and Florida braced for an economic boom not experienced since the giddy 1920s. But the Tampa economy emerging from WWII differed dramatically from the city that made hand-rolled cigars famous. Changing tastes and mechanization had greatly diminished the importance of cigars to Tampa's economic health. "The last of the Mohicans," as described by one aging tabaquero, worked in the antiquated cigar factories.

The largest employer in the postwar Tampa Bay area, and the source of unimaginable benefits to power brokers who could master its intricacies, was the federal government. Politicians scorned Washington's insidious federal bureaucracy, but routinely begged for more of the economic resources.

Pundits called this irresistible alliance of universities, defense contractors, congressmen, ex-generals and lobbyists, the military-industrial complex. A resurgent federal government had built the runways and hangars of Drew Field, soon to become Tampa International Air Field. Washington underwrote the lucrative shipbuilding contracts at Hookers Point, the mega-complex of MacDill Army Air Field, and the facilities at Bay Pines Veterans Hospital. A Cold War, growing hotter because of Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech and U.S.-Soviet skirmishes, ensured a steady stream of defense dollars to bolster Florida's citadel.

New residents and newly affluent tourists raced toward Florida almost as quickly as federal dollars. World War II had caused an unprecedented upheaval in the Sunshine State. But perhaps most dramatically, the war lured millions of servicemen and travelers to Florida. The war meant, above all else, migration, movement, and mobility. Between 1940 and 1947, 70 million Americans changed residences. The yet unnamed Sun Belt had been discovered.

In 1946, Florida readied for the first wave of a tidal surge of retirees, tourists, and new families. In 1940, Florida's population had not yet reached the two million mark. Yet by 1950 demographers trumpeted Florida's spectacular growth, as the census recorded almost three million residents, a 46% increase.

Hillsborough County luxuriated in the 1940s boom. On the eve of Pearl Harbor the county numbered 180,000 residents, a figure spiralling to 250,000 a decade later. In 1946, Tampa included about 125,000 residents, a
city restricted by its narrow geographical boundaries. Port Tampa, Palma Ceia, and Sulphur Springs had not yet been annexed to Imperial Tampa. Planners noted that many new residents were moving into unincorporated Hillsborough County. A new era dawned. The rural simplicity of Brandon and Lake Carroll would soon be more nostalgic than real.

Retirees and midwestern transplants more often than not chose neighboring Pinellas County. Upstarts St. Petersburg and Clearwater aggressively recruited new residents and industries; indeed, Pinellas proved more successful than Hillsborough in the quest for high-paying defense industries. But in 1946, Hillsborough leaders chuckled at the efforts of Pinellas County, which then boasted a population only slightly over 100,000. Yet early in the 1960s the census figures verified the humiliating evidence: Pinellas had surpassed Hillsborough in population. At least Pasco County knew its place. In 1946, Pasco County contained about 20,000 residents.

In the summer of '46, Tampa Bay’s most expensive real estate centered around Franklin Street. Downtown Tampa stood at its zenith; its stores, offices, and banks defined fashion, power, and status. The
The Tampa Tribune enjoyed a statewide following, earning a reputation for its journalistic crusades.

In those halcyon years after World War II, residents from Arcadia to Zephyrhills drove to downtown Tampa to patronize upscale stores, such as the region's only modern department store, Maas Brothers. When veterans retired their khaki uniforms, they instinctively returned to Wolf Brothers for the latest seersucker and linen suits. Customers weary from window shopping enjoyed the air-conditioned sanctuary of the Tampa Theater.

Downtown Tampa reigned as the region's capitol of capital while its buildings exuded power and influence. The Floridan Hotel, with its nineteen stories, stood as the tallest building between Atlanta and Miami. The Tampa Terrace Hotel's Palm Room entertained the city's elite.

Downtown Tampa's most graceful building, its most distinctive structure, was the County Courthouse. Built in 1891 and designed by architect J.A. Wood, the Hillsborough County Courthouse featured a giant Moorish dome, stylish red brick, and captivating park. In 1946, county commissioners announced that the doomed courthouse was obsolete and a fierce debate ensued to find an appropriate location for the new structure. The Tampa Tribune and Tampa Daily Times warred over the suitability of appropriate sites. The historic courthouse was demolished in 1951.

Another beloved Tampa institution received a death penalty that summer. The Tampa Electric Company announced that its streetcars would discontinue. For a nickel, residents could travel from Sulphur Springs to Ballast Point, West Tampa to Ybor City. A monument to Tampa's irrepressible Peter O. Knight, the streetcar system had crisscrossed Tampa since 1899. But the streetcars, victims of neglected maintenance, postwar affluence, and collusion between Detroit automakers and utility companies, ceased operation in early August 1946. Colonel Knight, a bastion of conservatism and Tampa's most powerful businessman, also passed away late that year. The streetcars found afterlife, in South America. The demise of the streetcar symbolized the complete triumph of the automobile. Residents had long complained that the noisy trolleys interfered with the efficient flow of auto traffic. Officials promised that a bus system would make residents forget the streetcar.

Tampa's bus system required new rules of etiquette for passengers long familiar with the trolley's manners and mores. In the beginning, passengers attempted to exit en masse, blocking the narrow doors of the buses. Racial etiquette, however, followed the old order. In 1946 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation of African Americans on interstate buses was illegal. E.S. Matthews, a Tallahassee official, stated that separate seating for black and white passengers would continue.

Once a luxury, a Chevrolet or Ford coupe became necessities in 1946 Tampa. The result, of course, meant increasing congestion. Traffic gridlock dominated the letters-to-the-editor. Dale Mabry Highway, became synonymous with gridlock, as an alarming number of accidents occurred on its southern route. Authorities optimistically implemented new plans to solve traffic woes: stoplights.

Customers fortunate enough to purchase a Ferman Chevrolet encountered still another hurdle—finding a parking place in downtown Tampa. In July 1946 a young
reporter for the *Tampa Daily Times*, Hampton Dunn, observed presciently, "Between noon today and noon tomorrow, 40,000 vehicles will have passed in and out of downtown Tampa. Practically all of them will be looking for a parking space—in an area that has only 1,371 places available! That's your traffic problem in Tampa at a glance."¹⁰

Negotiating traffic and then having to feed a parking meter was one thing; driving downtown and *not* finding a space truly aggravated loyal customers. Downtown, despite its glitter, began to show serious cracks. A glance at downtown cornerstones revealed that Tampa's skyline was frozen in a 1920s timelock. Not until 1960, when the Marine Bank and Trust Company built the blue-windowed monstrosity, would a significant new building be erected in downtown Tampa. In 1948, Maas Brothers opened a department store in St. Petersburg. Suburbanization, with its attendant features of decentralization and low population density, was reshaping the region.

Glaringly absent from Tampa's skyline were large corporate headquarters and diversified industries with high-paying, unionized jobs. While World War II had ignited an economic boom, Florida attracted few industries which complemented the emerging Cold War economy: aircraft production, computers, electronics, automobile and chemical factories, petroleum refining, medical and educational research. In 1946, the State of Florida threw down the gauntlet to union organizers, passing the first Right-to-Work law. Agriculture, tourism, and extractive industries continued to characterize Florida's underdeveloped economy.

Whereas states such as California, invested heavily in education to help create Silicon Valley and the aerospace industry, Florida ignored its educational needs. In 1946, Florida supported only three public universities, none south of Gainesville. The state had no medical school and no veterinary school.

Underfunded and overextended, education was in a deplorable state in 1946. Across Florida, but especially in Tampa Bay, citizens and educators confronted the reality of an educational system long neglected. In Tallahassee, State Senator LeRoy Collins lobbied for reforms, culminating in a sweeping piece of 1947 legislation, the Minimum Foundation Program. In Tampa, the *Tribune* championed school reform. In a series of extraordinary exposes, the paper attempted to inform the public of the shocking details found in state and local schools. Led by crusading journalist, J.A. "Jock" Murray, the *Tribune* unleashed a furious assault upon one of the area's sacred cows.¹¹

Throughout the summer of '46, Tampans read the depressing news. "Mango School," wrote columnist Jim Killingsworth, represented one of the "worst" schools in the county. "Rats, repair neglect, filth, outhouse privies, sewer gas, fire hazards—Mango has them all." In Cork, Principal L.I. Walden confessed that teachers helped pay the janitor's salary. Students complained of inadequate lighting, and for good reason. The Cork School had never been wired for electricity.¹²

Even vaunted Plant High School received serious criticism. Reporters cited Plant for the worst rat infestation of any school in the city; during a routine inspection, three dead rats were found in the cafeteria. In addition, the article described broken plaster and unrepaiired toilets. At Gorrie Elementary, officials noted leaking sewer gas, a dozen
broken drinking fountains, and a restroom described as a "disgrace."13

In 1946, African-American schools were separate and very unequal. "The Keysville Negro School," cried a reporter, "is an ugly blot on the Hillsborough County school system...a broken down shack...that would have been a disgrace 100 years ago." The Christine Meachem School featured "rotted walls and ceilings, falling plaster, and broken desks." The Dobyville Negro School contained "fire and health hazards and the worst lunchroom..." Conditions at Lomax Negro School were summarized simply, "Everything wrong with it."14

Across the state, vast differences in tax rates and attitudes exacerbated the educational distance between rich and poor counties. In 1946 Dade County spent fourteen times as much money per pupil as Holmes County, and twice as much as Hillsborough County.15

At least one educational enterprise thrived in 1946. Tampa's three high schools—Jefferson, Plant, and Hillsborough—embraced football with fervor. High school football, noted the Tribune, had become "big business." Emblematic of that athletic prowess was the legendary Hillsborough Terrier team, led by the imperious coach with the hall-of-fame name, Crockett Farnell. During the war years the Farnell-coached teams boasted a record of 37 wins and only 3 defeats. Going into the '46 season, the Terriers enjoyed a 26-game winning streak, during which they outscored opponents 618 to 57. For his leadership skills, Farnell was promoted—cynics suggested demoted—to superintendent of Hillsborough County schools.16

Tampans adored football, in large part because it was almost the only game in town. In 1946, the University of Florida football squad lost every single game, and Florida State was exclusively female, known as the Florida State College for Women. The Tampa Smokers, a minor league baseball club, drew modest crowds, but nothing compared to the fall classics. In 1946 the annual Plant-Hillsborough Thanksgiving game attracted 17,000 fans.17

Tampa, hoping to rival Pasadena, Miami, and New Orleans in the lucrative post-season spectacles, gleefully announced the first Cigar Bowl. The newly revived football team of the University of Tampa would meet Rollins College. Former player Paul Straub coached the Spartans. The inspirational coach had lost both legs during the war. Downstate, the University of Miami canceled a football game against Penn State because the Nittany Lions team included black players.18

Unofficially, the most popular sport in 1940s Tampa was bolita, a local version of the numbers game. Off the books, bolita made a huge impact on the local economy. Bolita also shaped the political economy, helping produce an incredibly corrupt system of government. A men's magazine labeled Tampa, "Hell Hole on the Gulf Coast."19

Mayor Curtis Hixon typified a long line of Tampa mayors. Southern-born, a druggist, he stood for fiscal austerity, law and order, and an undisturbed Jim Crow line. Allegations before a U. S. Senate committee in 1950 that Hixon allowed gambling to flourish would later be embellished by Danny Alvarez, a Hixon protege and member of the Tampa Police Department. He confessed that he served as the mayor's "bag man," collecting huge sums of protection money from bolita lords.
In 1946, Nick C. Nuccio exercised formidable influence as county commissioner, and the Latin community's most powerful politician—a time when that was not a bad word. In his inimitable style, he supplied constituents with complimentary sidewalks and park benches, each stamped with the imprimatur, "Nick C. Nuccio, County Commissioner." Never a wordsmith, Nuccio once remarked after a medical checkup, "They filled me up with chalk and looked at me with a horoscope."

For Tampa's African Americans, the summer of '46 bristled with great expectations. Emboldened by Supreme Court decisions and energized by local protests, African Americans were doing something not seen in fifty years: registering as Democrats and voting in the primaries. Early in the century, the Florida legislature had empowered the Democratic Party to restrict membership to whites. The White Primary further eroded the black franchise, reasoning that in a one-party state, the primary constituted the only important election. And in Tampa, politicians erected still another hurdle to block black political aspirations. In 1906 leaders established the White Municipal Party, a nonpartisan, racially-exclusive design to eliminate the black vote and "reform" politics.

The 1940s shook the foundations of Tampa politics. In 1944 the Supreme Court outlawed the White Primary, although Hillsborough County's Supervisor of Elections, John C. Deckle resisted efforts by African Americans to register as Democrats. "Negroes can register as Democrats if they want to," scowled Deckle, "but we don't invite them." Thurgood Marshall, representing the NAACP, assisted Perry Harvey, Sr., James Hargrett, Sr. and others to challenge the barriers to voting. C. Blythe Andrews, publisher of the Florida Sentinel, complained of humiliating Jim Crow voting booths. But the dam had been breached and increasingly, African Americans participated in Tampa's political debates. In 1983, Perry Harvey, Jr., became the first African American since 1887 to sit on Tampa's City Council.

On the state level, 1946 represented the highwater mark of Democratic dominance. Yellow dog Democrats, who preferred voting for a jaundiced cur dog than a Republican, ensured Florida was alien to the GOP. No Republican served in the 1945 Florida legislature. The state GOP was moribund at best, downright embarrassing at worst.

But time was on the side of Republicans. The very forces reshaping Florida (migration, postwar prosperity, disillusionment with federal controls) breathed life into a state Republican Party dormant since the 1880s. In the November 1946 elections, the Republicans won control of the U.S. Congress for the first time since 1928. Republicans won 12 seats in the U.S. Senate and 55 in the House. More shocking, a Republican was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. The lonely Republican, Alex Akerman, Jr., of Orlando, once practiced law in Tampa.

In the summer of '46, all parents, black, white, and Latin, faced a threat far more serious than yellow dog Democrats or vengeful Republicans. While politicians worried about the Iron Curtain, parents dreaded the Iron Lung. Polio was sweeping across Florida. The fear of contagion and the ignorance surrounding the disease led to a series of bizarre events. The State of Georgia imposed a quarantine on travelers from Florida passing through the Peach State. The City of Tampa announced on
June 15 that sanitary workers would begin spraying DDT to arrest the spread of polio. The witches brew DDT had been unveiled the previous year, and already, authorities touted the miracle pesticide as the savior of Florida. DDT proved extraordinarily successful against salt water mosquitoes and cattle ticks. Lamentably, DDT also proved lethal against fishes and birds, but not the polio virus.

As if infantile paralysis, Republicans, and Communists were not enough, Cuban bakers delivered the cruelest cut of all in 1946. In July, Cuban bakers struck, causing shortages of Cuban bread. American white bread replaced the crusty Cuban loafs as Tampans resigned themselves to a world where John L. Lewis could lead coal miners and Cuban bakers out on strike. Still, many Tampans argue that this was the best year in their lives.

In Shakespeare’s Henry V, huddled French officers dispute a report revealing the enemy’s strength before Agincourt. “Who hath thou measured the ground,” asks the French Constable. The decade following the summer of ’46 can be measured in momentous change for Tampa Bay.

A decade of sustained prosperity brought hundreds of thousands of new residents to the bay area. Joseph Schumpeter once observed that capitalism breeds creative destruction. As evidence, hundreds of suburban developments bulldozed away orange groves and palmetto scrub. Television replaced radio and instantly, roof lines sprouted antennae. Hillsborough County rejoiced when State Senator Sam Gibbons helped secure the University of South Florida for Tampa. Its location anticipated the future growth of the county. The year 1956 marked the opening of Tampa’s first shopping malls, Britton Plaza and North Gate. The shopping mall signified the decline of downtown, dislocation of neighborhoods, and appeal of suburbanization. More ominously, the passage of the Interstate Highway Act doomed many of Tampa’s most beloved neighborhoods. Interstate highways 4 and 275 cut grievously into the urban fabric of Ybor City, West Tampa, Seminole Heights, and Central Avenue.

Ybor City may have been in irreversible decline, but not so the political career of Nick C. Nuccio. In 1956, he became Tampa’s first Latin mayor. Ironically, his career came to an end in 1967 when a dashing, and brash thirty-four year old challenger crushed the veteran politician. Tampa’s young mayor was Dick Greco, Jr., barely a teenager the summer of ’46. Not even Greco, however, could explain why a Cuban sandwich could not hold the mustard of those a decade earlier.


2 Polk’s Tampa City Directory, 1946 (Vol. 34) (Richmond, VA, 1946).


4 ”FSCW to Take up to 1000 Men Students,” “Governor Asks Plan to Put 1000 Men Students at FSCW,” ”Florida U. Asks Students to Wait Until February,” ”U. of F. Faces Loss of 60 Teachers In Housing Crisis,” ”Most Tampa U. Students to be War Veterans,” ”New Church College to Open Here Monday,” Tampa Tribune, September 3, August 28, August 20, August 25, and September 15, 1946.
5 See want ads, summer of 1946. See also "Pinellas Beaches Booming; Prices not up to 1925," *Tribune*, February 13, 1946.


13 "Plant High Has Worst Rat Infestation In City," "Gorrie School Conditions Bad," *Tribune*, June 18, 20, 1946.


17 "Hillsborough Beats Plant Here, 26-0," *Tribune*, November 29, 1946.

18 "University of Tampa To Have Informal Team," "Straub, Legless Vet, Will Coach Tampa Gridders," *Tribune*, September 10, August 14, 1946.


"VERY HARD TO BEAR":
FLORIDA’S FUTURE FIRST LADY
CATHARINE HART TRAVELS THE SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN 1852

Introduction, Notes, and Afterword by Canter Brown, Jr.

The human side of pioneer life in South Florida prior to the Civil War has remained somewhat elusive to us, in good part because of a relative scarcity of letters, diaries, and journals recounting day-to-day experiences and insights. Thus, when an original account becomes available, its contents likely will enhance our understanding substantially while providing readers with fascinating detail and long-sought-after description. When the account’s subject involves a key figure in our state’s history and its author reveals a keen eye and an intriguing style, the document’s value jumps accordingly.

Such is the case with the following letter, which describes an 1852 trip up primitive roads from Tampa into Hernando and on to Levy County. Written by future Florida First Lady Catharine S. Hart, wife of Ossian Bingley Hart, it graphically paints the rigors of frontier travel, the variety and immediacy of pioneer life, and the rough demands of legal practice on the southern judicial circuit.

The circumstances that propelled Catharine Hart on a taxing journey through Florida’s peninsular frontier in 1852 are complex. Born into a Newark, New Jersey, merchant family on September 7, 1823, she met twenty-one-year-old Ossian B. Hart, son of Jacksonville founder Isaiah D. Hart, during an early 1840s visit to an uncle in Florida. Nature took its course, and the couple married at Newark in October 1843. At the time, the Second Seminole War had recently ended. To provide for settlement on and security of the frontier, including much of the Tampa Bay area, the Congress approved the Armed Occupation Act, which granted a free homestead to pioneers under certain circumstances. The Harts opted to take advantage of the offer and moved to an isolated site just south of the recently abandoned army post of Fort Pierce. There they intended to make their fortune with a citrus grove.
Fate held other plans in store for the Harts. The couple earned the respect and affection of their few neighbors, and St. Lucie County voters even sent Ossian to the territorial council in 1845. On the other hand, Mother Nature intervened tragically. The great hurricane of October 1846 wiped out their groves and obliterated their home. Almost destitute, they sought the assistance of friends at Key West, where Ossian endeavored to recoup their losses through the practice of law. Thanks to political contacts, the legislature in 1849 elected him to a two-year term as solicitor (district attorney) of the southern judicial circuit, which encompassed most of the area south and west of a line drawn from near Cedar Key to present-day Fort Lauderdale. It re-elected him in 1851 for a second term.5

As solicitor, Hart "rode" the southern circuit twice a year, prosecuting criminal cases in each county seat. Particularly, pursuant to law adopted in early 1851, each fall he visited Levy, Hernando, and Hillsborough Counties for court terms that began, respectively, the second Monday in October, the third Monday in October, and the first Monday in November. He then would return to his Key West home for a court term that commenced the first Monday in December. Kate naturally missed her husband during his absences, particularly because she felt uncomfortable as a strict Presbyterian in the cosmopolitan and easygoing atmosphere of her island home. When Ossian proposed that she accompany him on the circuit in the fall of 1852, the idea appealed greatly to her, she made the trip, and, after her return, she penned on November 29 a letter to her sister Charlotte Campbell in Newark describing her adventure.

Our knowledge of the Hart trip results from the far-sighted interest of Dena E. Snodgrass, a former president of the Jacksonville and Florida Historical Societies. At a time when historians displayed little interest in the Hart family, she purchased and preserved a small collection of Ossian and Catharine Hart's letters. They included Catharine's letter of November 29, 1852. Recently, Miss Snodgrass donated the letters, some related materials, and her notes on the Hart family to the P. K. Yonge Library of Florida history at the University of Florida, Gainesville. They are contained in the Dena E. Snodgrass Collection.

Key West Nov 29th / 52

Dear Lottie

Your last epistle was received amid the hurry and bustle of our departure from the island for a short time upon the main land, and as I have been ever since untill the present time on the move, I have not had an opportunity of replying to your last. I suppose you have all wondered at my long silence and perhaps thought me negligent, but I can assure you I do not deserve the charge. We arrived here last week and the first mail leaves here on the 30th[,] and, though much annoyed with my domestic affairs, I hope I shall find time to start a letter on its way to you.

The servant girl I have had living with me for the last year, has been obliged to stay at home, her mistress requiring her services, and I have not yet succeeded in getting one to take her place. At present I have no assistance but a black boy of 10 or 12 years of age and I find my time in great demand.6 And[,] in addition to the cares of kitchen and house[,] I have a cow in the yard which of course requires milking and feeding daily, the milking I do myself through it requires more strength of hand and arm than I have. I
milk over two quarts every morning, it is more than we can use. I wish you were here with me to drink some of it. I suppose you would like to know something about my travels and how I enjoyed myself.

We left Key West in a small schooner of about 20 tons, with of course very poor accommodations, had head winds all the way, and I was very sea sick. We were seven days on the way, a distance of 250 miles, a steamboat can travel it in 26 hours. On the seventh day we reached Tampa or Fort Brooke as it is called on the map, if you have an enlarged map of Florida you can trace my route all the way through. It was our intention to leave the same day for the country, but Ossian found some difficulty in hiring a good horse, we had our own carriage with us, and did not start until the next morning about six o'clock. The first day we rode all day long through the pine woods without any thing particular occurring, and by night our horse and ourselves were well tired, and glad to find a shelter for the night which we did about eight o'clock, having traveled 38 miles since morning. To you who are accustomed to traveling by locomotive power, this will appear a slow way, but I can assure you it is quite fast for Florida for the country people never make their horses travel out of a walk, and they cannot walk more than 20 or 25 miles per day.

The house we stopt at for the night was a log pen with two rooms in it, and a small room put up in the yard separate from the main house for the accommodation of travelers. After waiting an hour for supper to be cooked and trying very hard to eat enough to satisfy our hunger, we took possession of the lodge in the yard. There we found a tolerably comfortable bed, the cleanliness of which will not bear the test of examination, and undressed and laid our selves down to sleep. Ossian I believe slept tolerably well at least when I would let him, but I, though very tired, could not sleep, because owing to the musty smell of the feathers of which the pillows were made compelled me to lay upon my back. The instant turned, my nose came in contact with the odour from the pillowcases, and I could not stand it. This was our first night.

I rose the next morning and prepared to start again. We found our horse so jaded he was not able to travel any farther and Ossian tried very hard to hire one from the man we stopt with, but could not succeed in hiring. [He] could only borrow one to go five miles farther, with the expectation of getting one from the next neighbor. We started with this poor prospect before us, and in addition to our other discomforts there was every prospect of a severe rain storm coming on. Our carriage had a top which would protect us from the rain, but it made every thing appear gloomy in such a barren unsettled country.

About 10 o'clock we reached the next house, and there we hired a gentle mule which was soon harnessed in and on we went. 2 o'clock we passed through a village called de Soto, the county site for Hernando county. Stopt at the principal boarding house and called for dinner. We sat down to the table which had upon it salt beef fried in tallow & the tallow as hard as candles ready for burning, a dish of homminy, corn bread made without salt, and coffee without milk. You can guess how much I ate. They charged 25¢ per meal.
We paid our fare and proceeded on and traveled until eight o'clock[,] which is two hours after dark, and that evening it was dark truly. The weather had continued stormy and of course the night was dark. We could not see the road and we were much afraid of losing our way[.] It was a part of the country Ossian had never traveled before and did not know what state the roads might be in. The last two miles we traveled that night, Ossian was obliged to get out and walk a head of the mule, to keep the road, but at last, when I was almost despairing of reaching a house[,] we discovered a light faintly glimmering through the trees. It was a welcome sight to weary travelers, for we knew it to be the residence of some settler, and we knew we could find food and shelter for the night, though perhaps very plain. Under the circumstances we were glad of anything.

We found them very poor people — a man and his wife and five children, the oldest a girl of 9 years of age, the husband and father sick in bed with the chill and fever. Their residence consisted of a log house all in one room with a fireplace and three beds in it. She prepared us some supper, and by this time I stood much in need of something to eat for I had eaten nothing that day. I had been wishing all day for a tumbler of milk but had not succeeded in getting it. After entering this temporary home, Ossian took a survey of the premises and discovered upon the table two large pans of milk and came to me with the joyful news and whispered it in my ear to comfort me, in case there was nothing I could eat. I could drink a plenty of milk, and it did comfort me. I was delighted at the prospect of having as much milk as I could drink.

Supper was at length announced and
soon dispatched and then preperations made for bed. Here also the beds would not bear inspection and[,] what was worse than all[,] she made her sick husband get up out of his bed and take another and put us in the one he had left, and when I laid down in it [it] was hot from the fever the man had; and the fleas were so thick we could not rest a minute. So we did not get any sleep that night, had traveled 31 miles that day.

We arose very early and the woman prepared us some breakfast and we started on. They informed us it was 12 miles to the Withlachoochee river which we wanted to cross, as the first term of court was held in Levy county some distance beyond this river. We reached the ferry about 12 oclock[,] crossed[,] and inquired the distance to the next house, was told it was 2 1/2 miles, and there we could get good board and clean lodgings. We proceeded on of course, and in a short time was there. We found a nice tidy old widow lady with one little boy and a negro man, the owner of the farm. I was well worn out by this. We had come 84 miles to this place in three days time I can assure you and [I] begged Ossian to let me stop and rest and[,] as the horse was tired down[,] to hire a horse and proceed on with out me. He reluctantly consented to do it and[,] as soon as we got our dinner[,] had his horse saddled and started.

I enjoyed myself as well as I could under the circumstances. I had a clean comfortable bed and a plenty of what was good to eat[—]plenty of milk and fresh butter, buttermilk and clabour[,] all of which I am very fond. Ossian was absent one week, had traveled 70 or 80 miles farther[,] held court and returned[,] got me[,] and started right back again, the same route we had come, as far as the place were we hired the mule. There we stopt. I was to stay there by express invitation during the session of court in that county. They were very kind hospitable and of a more intelligent gente[el] class, than others I have discribed to you. The courthouse was five miles from here, and Ossian rode back and forth every night and morning. There were two females in the family and I enjoyed myself very much untill I was taken with chill and fever, a disease which is very prevalent at this season of the year. My chill came on every other day. After I had my second chill[,] as court was over[,] Ossian determined to proceed on as quick as possible to Tampa[,] where the air was more healthy.

We started on my well day and hoped as I had taken large doses of blue pill and quinine that I would miss. We took a different route home and found better lodgings. The first night found very genteel people and good accomodations. Started the next day and about nine o'clock I felt my chill coming and the nearest house 25 or 30 miles off. The chill was a pretty bard one[,] lasted about 2 hours, and then came the fever and that lasted untill night. It was very hard to bear, sitting up in the carriage.

About 2 o'clock we came to a house and I went in and threw my self down on the first bed I could see, and layed there untill about 4 o'clock when I wrapped myself up well and proceeded on to the next house, 7 miles farther. We reached it at dusk and stopt before the door and gave the usual salutation, "can I get accomodated for the night." ["]Dont no, mighty bad chance. We are not prepared for taking travelers["] Mr. Hart replys,
My wife is sick and she can't travel any farther to-night, we will put up with any thing. ["""] Well, I'll do the best I can for you. I can make you a pallet on the floor.["] And this is a sample of the questions and replies of almost every house we stop at. We stop there and she made a pallet on the floor and there the fleas were so bad I could not rest.

That night I got no sleep, and we got up and started two hours before light, and reached the town of Tampa between ten & eleven the same day. There we found comfortable quarters and kind friends to welcome us. I soon recruited [?] and got rid of my chill and fever, and during my stay there enjoyed myself very much, made some very pleasant acquaintances, rode on horseback every afternoon and I did enjoy it very much. At this town court lasted nearly two weeks. I was almost sorry that the time had come for me to return, though I had often thought of my snug quiet home, and perhaps wished myself there sometimes. Yet at Tampa I enjoyed so much being a stranger and receiving the hospitality and attentions shown to strangers.

But an opportunity offered and duty compelled us to take advantage of it, for the opportunities are not very frequent, and these little sail vessels are the only means of getting to and from at present. We are hoping to have a line of steamers some day. We left Tampa on Sunday afternoon and arrived at Key West the following Saturday at noon. I was quite sea sick coming back as there was a heavy swell and a pretty hard wind blowing. We found our house and yard just as we had left it; and right glad we were to reach it once more, it seemed only the more dear, for a two months absence, the trees and flowers and garden had grown some.

You will think perhaps strange that I could leave home for such a trip as I have just described to you, but there are more pleasures in it than you think. If I should attempt to tell you every thing[,] all the little amusing incidents and variety of people and circumstances I passed through, it would fill a dozen of these sheets. I have nearly glanced at a few of the most prominent. Though there were some disagreeables it is true, yet I enjoyed very much, the change of scenes, change of rut [?] and climate were both pleasant and beneficial. I get very tired of the monotonous life we live here upon this island. It is the same thing year after year. Ossian is compelled to go every spring and fall and I would always prefer going with him if I could. I cannot bear to separate from him, for I fell uneasy all the time he is gone. He has been in excellent health all the trip and is still.

Our court comes on a week from tomorrow, being the first Monday in December, and then he is up to his eyes in law. I expect first thing we know he will be Judge. he is rising fast in his profession and daily gaining the respect and esteem of the people . . . Kate.

Catharine's prediction that Ossian Hart was "rising fast" failed to come true in the short term, but eventually her foresight proved accurate indeed. In 1852 elections, both nationally and in Florida Ossian Hart's Whig party collapsed. Hart and his friend and mentor, southern judicial circuit judge Joseph B. Lancaster, soon were ousted from their offices. Lancaster relocated to Tampa, where he became the town's first mayor in 1856. When the former judge died late in the same year, the Harts transferred their
home to Tampa, where Ossian assumed Lancaster’s law practice and continued some of their mutual business interests.11 Emerging as a community leader, he was elected to the town council in 1860. The Snodgrass collection contains four letters written during this period by Catharine at Tampa to her family in New Jersey. They are dated February 8, April 22, September 14, and November 30, 1860.

The Civil War saw Ossian Hart truly take the stage as a leader. A staunch opponent of secession and advocate of the Union, he was credited with saving Tampa from greater destruction during the Union occupation of May 1864.12 One Civil War era letter from Catharine at Tampa to her family survives in the Snodgrass Collection. It is dated January 5, 1865.

Following the peace, the Harts returned to Jacksonville. There, in Ossian’s law office, the Florida Republican party was founded in 1867. The next year he was appointed a justice of the Supreme Court of Florida. In 1872, a group of the state’s most-influential African-American political leaders combined with Southern Loyalists to compel Hart’s nomination as the Republican party’s candidate for governor and his subsequent election.13 The campaign undermined Hart’s health, however. He achieved a series of successes as governor but died in office on March 18, 1874.

Catharine Hart survived her husband by more than two decades. At first she divided her time between Jacksonville and the New Jersey resort town of Morristown. In 1883 she received appointment as postmistress of Kissimmee, in which capacity she served until 1886. Except for trips to New Jersey and to visit friends in Jacksonville, she remained in Kissimmee where she ran a stationery shop and campaigned for the temperance cause. She died at Morristown on October 9, 1897. An obituary noted, “She had a rich fund of reminiscences of the early days of Florida, and was weaving them into a book at the time of her death.”14


4 On the early history of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County, see Kyle S. VanLandingham, Pictorial History of Saint Lucie County 1565-1910 (Fort Pierce, 1988).

5 Leslie A. Thompson, A Manual or Digest of the Statute Law of the State of Florida (Boston, 1847), 57; Laws of Florida (1850), 137-38, 140-41.

6 Although the Harts occasionally rented the services of slaves, neither Ossian nor Catherine Hart ever purchased a bondsman or bonswoman. Later in the decade, when they were living at Tampa, Ossian was given a slave family by his father. Subsequently, upon his father’s death Ossian received a distribution of additional slaves.

7 Pen, as used here, meant a double-pen log house, sometimes called a dog-trot cabin. This was a traditional frontier house for Florida, with a single room on each side of a central breezeway or “dog trot.”
8 Created by the legislature February 24, 1843, Hernando County’s name was changed in 1844 to Benton, in honor of United States Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri. Benton had sponsored the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, which attracted many of the county’s pioneer settlers. Benton’s pronounced Unionism at the decade’s end prompted local citizens to demand a reversion to the name Hernando. That was accomplished December 24, 1850. In November 1852 the site of former Fort DeSoto, which lay approximately one-and-one-half miles north of present-day Brooksville, served as a temporary county seat. Richard J. Stanaback, A History of Hernando County 1840-1976 (Brooksville, 1976), 12, 20-21; Allen Morris, The Florida Handbook 1991-1992 (Tallahassee, 1991), 424-25.

9 Florida’s twenty-sixth county, Levy was established March 10, 1845. It was named for congressional delegate David Levy, who, upon his election in 1845 to the United States Senate, had his name changed by the legislature back to his proper family name, Yulee. Morris, Florida Handbook, 427-28.

10 Apparently Catharine meant that the nice widow lady was the owner of the farm.


14 Jacksonville Florida Times-Union & Citizen, October 14, 1897.
Funeral invitation for Caroline (Rhodes) Ferris, first wife of Josiah Ferris

— Courtesy Ferris Family
"TAMPA IS THE PLACE OF PLACES":
The William G. Ferris Family Collection

Introduction and Notes by Kyle S. VanLandingham

The William G. Ferris Family Collection is an extensive body of letters and documents relating to the pioneer Ferris family of Tampa. There are numerous letters, dating from as early as 1852, mostly written by family members. In addition, there are account books, business receipts, shipping documents, social invitations, political material and early pictures of family members. The Tampa Historical Society extends its deep appreciation to Mrs. Esther Ferris Floyd, owner of the collection; her daughter, Mrs. Ginger Lee Floyd Phillips; and her sister-in-law Mrs. Elma Mann Ferris, widow of Bernhard Lee Ferris, for allowing the Sunland Tribune to publish several of the most significant letters and to reproduce a number of the fascinating nineteenth century documents. We also wish to thank Mr. Julius J. Gordon for his assistance in facilitating the publication of this material.

Introduction

William Gould Ferris was the founder of one of Tampa's leading nineteenth century pioneer families. Born June 11, 1810 in Ovid, New York, he was the eldest of five children of Josiah and Lydia (Bangs) Ferris. As a young man, William went to the Choctaw Indian Nation Territory (Hempstead County, Arkansas), and was married there June 4, 1834 to Eliza Morris, a native of Fort Wayne, Ohio. She was born April 27, 1817.1

William G. Ferris arrived at Tampa Bay from Arkansas in 1841. He was employed by the U. S. Army and received orders from a ship in the bay which transferred him to East Florida. The following year, in 1842, he returned with his family to settle at Fort Brooke, where he served as acting paymaster and sutler to the troops. William soon opened a general merchandise and clothing store which was washed away during the hurricane of 1848. He then built another store on the south side of Whiting Street which he operated until 1857, when he moved the store to the northeast corner of Washington and Monroe Streets (now Florida Ave.). Also in 1857, William G. Ferris constructed a new two-story home for his family on Washington Street, just east of the store.2

In addition to being a prominent merchant, William was a pioneer in the shipping business and owned a number of schooners and steamers. The Florida Peninsular reported on August 2, 1856:

It will be seen by reference to our advertisement columns, that W. G. Ferris & Son have purchased the large and fast-sailing Schooner, Harrison Jones, and will place her
and the Schooner John J. Taylor upon the Tampa and New Orleans trade.
The above vessels will arrange their sailing so as to depart from each port at the same time, allowing a month for one trip, thus making a semi-monthly line of schooners. This is a matter long neglected, which the necessities of this community have loudly called for, and we hope now that it has been undertaken by this enterprising firm, it will receive liberal encouragement from our citizens.3

Perhaps the most famous of the Ferris ships was the steamer Scottish Chief. The Peninsular reported on July 28, 1860 that W. G. Ferris and Son had entered the cattle business and had purchased a small steamer, the Scottish Chief, "a ship well calculated for the cattle industry."4 Later during the Civil War, the Scottish Chief was used as a blockade runner by Capt. James McKay and was set afire and sunk by Union forces in the Hillsborough River in October, 1863.5

William G. Ferris was a leader in many fields. He was a founder and fifth largest stockholder of the Florida Peninsular Railroad Company in 1859 and was president of the Tampa Ice Company which erected an ice house on Washington Street in 1860. On Nov. 24, 1860 when Hillsborough Countians convened in a mass meeting at the Alafia to urge secession of Florida from the Union, W. G. Ferris was among those present who signed the petition calling for a state convention to consider the matter.6

After the Civil War, the Ferrises resumed their shipping business and continued to operate their general store. The eldest son, Josiah, who had been born in Arkansas, Aug. 5, 1836, continued as partner with his father. Josiah was elected to the Tampa City Council in 1866, served as Mayor protem in 1869, City Clerk in 1877-79 and Clerk and Treasurer in 1881. He was also in the jewelry and watch and clock repair business. He and his father served on the first vestry of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in 1871.7

Always the trailblazer, Col. Wm. G. Ferris was reported by the Sunland Tribune in June 1879 as converting the lighting of his residence from kerosene to gas. In 1880, his son Henry Clarke Ferris was elected Mayor of Tampa. Eliza (Morris) Ferris died in Tampa, Oct. 30, 1891. Col. W. G. Ferris passed away in Tampa, Aug. 3, 1895, after a long and productive life.8

All or a portion of eleven letters are reproduced in this article. They are presented without changes in spelling or punctuation. At the end of the article, endnotes 9 through 19 provide further explanation as to the persons, places and events mentioned in the letters.

Letter from Mary E. Ferris to Aunt Katura
Tampa Bay E Florida
30th May 1852
Dear Aunt,

I received your letter of the as this morning and was very glad to hear from you I have news for you Hardy and Mrs Martin are married would you of thought it she went with Mrs. Deerfield and I to Key West on the
William Gould Ferris, 1810-1895

Eliza (Morris) Ferris, 1817-1891

William G. Ferris, Jr. 1844-1867

All pictures and documents courtesy Ferris Family
steam boat and then came back and got married A Baptist minister married them there was no one to the wedding but Mr. and Mrs. Cunningham and the preacher she had on a long white veil dress and white shoes no one knew of it until next morning and then Mr. Fisher took the Dray and Abram to drive and went up to call on the bride and abram handed him out of the Dray and waited for him to come out again when he helped him in and they drove off in fine style and oh I wish that you could of been here that night about ten o’clock they turned out the greatest noise you ever heard old pots and tin pans and every thing that would make a noise they had. you may guess that it must of been some then they had a dog hurling him up and down the Piazza by the tail Every body turned out old and young the made Hardy come out and demanded Fifty dollars they had to serenade him three nights before he would consent to it and worse every night he is to pay it by the first of June if not they go at it again it is for the Methodist Church the first night the men came down from the mill with their guns thought the indians had come she dont seem to mind it at all she goes around the streets with all Spencers and Kendricks children following after her its nothing but Aunt Ellen we are looking for Josiah back now all the time he went on the Steamer to New Orleans we are also looking for the Roleph, Mr. and Mrs. Evrelle[?] have gone home. Mrs. Clark had been on as far as Augusta and has returned let me know if Aunt Harriet got my letter

I am very glad to hear that Catherine has not forgotten me. Write as soon as you get this I remain your affectionate niece.

Mary E. Ferris to Aunt Katura
PS Captain Casey sends his love to you
Mary E. Ferris to Katura

Letter from W.G. Ferris, Jr. to his Grandfather Josiah Ferris.

Tampa
July 20th 1858

Dear Grand Pa

I have taken this opportunity of writing to you a few lines to let you know that I am well and I should like for this to find you the same I have written you four or five letters and have not received an answer to none of them and so i thought i would try it again I am going to school to a new teacher and am learning very fast. he has a full school the people in Tampa like his teaching very well he has about forty scholars I am in Latin now and am getting along very well and besides all with the rest of my studies. Our Court House is about to fall down they have taken everything that is valuable out of it so it wont hurt anything when it falls they want it to fall very much We have had several weddings in our City lately all of this place Mr. Thomas married Miss Sallie McKay - a large merchant’s daughter they were about to shivare them but they begged so hard that they thought they would let them off if they would give a large dance and they
agreed to do it. It came off last night all of us had an invitation but none did go the other couples done the same the Indians are about to leave Florida. Capt. McNeil one of the volunteers captains had a talk with them and they agreed to go some of them has gone about one hundred and seventy or eighty. Captain Nelson was here a few days ago from New Orleans bringing us news from Aunt Eliza she is coming here to make a visit Pa thinks of going on North before long there is not much news in our city at present.

I remain your grandson

W. G. Ferris Jr.

Give my love to Grand Ma and all the rest.

Letter from William Ferris to his Grandfather, Josiah Ferris in N. Y.

Tampa
April 26th 1680

Dear Grand Father,

I take this opportunity of answering your letter which I should of done before now but being as I am at school and when school is over I am in the store I have but little time only on Saturdays and Sundays and then I feel as though I ought to have a little recreation and never think of writing. We have received a cargo of ice from Boston and it is quite lively in our City now as the Schooner is discharging it to see the Boys and People (generally) carrying it off. Pa is President of the company and he has his share of it packing it in the Ice House as it comes off of the schooner it is the first load of Ice that has been landed here in six years and it is quite a treat to see it we expect to keep cool this summer if Ice can do it as we have one hundred and thirty tons the first snow I ever saw was when the schooner opened her hatches it was frozen on the Ice that was a curiosity also we have also a Soda Fountain and an Ice Cream Saloon just fixed up so that this summer we can enjoy ourselves better than we ever did in this place. although I expect the subject of ice you care but little about as you have so much of it about you and therefore I will change the subject. As I wrote you some time since about a Rail Road coming to our place we believe it stronger than ever now as the Engineers of the Rail Road have surveyed the land and we expect before many days to hear her Puffing. Grand Ma was glad to hear from you. I gave mine and her own letter and she went up stairs and took her time to read them she is well and gaining in weight all the while we tell her if she would spend the summer here that she would weigh two hundred pounds but I think that she is thinking of home too strong to stay here much longer. I think if you was to come out here that you would like our country very much and the People also you could go to some of our large Sugar Plantations and see them making sugar I think that you would like it and I think that the climate would be _____ you. As I know of but little news to write to you about you must excuse my short letters and bad writing expecially this letter as I wrote it in school and had to be in a hurry for fear of missing my lessons write soon give my love to Aunt Harriet and tell her I would like to receive a letter from
The Orange Grove Hotel was Tampa's social center during the 1870s and early 1880s.

The "Perry Guards" was an independent volunteer company formed in Tampa in 1860.

Josiah Ferris’ receipt for a year’s subscription to the Tampa Florida Peninsular, 1867-1868.
her very much and also my cousins
if they think enough of me to write
write soon all is well

I remain your Grand Son
William Ferris
Tampa
Fla

Letter from William Ferris to his
Grandfather Josiah Ferris
Tampa Florida
May 3rd 1861

Dear Grand-Father

Your kind letter was received a few
days ago and we were glad to hear
from you. I might of been more
punctual in answering your letters
but as there is but little news in our
City is is almost impossible to write
a letter. Business is quite dull we are
scarcely doing anything in the line of
selling goods. Pa is shipping Cattle
to Cuba and it keeps us pretty busy
at times He went to Cuba last week
and will start again on Sunday with
200 head of cattle and will return
again on Sunday week following.
Josiah and myself we mind the store
and the Cattle while Pa sells them.
Ask Grand ma if she has been eating
green corn yet tell her we have had it
for dinner nearly every day for three
weeks and besides vegetables of all
kinds. Our Farmers will make plenty
of corn this season and tho War we
can stand pretty well corn potatoes
and Beef will keep any man from
starving to death and besides put him
in a good spirit for fighting. I sup-
pose that it is getting to look
something like war in your Country
now as we hear from the Papers that
your States begin to feel uneasy
about the ways that the South are
progressing and we know that she
will progress until the North will
abide by her rules and sooner the
better for one and all as their is but
little news in our town you must not
expect to receive a long letter from
me but the next time I write I will try
and do a little better. All the folks
are well excepting Sissy she has
been quite sick but improving now
Hoping that these few lines will find
you all enjoying good health. I
remain your affectionate Grand son

William Ferris

P.S. write soon

Letter from Henry L. Crane to Josiah
Ferris
Fernandina
Jany 12th 1862

Dear Friend,

I suppose you think that I care very
little about Tampa & its people. it
would appear so by my neglecting to
write to my old friends. I assure you
that I think Tampa is the place of
places none that I have seen yet (but
it is few that I've seen) can compare
with it in anything. I can never forget
the happy times we used to have at
the Band-room and at our concerts. I
have heard no music since I been
here with the exception of
break-downs in the Soldiers Camps.
The Mississippi Reg. has a Band of
12 instruments but I have not heard
them play yet; their camp is about
six miles from here on the other side
of the bridge. I think with a little
perserverence and a great deal of
Envelope and invitation to the 50th Anniversary Celebration for Mrs. And Mrs. W. G. Ferris, Sr.

Ship's manifest (Bill of Landing) for Ferris Schooner Delia
mind you can master the Soprano — as soon as you can form an am [?] you will not have much trouble; if you would meet and practice often it would help you very much I know that I can blow better when all the instruments are playing than when playing alone.

Col. Hopkins is anxious to purchase our instruments if he could get some one to teach, but I think that he would be mustered out of service before they could learn to play. War news is much like it is at Tampa. All sorts of reports and nothing reliable. I believe it is a fact that Mason & Slidell have sailed for England in a British steamer. The Blockade is very strict on this Coast there is a Steamer in sight nearly all the time, two are in sight to-day, one of them not more than three or four miles from shore below the Batteries. Gen Lee & Gen Mercer arrived here last night from Savannah they think there will certainly be an attack made on this place very soon. Gen. Burnside's fleet passed Cape Hatteras a few days ago, and it is supposed for this place, but it may be intended for the Gulf. I think he will get his sides burnt if he comes here.

Jas. McKay arrived here last night he left his wife at Waldo, not willing to risk her here for the present.

The S. S. Guards are getting along finely, there is much sickness in camps, but so far they have been very healthy. Florence Andrew is the only one sick he has a touch of the measels there is about 200 sick at present two or three die nearly every day. — The Mississippi Regiment suffer most.

Remember me to all the members of the T.B. C. Please write soon and let me know what is going on in Tampa. — you seem to be as gay as ever, if parties & are indication. S. Stringer saw your Father in Tallahassee a few days ago. Nothing more at present. but remain

Yours Respectfully
in T.B. &C
H. L. Crane

P.S. If there is anything that I could do for you over here I would be very happy to do it. H.L.C. 13

Letter from John Edward Spencer to Wm. G. Ferris, Jr.

St. Marks, Fla.

February 29th, 1864

Friend Billie: I was truly sorry to learn of your sad misfortune. I was in Tallahassee on the 24th inst. but knew nothing of you being there until I started back. Col. Magbee told me of your being wounded and stopping with Mr. Rhodes' family. I regretted it very much. But you are fortunate, Billie, not to be in a worse condition than you are. If I could get off I would come up and see you, but our captain is very strict and I don't suppose that he would grant me permission to leave again so soon. Billie, I am so unfortunate as to be cast away off from friends aboard a C.S. Steamer, — "a gun boat" at St. Marks don't you sympathize with
me? I can’t see any one here that I can call a friend, especially one that I cherish as a friend from my boyhood days as your self. Ah! Billie, still fresh in my memory is our boyhood days, where we enjoyed life together — little did I think . . . four years ago when we were together in our dear little city of Tampa that our fate would have been what it is at the present time. Ah! time tells us what is in the future. Billie, the way that I console myself now . . . I tear myself from all society — such as we have her — and get off to myself and ponder over the happy days gone by. I still live in hopes that ere a long while, we will all meet our dear friends at our happy homes — and oh! what a joyful time that will be! I have not heard from home in two months. I am troubled about home on the receipt of this if you are able — write me all the news. I belong to the Navy department at this place. I will try and get off in a week or two and see you.

Very Respectfully, your true friend
Edward Spencer

Letter from J. E Henderson to William Ferris, Jr., in Tallahassee, Florida.

Gainesville, March 8th, [1864]

"Buckshot" — Maj. Summers came down from the front yesterday. He says he sought for you in Lake C. but you had gone up to Tallahassee. I had heard you were wounded. Maj. S. tells me he heard you highly lauded for high soldierly capacities displayed in the very short time you were with your company and for very meritorious conduct on the field. I am proud of you. Let me congratulate you.

I hope your wound may prove trifling but you have a scar to be proud of — and have seen an action you may relate to your children years hence as a crowning glory.

About the time of the fight I sent you a letter from your father under cover to Capt. McNail. I hope you received it. I have not heard a word from home since then except by Mr. McKay. I am assured though the Yankees have not molested our people since. Mr. MK tells nothing strange. he saw your family — all well..

We are removed up here for a short time to ship the accumulations of Company Stores. By some mischance everything is so mixed up that it consumes a very great while to put it in shape. The Yankees when here interfered with nothing belonging to us. They gave Capt. Baya's store up to the Citizens though some of whom availed themselves of the opportunity to lay up little supplies of such trifling articles as Coffee, Sugar etc. By some accident however one of our warehourses was burned consuming about 150 Bls syrup.

Did you hear of the elder Bates exploit at Archer. Being firmly convinced the enemy were approaching, with a patriotic ardor, and spirit determined not to suffer them to have anything whatever, he sailed out of the depot at Archer some 250 barrels syrup and smashed them in
and inconveniently fled to parts unknown — where the Yankees did not approach.

The Company Dictionary was likewise in the fight. Did you hear whether he distinguished himself.

There are rumors that the Yankies were withdrawing - and it was supposed would next advance from the Gulf Coast Suwanee R. probably. This may have been supposed only from the fact that Gen Beauregard went through to No 4 on the Florida RR — probably with eye to such movement on the part of the Yankees. The beauties of the place were at the depot to see the General. He came out the cars very condescendingly and shook hands with the crowd and like the King of
France went on again. The Gainesvillians did not make a dazzling display.

I should be glad to hear from you. I would not have written first to you inasmuch as you promised to write me, but I must (?) you on your exploits.

Give my respects to Mr. and Mrs. J.E., Miss Estella & C. and believe me
Yours truly
J.E. Henderson

Letter from John H. Rhodes to his daughter Caroline Ferris and family in Tampa
Tallahassee
12 January 1867

My dear children again we are permitted to enter a new year with changes, hoping this may find you all well and well doing this leaves us all well except your Gran Mother and myself She has been confined to her bed for a few days but got up yesterday my health had not been good since I left there and does not improve any, but hope soon to be able to leave here and spend my time with you I believe I should enjoy better health provided I cold have anything to do that would not be too laborious I am unable to attend to official business except writing times are dull here as I ever saw it money scarce. I should have come this trip but Judge Baker has been so sick that he put off the Wakulla Court, until next Monday week and I have to be their or would have to lose my case. their and another thing the people that live in my house last so damaged it that I have to have it repaired before the person which is Mrs. Joe Chaires that has it rented this year can move in it. Mrs. Grant has left your Gran Mothers and her health so verry bad that we concluded to stay a while with her. Estell & Capt. Cogswell was married the 24th December last we all occupy Mrs. Grant's room as they will not consent for me to sleep out of their away from the fire. I did not receive the fish roe nor lemons I sup pose the boat took them to Neworleans. I understand the Boat has returned but wasnot able to see Capt McKay to ascertain the cause of my not receiving them Mr. Andrew Denham wrote me that whenever you sent anything from there that you must write him and he would attend to receiving and forwarding he is Rail Road agt at St. Mark's. I have nothing good to send you as I didnot know until last night that the Boat was in and would leave this morning before I could get out It being very cole disagreeable weather. It is now just 3 o'clock and I thought you woud be uneasy unless I wrote a few lines to you Miss Lidia Grant I understand is expected soon to be married to a Dr. Best said to be a very fine young man. Your Gran Mother has endeavored to get Robert Bruce to go on marry Miss Molly, Could she ever get him in a condition to do so. You didnt say whether or not you have a cook the Negroes here are very independant donot wish much to work for the whites. we have to murders committed here very lately by the whites and many by blacks Mr. Richard Jenkins was killed the third day after his Mothers arival
here by a Lt Kemper which is now in jail. Major Henderson Col Magbees wifes brother was killed last week in Wakulla County by Mr. Hardison, which is here in jail. One of the regular soldiers killed another a few days since it is almost dangerous to pass here at night the soldiers are committing so many depredations by theft &c. You did not say if Atty was school or not nor if she needs books or what. I do trust that the child has respect enough for herself and family to try and get a little education so that she will not afraid nor ashamed to go into or be seen in company do let me know on return of Boat what she may need and also what I can bring for any of you.

Josiah I hope you have made some arrangement in New York about getting some goods. pleas let me know I donot know if I can or not but have you not I will try as I hate to come there and do nothing and let me know what kind

Mrs. Bruce Estell Capt Cogswell send their love to you all Give my love to sister Mr. Grant and family and Sissy Ferris Mr. Alberry if you see her kiss Atty and my dear little Willey tell him when I come I have got a pet chicken, two little lambs & 2 kids and want to get if I can a pair of pigs. and receive a receive a kiss from your affectionate father.

J.H. Rhodes

15th September 1867

Dear Mother,

Your letter of 22nd August reached me by last mail and found us at that time as well as usual since that time Eliza and Josiah have both been taken unwell, nothing more serious I think than chill & fever, which can soon be conquered. Eliza and Josiah are both up this morning and under the Quinine treatment We have had a great deal of sickness in this place, and throughout the Country. undoubtedly occasioned by the excessive rains, the like of which was never before known here I cannot tell when we have had 24 hours without rain the next street North of my house is almost impassable at any time and a part of the time almost swimming We have not had any mails since June until a few days since when I wrote to James So if you had written every day I could not have received your letters

I wrote to James if Nelson was not coming out for him to come by the middle of next month the reason I did not fully explain, but gave him to understand I hope you will come with him Come by water to Fernandina or "Jacksonville" by Rail Road to "Gainesville" and by stage to "Ocala" where I will have a convenance to meet you, if he will telegraph to "Bartow" to me at what time he will probably be at "Ocala" You can as well leave home as not Your chickens can be attended to by harriet and I think all at home will be pleased to have you again get a new lease of life. I do not think the trip as I have planned it will not be very uncomfortable or fatiguing.

W.G. Ferris to his mother Lydia (Bangs)
Ferris, New York
Tampa Fla
I would have said to come by Key West, but there may be sickness at that place, and consequently I recommend the other I cannot offer a great many inducements for you to come other than the benefit of our climate, which you have before proved to be beneficial to you, unless it be that the little Negro that you before saw running about as slaves well fed, and clothed, are now Free hungry and naked, if sick, die, for want of attention, as the parents will not do anything for themselves or each other — not a very gratifying sight for a person of your disposition, still it is true.

Since I wrote to James, Wm's wife has left on a visit to her Mothers. Our grand child was a spoiled boy here. Everyone in the house, and the "darkeys" in the yards contributing He would at any time leave his Mother to go to his Grand Mother — and I think his going away has helped on her present illness. We all miss him — very much.

Josiah has removed to Williams house, the "Post" or "Palmer House" as you may remember it. — the place will do well in dry weather, but now it is a hard matter to get to it

You write of high wages with you If you can get people to work at that, is more than we can do, they will take the wages, but when it comes to the work, you must do it yourself or it is not done — such is the case generally — tho' we perhaps are now blessed in servants tho' we have but one that we owned previous to the War, You and James may both recollect "Wade" Kate's husband who says he never was as well off as when belonging to me, and that he intends to stay as long as I will let him. . . .

Kate, that nursed our smaller children and that I thought would never leave us, still holds off, but I am under the impression will soon be begging to again become one of the family Isaac, I think you have been told, died of consumption in Key West. his wife Winney wishes to return to us . . .

Mrs. McCarty still lives where she did when you was here, and still a widow, tho' it would not surprize me to hear of her marrying at any time, as she is still young and good looking, besides, she has a house to shelter a husband.

Mrs. Kate somebody from here has told you, died about a year since. The McKay family appear to be in a flourishing condition

We have Baptist, Methodist and Catholic Services on each Sabbath, and I f we are not a very good people, should be, but I am afraid that the preachers get poorly paid I do not see how it can be otherwise as it is a hard struggle for the best to get along.

I will thank you to say to Harriet that a postage stamp costs but three cents and that she might show her sisterly affection, (if she has any) at least once in 5 years she certainly has as much time to write as I have, and I know the Musquitos' are not as bad with you as us, at this time

Eliza and the children join me in love to all — and I hope to soon hear that you are coming out
Write soon, and tell me all the news
Yr affectionate Son
W.G. Ferris

Letter from Josiah Ferris to his wife
Maggie
Tampa Fla
June 30th 1879
My Darling Wife

Your kind and loving letter of the 23inst came safe to hand yesterday - and you well know how proud and happy I was to receive it. I am so delighted to know that you and my boy are all right. . . .

You ask what we are going to do on the fourth. As for my part I expect to do nothing in the way of celebrating the day. You know that I don't take much stock in that. The 24th of July is my day to celebrate. When the war ended all of my patriotism oozed out — and I don't think a good Southern person has any right to hurrah for the glorious fourth. The folks on Nebraska Avenue are making extensive preparation for the event. They are building a stage for dancing in old man Robles grove and decorating it with the flags from vessels in port — and the ground is white with the bloom of the orange. You ought to be here to enjoy the delightful weather — cool nights and moonlight — orange blooms Myrtle Lillys & Jesimines and as a Cape Coder would say It is dreadful. . . .

Joe . . .

Letter from Wm. G. Ferris to his brother
James L. Ferris
Tampa, Fla
6th Feb. 1882
Dear Bro. Jas. L.

Your letter of long ago came to hand in due course of mail, and should have been replied to long since, but a variety of causes has prevented principally my old complaint Laziness. and I had nothing in particular to write about unless it be that we are all quite well — not froze out as you in your country seem to be. — We have had no frost in town, tho some has been reported out in the country — Oranges are in Bloom and a large quantity yet to market Tomatoes are shipped each trip of the steamers also Egg Plants, and Cucumbers altho we are eating Green Peas new Irish Potatoes and strawberries from our garden we do not expect to ship any from that Source —

We are now expecting a Rail Road, but whether it comes in my time or not only will show — It is now about 70 miles from here and daily coming nearer — that is one — another has commenced grading from town towards Jacksonville — and still another has surveyors on the route from Live Oak. Which will get her first I do not know — But this I do know that the country is filling up fast with settlers, and that all good orange lands, or lands suitable for raising vegetables is commanding high prices — say from 5 to 150 $ per acre according to location and improvement.
Remember us to all. — and write as often as you find opportunity — in haste

Affectionately
W. G. Ferris

ENDNOTES


4 *Tampa Florida Peninsula*, July 28, 1860.


8 *Tampa Florida Peninsula*, June 12, 1879, Aug. 12, 1880; McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, III, 394.

9 The author of this letter was Mary Eliza Ferris, daughter of Wm. G. and Eliza (Morris) Ferris. She was born July 28, 1838 in Arkansas and married Robert Brenham Thomas in Hillsborough County on Jan. 19, 1854. She died in Tampa at the age of 18, shortly after the birth of her second child. She was 14 when she wrote this letter to "Aunt Katura." She tells of the marriage of Hardy D. Kendrick, one of Tampa's early lawyers, to Mrs. Ellen Martin, widow of Rev. Alexander Martin, May 12, 1852. The "festivities" mentioned in the letter which occurred after the wedding, were part of the pioneer shivaree or chivaree custom. The Roleph was the John Roalef, a schooner owned by W. G. Ferris which ran aground during hurricane in 1853. Capt. James McKay bought the schooner where it had grounded and later used the ship in his business activities. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, III, 394; John H. Baxley, Julius J. Gordon, and Diane M. Rodriguez, Oaklawn Cemetery and St. Louis Catholic Cemetery: Bilographical and historical Gleanings, 2 vols. (Tampa, 1991), I, 499; Kyle S. VanLandingham, *In Pursuit of Justice: Law and Lawyers in Hillsborough County, 1846-1996* (Tampa, 1996), 9., *Tampa Tribune*, March 26, 1950.

10 William Gould Ferris, Jr., was born in Tampa, July 29, 1844, the third child of Wm. G. and Eliza (Morris) Ferris. He was approaching his 14th birthday when wrote this letter to his grandfather, Josiah Ferris. The courthouse which was "about to fall down," had been constructed only a few years earlier, in 1854-55. Mr. Thomas was Robert Brenham Thomas, West Point graduate, whose first wife, Mary Eliza Ferris, had died the previous year. Thomas was now marrying his second wife, Sarah J. McKay, May 21, 1858. She was the daughter of Capt. James McKay, the "large merchant." McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, III, 394-395; Baxley, et al., *Oaklawn Cemetery*, II, 836; VanLandingham, *In Pursuit of Justice*, 12-13. For more on the end of the Third Seminole War, see "The End of the Third Seminole War," *Sunland Tribune* 18 (November 1992), 101.

11 Col. Wm. G. Ferris, Sr., was the president of the Tampa Ice Company, established in March 1860 and was a founder and fifth largest stockholder in the Florida Peninsular Railroad, established in 1859. The railroad never got to Tampa, the only construction being a graded right of way from waldo to Ocala. Grandma was Lydia (Bangs) Ferris, age 67, on a visit to her son's family in Tampa. Aunt Harriet was a younger sister of Wm. G. Ferris, Sr. *Tampa Florida Peninsula*, June 11, 28, July 16, 1859, March 24, 1860; George W. Pettingill, "The story of the Florida Railroads;"

12 In 1860 W. G. Ferris, Sr., purchased the *Scottish Chief*, a steamer which he used in the cattle trade. The Civil War had been underway for three weeks when William, Jr., wrote this letter. The 17-year old boy was clearly filled with Southern patriotism. On March 15, 1863, he enlisted at Brooksville, in Co. I, 9th Florida Infantry, CSA. He was described as 5' 10", with
dark hair, hazel eyes and fair skin. Tampa, FL, Peninsular; July 28, 1860; David W. Hartman and David J. Coles, comps., Biographical Roster of Florida's Confederate and Union Soldiers: 1861-1865, 6 vols. (Wilmington, NC, 1995), III, 971.

13 Henry Lafayette Crane was born Sept. 25, 1838 at St. Augustine, the son of Henry A. Crane. He came to Tampa with his parents in the early 1850s. During the Civil War he served as Chief Musician of the Fourth Florida Infantry, CSA. He was captured near Spring Hill, Tennessee, Dec. 21, 1864, confined at Camp Chase, Ohio, and released Feb. 18, 1865. Crane and the Ferris brothers, Josiah and William, had been members of the Tampa Brass Cornet Band, organized March 31, 1860, by J. A. Butterfield. The band’s musical instruments were purchased for $170.11 from W. G. Ferris and Co. The "S.S. Guards" were the Sunny South Guards, a Tampa company commanded by Capt. John T. Lesley. They became Co. K, 4th Florida Infantry. Baxley, et al, Oaklawn Cemetery, I, 243; Compiled Service Records of Confederate Soldiers who served in Organizations from Florida, Dept. of War, National Archives; Grismer, Tampa, 134. Gen Lee was Robert E. Lee, commander of coastal defenses in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Fernandina was Florida's principal east coast port and fell to the Federals in early March 1864. John E. Johns, Florida During the Civil War (Gainesville, FL, 1963), 61-63.

14 John Edward Spencer was born Aug. 13, 1841, the son of Wm. S. Spencer. He came with his parents to Hillsborough County in 1846. He enlisted June 6, 1861, in Co. K, 4th Florida Infantry, CSA, the Sunny South Guards. He resigned Oct. 22, 1863 and subsequently served in Co. A, 2nd Fla. Battalion, CSA. At the time of this letter, he was serving aboard a Confederate steamer at St. Marks. William G. Ferris, Jr. had been wounded at the Battle of Olustee, Feb. 20, 1864, and was hospitalized at Lake City, but then went to Tallahassee to convalesce at the home of John H. Rhodes. Rhodes was the father of Caroline, who had married William's brother, Josiah, June 10, 1862. Col. Magbee was James T. Magbee, Tampa's first lawyer, who moved to Wakulla County after losing his seat in the Florida Senate in 1862. Grismer, Tampa, 318; Hartman and Coles, Biographical Roster, I, 450, III, 971, 1176; Ferris Family Notes; McKay, Pioneer Florida, III, 394-395; VanLandingham, In Pursuit of Justice, 8, 18.

15 James Fletcher Henderson was born Sept. 19, 1843, the son of Andrew J. Henderson. He came with his family to Tampa in 1847 and he and his elder brother John became lawyers. James also served in the Confederate forces. The Battle of Olustee was the most important battle to occur on Florida soil during the Civil War and was a significant Confederate victory. Baxley, et al, Oaklawn Cemetery, I, 442; Federal Works Agency, Works Progress Administration of Florida, Register of Deceased Veterans, Florida, No. 29, Hillsborough County (St. Augustine, 1940-41), 3; For more on the Battle of Olustee, see Leland Hawes, " 'Glory' Troops on Florida Soil" and "Wounded Blacks Lucky to Survive," Tampa Tribune, April 1, 1990.

16 The Leon County 1860 Census shows John H. Rhodes, age 43, city official, born North Carolina, worth $4,000 in personal property and $4,000 in real estate. His wife, Julia Ann, was 45. They had three children: Caroline Victoria, 20, music teacher, born Florida; Estell Blanche, 12 and Oceanna Atty, 9. Bureau of the Census, Eighth United States Census, 1860, Leon County, Florida (population schedules).

17 W. G. Ferris alludes to the 1867 yellow fever epidemic in Tampa. His wife, Eliza, and son, Josiah, were both sufferers, but survived the disease. James was James Leroy Ferris (1830-1884), younger brother of Wm. G. Ferris. William G. Ferris, Jr., died July 27, 1867. He had married Florence Hunter, May 25, 1865. They had a child, William Hunter, born in 1867. Wade, Kate, Isaac and Winney were former slaves of the Ferris family. Harriet (1823-1911), was W. G. Ferris’ sister. McKay, Pioneer Florida, II, 39, III, 395; Ferris Family Notes; For more on the McKay family's "flourishing condition" after the Civil War, see Canter Brown, Jr., "Tampa's James McKay and the Frustration of Confederate Cattle-Supply Operations in South Florida," Florida Historical Quarterly 70 (April 1992), 409-433.

18 Josiah Ferris' first wife, Caroline, died Nov. 1, 1871. He then married Maggie Lou Knight, July 24, 1872. She was born in Henry County, Alabama, Apr. 10, 1848 and died at Tampa, May 26, 1897. Josiah had four children by his first marriage and three by his second marriage.
When he refers to the 24th of July as his "day to celebrate," he is referring to his and Maggie's wedding anniversary. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, III, 394-396; Ferris Family Notes.

19 This is one of the last letters in the collection written by Wm. G. Ferris, Sr. He did live to see the coming of the railroad to Tampa in 1884. Grismer, Tampa, 174-175.
Reenactors of Company K, 7th Florida Infantry, CSA, fire a rifle salute at the Oaklawn Ramble, April 14, 1996.
— Courtesy John Baxley

Milton Light Artillery Cannon
— Courtesy John Baxley

To the left of Eric Harvester are four drummer boys of Company K, 7th Florida Infantry.
— Courtesy John Baxley
Oaklawn Conservator Julius J. Gordon, seated in center
Viewing the Oaklawn Ramble ceremony
— Courtesy John Baxley
Viewing the Oaklawn Ramble ceremony
— Courtesy John Baxley
Viewing the Oaklawn Ramble ceremony
— Courtesy John Baxley
A representative from Myrtle Hill Cemetery receives a certificate of recognition from Kyle S. VanLandingham, Tampa Historical Society president.

— Courtesy John Baxley

A marker placed by the Tampa Historical Society and dedicated at the Ramble. A marker was also dedicated by the society honoring Simon Turman, Jr., Hillsborough County delegate to the 1861 Florida Secession Convention. Also 20 markers were dedicated at previously unmarked graves.

—Courtesy John Baxley

Connie Pruitt, Executive Director of the Hillsborough County Bar Association honored the lawyers buried at Oaklawn Cemetery on the occasion of the bar association’s centennial.

— Courtesy John Baxley
A motorcade of antique autos helped kick off the History Center's Grand Opening. A 1911 Rolls Royce touring car carries the Tampa Tribune's history columnist, Leland Hawes, down historic Franklin Street to the Center.

As part of the History Center's Grand Opening, Sheila Benjamin demonstrates how food was acquired and prepared at a 16th Century encampment (on Tampa Convention Center grounds), long before refrigeration and microwaves.

The Tampa Bay History Center opened its interim museum and library at 225 S. Franklin St., September 21, 1996.
THE LONG, LONG JOURNEY OF THE TAMPA BAY HISTORY CENTER

By Judy Dawson

If a sense of history is the mortar that binds one generation to the next, then small wonder that recent generations have little grasp of their past. Oh, it’s not that there’s no interest in Tampa’s history; it simply has not been an overwhelming priority among city officials over the past 100 years or so.

British author H. G. Wells (1866-1946) said it well in *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*: "In England we have come to rely upon a comfortable time lag of 50 years or a century intervening between the perception that something ought to be done and a serious attempt to do it."

That comfortable time lag has stretched even beyond the century mark for the Tampa Bay History Center. In September the Center, with much fanfare, opened an interim museum, library and education center in the Tampa Convention Center Annex at the corner of Franklin and Platt Streets in downtown Tampa.

Some would say it’s about time. More than a century ago, in the early 1880s, some vocal Tampa residents expressed concern that there was no organized effort to preserve and display their artifacts and they subsequently proposed a facility for this purpose. In the January 19, 1882, issue of *The Sunland Tribune*, County Judge J. G. Knapp wrote:

... no time should be lost in snatching the historical artifacts from the waste and death of oblivion. Many are already gone and the balance is fast wasting away. Is there no man or body of men in the county to gather these precious relics? How long will it be before not a vestige of the history of those days will remain unless speedily [rescued] from irretrievable loss by the men and women of the present day? . . . who shall do it?

But alas, more than half a century passed before Judge Knapp’s concerns were addressed. In 1933 the Tampa Municipal Museum opened in the Tampa Bay Hotel. What remained of those "precious relics" were housed there. But the museum was closed in the late 1930s.

In 1949 the Florida Legislature authorized Hillsborough County to create an historical commission, appoint a county historian and provide an historical library and museum (Bill 765, *Laws of Florida*, Chapter 25883, and the *Hillsborough County Code*, Chapter 16). The County Commission appointed Grace Branch as the first chairman and newspaperman D. B. McKay as the first county historian. McKay received loans and gifts of artifacts for what was hoped would be a new museum. When a new courthouse was built on Pierce Street in 1952, the Historical Commission Museum and Library was assigned a small corner room, allotted an annual budget of $3,000 and was staffed by volunteers. Thus it remained until late last year.

**Big Plans for Doomed Courthouse**

Civic activists of the day, however, were hoping for much more. A September 19, 1952, letter to the Hillsborough County Commission from the Hillsborough Museum
Association listed the association’s "tentative plans" for the old courthouse, which had been designed by J. A. Wood, architect of the Tampa Bay Hotel. This wish list included a civic center/headquarters for the Archaeological Society, the Historical Commission, the Spanish War Veterans and Auxiliary, a public library, a memorial hall, a museum, a convention hall, a spacious lobby/meeting room, display space for the Pan-American Commission, a children’s reading room/day care center and a community bulletin board. Although the signature on the letter is indiscernible, it is believed one of the writers may have been Mrs. W. Finlay Hunter who lived at 826 S. Willow Ave. in Tampa. She was president of the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which was lobbying mightily to save the courthouse. She writes:

"We feel that this property converted to such civic and public uses, putting under one roof all of our Museum Collections and other displays of educational and interest value, both for our citizens and for our tourist population which is increasing greatly each year, will provide the solution of a great need for Tourist Attraction. At the same time it will be of great benefit to our downtown shopping centers and we believe that as a result in the years to come its value to the County will be reconed (sic) in the millions."

Again alas! The original classic red brick, silver-domed courthouse, built in 1891, was demolished in 1952. Today a modern skyscraper takes its place, bordered by Franklin St., Florida Ave., Kennedy Blvd. and Madison St.

In 1971, 20 years after the demise of the courthouse, another group of citizens formed the Tampa Historical Society to work toward preserving Tampa’s history and to collect archival material. In 1977 the Society acquired the historic Peter O. Knight honeymoon cottage at 245 Hyde Park Ave., built in the early 1890s, and it remains the Society’s headquarters today.

In 1986 area history became an issue once again when the County Commission directed that a task force be appointed to consider creating a history museum. As recorded in the July 23, 1986, minutes of the Hillsborough County Commission, the task force members were to be the mayor of Tampa or a city representative and members of local historical organizations. In 1988 County Administrator Larry Brown reported to the Commission that a Museum Task Force indeed had been appointed with Wit Ostrenko, director of the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI), as its coordinator. Meanwhile, another group of concerned private citizens had formed behind the scenes to look into the development of a museum. Ostrenko arranged a meeting between the two groups and Ken Lewis of NCNB (now NationsBank of Florida) was selected as chairman of the merged County Museum Task Force.

**Survey Revealed Craving for History**

Anxious to determine what community feeling might be, the task force asked Randy Nimnicht, executive director of the Historical Association of Southern Florida in Miami, to conduct a preliminary marketing survey. He found that respondents consistently felt that a regional historical museum was an important component missing in the area’s cultural life and . . . the desire for an historical museum clearly exists . . . It will become a reality if leadership in the private sector succeeds in striking a partnership with
leadership in the public sector. Private leadership must demonstrate that it is organized, realistic and committed for the long haul.

Ostrenko recommended that a formal master plan for a history museum be commissioned and financed by county capital improvement project money. But the departure from Tampa of the task force chairman, Ken Lewis, delayed the effort.

In 1989 Tampa businessman J. Thomas Touchton was asked to chair the Museum Task Force by Historical Commission Chairman Herbert McKay, County Historian Tony Pizzo, and task force members Charles L. Knight II, James Ferman Jr. and James Apthorp. He accepted the volunteer position and began work. His enthusiasm for the project was contagious. He and other task force members soon had assembled a board of trustees and an advisory council and began work toward building a charter membership and obtaining much needed private funding. Three years later, the County Commission granted $50,000 and the City of Tampa the same amount so the board could begin planning and operations.

So more than a century after Judge Knapp so eloquently expressed his frustration, the History Museum of Tampa/ Hillsborough County was incorporated as a public/private partnership, with J. Edgar Wall III of the Tampa Historical Society serving as part-time director. It later became the Tampa Bay History Center which, in 1996, is still in its planning stages.

Go to Disney, Turn Right

In February 1993 Byron A. Johnson was brought in from the Albuquerque Museum in New Mexico to assume the post of first full-time executive director. He gradually assembled a small professional staff — an education director, a curator of history and a public relations/membership officer — and hired several consulting firms to conduct surveys and formulate a master plan, the size of which rivals the GTE yellow pages. The History Center's primary mission was education, but Johnson was more of a bricks and mortar man, envisioning a 60,000 square foot first-phase facility that would attract some of the same visitors that stream into Disney World. He injected state-of-the-art dioramas and sound equipment, hands-on displays, simulators and theaters into the master plan. Even virtual reality exhibits wouldn't be out of the question. But he soon grew impatient with the lack of forward movement. While the trustees were doing what they could to encourage government support, budgetary constraints prevented officials from committing to a permanent museum facility. In addition, although negotiations for a site were ongoing with the Port Authority and various downtown landowners, nobody was signing on the dotted line.

"All deliberate speed is not part of the vocabulary around here," he would lament. His frustration mounted as the History Center fought for attention among a laundry list of civic projects. After three years on the job, he was lured from Tampa in February 1996 to become director of the Texas Ranger Museum and Hall of Fame in Waco. Education Director Elizabeth Dunham became acting director for a brief period until Bob Harrell, who had served in a similar position at the Tampa Museum of Art, came on board as interim director for a limited six-month stint. As the process begins to hire Johnson's replacement, it's clear that the next executive director should have some nonprofit development experience, according to Touchton.
Meanwhile the History Center opened its doors to the public in March 1994 in a 2,200 square-foot space provided by Beneficial Corporation in The Shops on Harbour Island. There the small overworked staff operated a preview gallery, conducted educational outreach programs, created a membership base, began a public information program and collaborated on the master plan. The gallery was a hit and visitors and residents alike had their appetites whetted by the "Gateway to Florida" exhibits and displays. Lectures and workshops were offered and over 18 months nearly 500 charter members — private citizens, businesses, corporations and foundations — signed on in support of this quest for a full-fledged history museum. One board member, noting the quality of the exhibits, the positive publicity and extent of community support, remarked, "You're just a preview center, but you're acting like you're a real museum!"

TECO Takes in the Homeless

When The Shops were closed in September 1995, the staff stored its exhibits and collections and went searching for a temporary home. Tampa Electric came to the rescue once again and offered office space on the 8th floor of TECO Plaza on Franklin St. (TECO had previously underwritten the cost of original exhibits in the Preview Center.) From there the staff continued its educational outreach, membership management and public information functions. At the same time, the Historical Commission lost its space in the County Courthouse, which was being renovated. The History Center took responsibility for moving the collections and books into storage until some of the items could be displayed in the new Convention Center facility. In August of this year, the Historical Commission collection — among which are the "precious relics" referred to by Judge Knapp so long ago — became the responsibility of the Tampa Bay History Center under an agreement with the county.

And in an effort to raise the level of interest in the area's history and expand its educational mission, the Center brought noted author, historian and scholar Canter Brown Jr. on staff in July to conduct local historical research, write articles and speak to community groups.

After a year of virtual invisibility, the Center came to life once again in September in the Convention Center Annex. The Annex was built by the city to service the Convention Center. The History Center occupies 6,000 of the total 10,000 square feet of retail space adjacent to a parking garage. The agreement between the city, the county and the Center allows the museum to occupy the space for up to four years. Under the agreement, the Center built out the unfinished space with $200,000 allocated by the county from tourist development tax revenue plus private sector funding, including a grant from the Frank E. Duckwall Foundation for revising, refurbishing and building new exhibitry.

In addition to the 2,400 square foot exhibit gallery, the Annex also houses the Historical Commission library, a meeting area for community groups and staff offices. The gallery exhibits show the geographical, historical and multicultural influences that have shaped Hillsborough County and the region through the centuries. Approximately 40 panels of exhibits are nearly twice the number on display at the Center's earlier home on Harbour Island.

Discover the Past

Stepping into the Center Gallery, visitors experience the environment of the early
Paleoindian period — a world of lush grasses, estuaries and birds. Next, Native American heritage is explored, from the region's earliest human residents — the Paleoindian hunter-gatherers of 12,000 years ago — to modern-day Seminoles. Hands-on Discovery Boxes allow children to become acquainted with the customs of these ancient people.

Spanish exploration greatly changed the character of the region between the early 1500s and the mid 1700s. Graphics and astronomy instruments show how these early settlers navigated rough waters to finally arrive at Tampa Bay. The area's rich maritime history is further illuminated by the Three Friends ship's wheel and other artifacts from the Historical Commission collection. The tug ran arms and munitions for Cuban revolutionaries in and out of Tampa Bay in 1898.

Before northern visitors and residents flocked into the area in search of sun, surf and the Florida laid-back lifestyle, the Tampa Bay region was largely defined by wars. Its military history began with the founding in 1824 of Fort Brooke, which became downtown Tampa and was established to provide protection to pioneer settlers and to monitor the newly created Seminole reserve. It continues through the region's involvement in the Seminole Wars, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War and both World Wars. Artifacts — flint, ammunition and military items — uncovered on the site of Fort Brooke are on display. Photo exhibits, aircraft models, ration cards and other military artifacts illustrate wartime life on the homefront and show early scenes of MacDill Air Force Base.

A photograph montage illuminates the large multicultural flavor of the area. Other exhibits show how H.B. Plant's railroad, streetcars and the Cracker cattle trade influenced life in early Tampa Bay.

Finally, visitors can walk onto a tin-roofed bungalow's front porch and right into the past to learn how Florida's homes and communities have evolved since 1845, when Florida became a state. The History Center is the first stop for the large temporary exhibit, Making Florida Home, from the University of South Florida School of Architecture and Community Design.

But the Convention Center Annex is not intended to be the permanent home of the Tampa Bay History Center. The trustees and staff continue to search for a suitable location and funding to build an innovative, modern facility to serve the Tampa Bay area and surrounding counties.

**The Long Road Ahead**

The mission of the Tampa Bay History Center is ambitious:

To preserve the history and multicultural heritage of Hillsborough County and the Tampa Bay region and convey it through exhibits and educational programs; to serve diverse audiences of school children, long-term residents, newcomers, tourists, collectors and many more; to educate through exciting programs both in the History Center and the schools for the more than 400,000 school children in Hillsborough and adjacent Tampa Bay counties; to host outstanding traveling exhibits on history, antiques, archaeology, popular collectibles and folk arts; to collect, safeguard and exhibit artifacts of importance, to Hillsborough County, and to provide professional assistance to historical societies and heritage...
organizations throughout Hillsborough County.

The large majority of Tampa Bay residents can trace their roots to other climes. Their ancestors influenced the course of history somewhere else. But these newcomers are Floridians now. They will make their mark here and become part of the history of this place. Their names, their struggles and disappointments, their accomplishments and victories will be written in tomorrow’s history books, recorded on tomorrow’s microfilm and computer disks. The Tampa Bay History Center is here to provide the mortar that binds the generations and to ensure these new historics will be preserved for their children and grandchildren.
Col. Wm. I. Turner’s order turning over command of Fort Brooke to Capt. John T. Lesley
— Courtesy Lesley Family

Receipt for Special Tax issued to Mrs. M. J. Brown, stepmother of Mrs. John T. Lesley
— Courtesy Lesley Family
LESLEY DIARY OF 1885
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION
RE -DISCOVERED

By Donald J. Ivey

In last year’s edition of the Sunland Tribune, my article "John T Lesley: Tampa’s Pioneer Renaissance Man" alluded to a diary once kept by Lesley, one of Tampa’s earliest pioneer leaders, while he served as a delegate to the Florida State Constitutional Convention in 1885. According to Tampa historian D.B. McKay, he kept a diary during this period which briefly touched on his service during the Constitutional Convention, and showed a growing frustration with the proceedings of that body. In it, McKay relates, "he dwells rather scornfully on the time wasted by both sides, of frequent sessions lasting only from 10 A.M. to 1 P.M., and of the incessant ‘squabbling’ about trivialities." Few other details were known about this diary (which was presumed to have been lost) although McKay does mention that "Each day he recorded at the opening of his entry the condition of the weather — warm, hot, cold, pleasant or raining. Then he would record the financial transactions of the day — from 15 cents paid for a shave to a sale of real estate or cattle involving $10,000 to $12,000."¹

Recently, Tribune editor Kyle VanLandingham re-discovered the diary among the voluminous holdings of the Lesley Collection in the Special Collections Department at the University of South Florida Library in Tampa. Among Lesley’s diaries located were those for 1879, 1884, 1885, 1895 and 1906.
Meet in convention at 12 noon Judge Maxwell [Judge A. E. Maxwell, delegate from Escambia County] elected as temporary chairman S.Pasco [Samuel Pasco, delegate from Jefferson County and later U.S. Senator from Florida] unanimously Elected Permanent Chairman.

Adjourn in Respect to the Governor to tomorrow." [This refers to the adjournment of the Convention as a "mark of respect" to Florida Gov. Edward A. Perry, whose daughter — Genevieve Perry Parkhill, first wife of Charles B. Parkhill of Tampa — had died the previous Sunday.]

Wednesday June 10: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet at 10 A.M.
pd. for stamps .80
Completed the Election of Officers of the Convention"

Thursday June 11: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet at 10 A.M. squable [sic] over a 5th page
Select Fowlers Son [a reference to the election of H.W. Fowler, son of delegate G.P. Fowler of Putnam County — apparently a friend of Lesley’s — as a fifth page at the Convention] pd. Telegram to Dixon .80”

Friday June 12: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet in convention 10 A.M. select chaplain Mr. McCants [the Rev. A.C. McCants of Tallahassee]
Saturday June 13: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet 11 A.M. accept the rules laid
down by committee [the Committee
on Rules, which established the
standing rules of the Convention]
adjourn until Monday 10 A.M.
pd. for slippers 1.50
Rent pd. Himes at Home 2.00
Several Members go home”

Sunday June 14: "At Tallahassee warm
remain at House pretty [sic] much all
day write a [few letters?]
Sam Tucker arrives [Samuel C. Tucker was a prominent Gainesville
attorney appointed 1885 by President
Cleveland as Register of Public
Lands at Gainesville.]
pd. for Drinks .30"
[The reference to "Drinks" here
presumably refers to alcohol,
somewhat of an ironic twist con-
sidering that according to one source
Lesley "For years . . . has advocated
the cause of temperance, although
not a Prohibitionist."]

Monday June 15: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet at 10 A.M. do but little
Adjourn at 12 noon til tomorrow 10
pd. for Drinks .75
Caucus to night by those in favor of
Election by the People" [A reference
to a faction among the delegates who
favored election of cabinet officers
by popular vote. Interestingly also,
Lesley modestly omits his own
unanimous election to office, as one
of the two Vice Presidents of the
Convention on this day. Furthermore,
in the assignment of committees which was also made on
this date, Lesley drew two —
Census, Apportionment and Bound-
daries, and Private Corporations,
which he chaired.]

Tuesday June 16: "At Tallahassee warm
Some excitement getting up as to
Eligibility & suffrage caucus held
tonight by those in favor meet in
Convention 10 A.M. & adjournment
at 1 P.M. till tomorrow” [The
"caucus" referred to here probably
was a Democratic party caucus for
those delegates who were also
elected officials in Florida state
government, among whom was
Lesley, who was representing
Hillsborough County in the State
Senate at the time. Unfortunately,
details of the meeting have yet to be
discovered, but probably it involved
discussion on including a poll-tax
provision into the Constitution,
which was designed by the
Democrats to exclude Florida's
African-American population from
voting — the vast majority of whom
were Republican.

Wednesday June 17: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet at 10 A.M. do but little
squabbling over Mann's resolution
the whole matter laid on the table [probably a reference to Hernando Austin S. Mann’s resolution "relative to printing resolutions" proposed on this day.]

Meeting of caucus again good deal of dissatisfaction." [The "dissatisfaction" referred to here no doubt involved the ongoing debate within the Democratic caucus on the issue of suffrage.]

Convention historian Edward C. Williamson summed up the controversy in these terms:

The most important difference in the convention was suffrage and eligibility. Here the delegates from the poorer piney-woods counties broke with the cotton-growing black belt "Bourbons." When the majority report on suffrage came in, the "Bourbons" were most displeased. "Farmer" [Austin S.] Mann had had the courage to divorce the issue of disenfranchisement of the Negro from the constitution. Furthermore, he warned the convention that to inject this issue now would be hazardous, and he suggested that it be voted on as a separate ordinance. Indignant "Bourbons" [conservative Democrats, of whom Lesley was one] immediately rejected this unwanted advice on race relations by a young Yankee upstart. On the other side a sizable group of white county Democrats supported Mann. A wild rumor circulated that Mann had broken the hitherto solid Democratic front and was accepting support from the Republicans. That such support was available was made clear by the Republican leadership. Thomas V. Gibbs urged his fellow party members to shake off their lethargy and help defeat the poll tax. A stormy session of the convention ensued on July 22 when ex-Judge Edwin M. Randall presented a petition from the Working-man’s Association of Jacksonville. These white laborers had clearly seen that a poll tax would work an injury on labor and poor whites in general. They bluntly warned that convention that such a tax would convert Florida from a democracy into an aristocracy. In support of their resolution Mann affirmed that a poll tax was unfair to the laboring class.

It soon became obvious that the youthful citrus man was fighting a losing battle. The minority report of the suffrage committee was the weapon by which the "Bourbons" delivered a sharp blow to Mann’s rising political star. This report, authored by James E. Yonge of Pensacola, became part of the constitution by a vote of eighty-six to twelve [Lesley voting with the majority on this provision]. Surprisingly, a few Republicans — including ex-Senator Simon B. Conover, Hannibal Rowe of Santa Rosa County, and William F. Thompson, a Leon County Negro — supported the measure which was obviously directed at the disenfranchisement of the Negro and the obliteration of the Republican Party in Florida.  

Thursday June 18: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet at 10 A.M. one or two committee reports to day adjourn at Eleven til 10 tomorrow [?]Write several letters to-day introduce my first ordinances." [Here Lesley mentions the first of 5 resolutions he introduced on the floor of the Convention:

Ordinance No. 17, on "Formation of new counties-" and Ordinance No. 19, "Relative to the removal of county seats." These ordinances eventually were incorporated into the final draft of the Constitution as Sections 2-4 of Article VIII on Counties and Cities.]

Friday June 19: "At Tallahassee warm

Meet at 10 A.M. & adjourn til Monday next 10 A.M.

pd. Drinks .85 pd. Express on [Millet?].75

Many Members leave for home"

Saturday June 20: "At Tallahassee warm

pd. per Milon .25

[laid?] around doing nothing

pd. For Drinks .80

feeling badly

Rent pd. Hines at Home $3.00"

Sunday June 21: "At Tallahassee warm

Lay up all day

[Sweat?] run off all night last night feeling badly today"

Monday June 22: "At Tallahassee warm

pd. for pants $9.00

pd. for stamps .50

pd. for [flour ?] .15

pd. for Drinks .40

Did but little work Meet at 10 A.M. & adjourn at 1230 till 10 tomorrow

Tuesday June 23: "At Tallahassee warm

Meet in Convention 10 A.M. adjourn at 1 PM. next tomorrow

pd. for Drinks .50"

Wednesday June 24: "At Tallahassee warm

Meet in Convention 9 A.M. take up Article five [on the Executive Department] & squabble over it all morning

adjourn 4 P.M. til 10 tomorrow

[?] Henry family arrive in Tallahassee

pd. for shoes .15"12

Thursday June 25: "At Tallahassee warm

Meet at 10 A.M. still considering Article 5 adjourn t:30 PM. until 9 tomorrow"

Friday June 26: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet in Convention 9 A.M. take up Article four [on the Legislature Department] sqable [sic] over it all day
adjourn at 1 P.M. till 9 tomorrow pd.
For stamps .80" 13

Saturday June 27: "At Tallahassee warm
many go home
Adjourn till Monday 10 A.M."

Sunday June 28: "At Tallahassee warm
lay around the house all day doing nothing"

Monday June 29: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet 10 A.M. do but little today order of Busbees paid [?] 7.00"

Tuesday June 30: "At Tallahassee warm
pd. For stamps && .80
getting along slow"

Wednesday July 1: "At Tallahassee warm
pd. Drinks [.80?] 
adjourn after two hours discussions till tomorrow"

Thursday July 2: "At Tallahassee warm
Sparkman Wall & Henderson come up to day [The individuals referred to here are probably Stephen M. Sparkman, Joseph B. Wall and William B. Henderson, all prominent Tampans and close friends and political allies of Lesley’s. Sparkman was at the time of the Convention serving as state’s attorney for the Sixth Judicial Circuit (which included Hillsborough County). Also, according to Tampa historian Karl Grismer, "In the early 1880s he became counsel for the South Florida Railroad and when that line was acquired by the Plant System was retained in the same capacity." Wall was also a prominent Tampa attorney and was at one time a partner of Henry L. Mitchell, who became governor of Florida in 1893, and later of Peter O. Knight. And lastly, Henderson was a very successful Tampa merchant, banker and businessman who at one time was Lesley’s partner in the cattle business. During the Civil War, he had also served as 1st lieutenant in Company B, 7th Fla. Infantry and after the war the two had been partners in various businesses for a time."
fighting over Homestead Land I am in the chair" [This reference refers to an ongoing debate within the Convention over Article VI, on Homestead Exemptions. In one instance during the afternoon session on this date, Lesley was called to briefly preside over the Convention during debate on this article.] 14

Friday July 3: "At Tallahassee warm
Meet at 9 A.M. do but little adjourn till Monday 10 A.M.
pd. For stamps .50
pd. Repairs on [?] 1.50
many of the members leave for home
Saturday July 4: "At Tallahassee warm

go to Monson's ferry to 4th July celebration Judge Wescot, Dr. Wescot & Mr. [Holliman?] & I speak [with Charley Baird on?] declaration of Judgement

return 4 P.M. watch short [?] between Pensacola & Tallahassee [?] in favor [?]"

[The "Judge Wescot" mentioned here probably is James D. Wescott, Jr., who served as an Associate justice on the Florida Supreme Court from 1868 to 1885; the "Dr. Wescot" is probably Dr. John Wescott of St. Augustine, delegate to the Convention from St. Johns County. The references to "Charley Baird" and the "declaration of Judgement" are otherwise unknown.]15

Sunday July 5: "At Tallahassee warm

do nothing but write a few letters"

Monday July 6: "At Tallahassee warm

good rain today

Meet at 10 A.M. quorum present do but little

pd. Drinks 1.00

pd. Telegram to Chase 1.10

Rent pd. Hines at Home 2.00"

Tuesday July 7: "At Tallahassee warm

Recd. Of [L.C. Pearce?] 4,000.00

1 year at 10% int [erest] signs note J.A. Henderson [W.B.?] Henderson Jno. T. Lesley."

[This no doubt refers to a sale of cattle by Lesley from his vast South Florida cattle operations, one of his many enterprises which was at its zenith at about this time. The "J.A. Henderson" referred to here was John A. Henderson, brother of William B. (W.B.) Henderson and for years a prominent Tampa and Tallahassee attorney]

Meet at 9 A.M. adjourn till 5 P.M. "16

Here the diary abruptly ends. The Convention would continue to meet until August 3, when the final draft of the Constitution was signed by the delegates. Lesley himself appears to have left for home on the 2nd without having signed the document. However, in spite of Lesley's personal disillusionment with the proceedings of the Convention, he won the respect of delegates on both sides of the aisle, and prior to the close of the Convention on August 1st he was presented with a beautiful gold-headed cane by the Republican minority to thank him for his impartial service as Vice President.17


3 Ibid., 26.

4 Ibid., 31-32.

5 Ibid., 35-50.
Lesley Family Scrapbook in possession of Lesley family.


Convention Journal, 52-54; Regarding the use of caucuses during the Convention, Convention historian Edward C. Williamson commented that “Throughout the convention the Democrats resorted to the caucus- a proven unification device. Thus any former Independents who exhibited wavering tendencies could be prevented from voting with the Republicans and upsetting the "Bourbon" [i.e., conservative Democrats, of whom Lesley was one] cotton wagon.” See Edward C. Williamson, "The Constitutional Convention of 1885," Florida Historical Quarterly 41 (October 1962), 121.

Williamson, 122-123.

Convention Journal, 68-69; and Williamson, 68-69.


Ibid., 112-127.

Ibid., 142-154.


Hartman, 2:694.

Convention Journal, 1885, 581. Also, the cane which Lesley was given at the close of the Convention is still in the possession of the Lesley family today.
MEET THE AUTHORS

Canter Brown, Jr., is a native of Ft. Meade, Florida and received his B.A., J.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Florida State University. His 1991 book, *Florida’s Peace River Frontier*, received the Rembert W. Patrick Award from the Florida Historical Society. An acknowledged expert on 19th-century history, Brown is currently Historian in Residence at the Tampa Bay History Center.

Dr. James W. Covington is past professor of History at the University of Tampa, and author of numerous books and articles. He is former president of the Florida Anthropological Society, and of the Tampa Historical Society, and former member of the Barrio Latino Commission and of the Hillsborough County Historical Commission.

Judy Dawson is a marketing communications consultant and freelance writer who joined the staff of the Tampa Bay History Center in 1994. She is responsible for promoting the Center and its educational programs; writing, editing and publishing *PastTimes*, a quarterly newsletter, and other publications, and managing the Center’s growing membership. She graduated *cum laude* from the University of North Dakota with a B.A. in Journalism, and did her graduate work at Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

Hampton Dunn is past president of the Florida Historical Society and is official Hillsborough County Historian. He has been in the communication fields of newspapers, radio and television broadcasting, public relations and magazine writing for nearly 60 years. He is author of 18 books on Tampa and Florida historical subjects and is also in demand as a public speaker on many subjects. And he’s a native Florida "Cracker."

R. Thomas Dye is an Adjunct Instructor of Social Sciences at Tallahassee Community College and Ph.D. Candidate in history at Florida State University. In 1993, Dye was one of five Floridian historians appointed by the State Legislature to investigate the incidents that occurred in Rosewood, Florida in...
1923, and his work on Rosewood has been published in the *Historian*. Thomas is currently writing his doctoral dissertation on drug smuggling in Florida.

Leland Hawes, Jr. is a native Tampan who grew up in Thonotosassa, where he published a weekly newspaper at age 11. A graduate of the University of Florida in 1950, he worked as a reporter for The Tampa Daily Times for two years, then for The Tampa Tribune in various capacities since then. For the last several years he has been writing a history/heritage page.

Donald J. Ivey received his B.A. with honors in History and his Master’s Degree in Public Administration from the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Now the Curator of Collections at Heritage Village-The Pinellas County Historical Museum in Largo, he has written a variety of articles on Florida’s early pioneer history. He and his wife Mylene live in Largo, and are expecting their first child in January.

Rodney Kite-Powell, II, was born in Tampa January 10, 1973. He received his B.A. degree in history from the University of Florida in 1995 and is currently pursuing a Master’s Degree in history at the University of South Florida. He is employed as Education Associate at the Tampa Bay History Center.

Joe Knetsch received his B.S. degree from Western Michigan University, his M.A. from Florida Atlantic University and his Ph.D. from Florida State University. He is employed by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection as a Senior Management Analyst II. His primary function with the Department is to research Florida’s history for early methods of transportation on and the usage of Florida’s water-bodies.

Gary R. Mormino is Professor of History at the University of South Florida and is an author of numerous books and articles on Florida history. His interest in the summer of 1946 is both personal and professional. During that summer, his parents Ross and Mabel Mormino were expecting their first child, Gary Ross Mormino.
Michael H. Mundt received his M.A. from the University of South Florida in 1994. The title of his master’s thesis is "Fiery Crosses in the Palmettoes: The Ku Klux Klan in the Greater Community." A resident of the Tampa Bay Area since 1981, he is an adult education instructor for Hillsborough County.

Spessard Stone, was born in Clewiston in 1944. He is a descendant of the pioneer Stone and Hendry families of Florida. He was reared in Hardee County and in 1960 suffered a broken neck in a diving accident, resulting in quadriplegia paralysis. He is author of John and William Sons of Robert Hendry, a Hendry genealogy; The Stone Family, Thonotosassa Pioneers, and Lineage of John Carlton, as well as numerous historical articles and biographical sketches for various publications. He resides in Wauchula.

Kyle S. VanLandingham, a sixth generation Floridian, received his B.A. degree from Maryville College in Tennessee in 1973 and his J.D. degree from Cumberland School of Law of Samford University in 1976. He has authored numerous books and articles on Florida history and genealogy. VanLandingham is currently president of the Tampa Historical Society and has been editor of the Sunland Tribune since 1991.
Michael Gannon, Distinguished Service Professor of History at the University of Florida, is this year’s winner of the 1996 D. B. McKay Award.

The honor, presented by the Tampa Historical Society for exceptional work in the historical field, goes to the editor of *The New History of Florida*, the first comprehensive history of the state in 25 years.

A native of St. Augustine, Dr. Gannon is a specialist in Spanish Colonial history of Florida and the Caribbean. He is director of the Institute for Early Contact period Studies, which conducts research into the voyages of Christopher Columbus and the first contacts between Europeans and Native Americans in the New World.

Two of his books in the 1960s dealt with the early history of the Catholic church and the Spanish missions in Florida — *Rebel Bishop* and *Cross in the Sand*. He is co-author of two others and a contributor to numerous others on the region.

In 1990, Dr. Gannon wrote a national best-seller in a new field for him — submarine warfare. His *Operation Drumbeat*, a history of Germany's first U-boat operations along the Atlantic coast in World War II, became the subject of a National Geographic dramatization which won an Emmy award.

He followed that one with a World War II novel with a Florida setting, *Secret Missions*, which began with the landing of German spies from a submarine on the coast near St. Augustine.


He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Florida Blue Key. In 1990 King Juan Carlos
I of Spain conferred upon him the highest civilian award of that country, Knight Commander of the Order of Isabel la Catolica.

Michael Gannon is truly a distinguished historian in the cause of Florida history.
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--Courtesy Lesley Family