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THE SMUGGLERS' BLUES: DRUG AND ALIEN TRAFFIC IN TAMPA DURING THE 1920s

by Frank Alduino

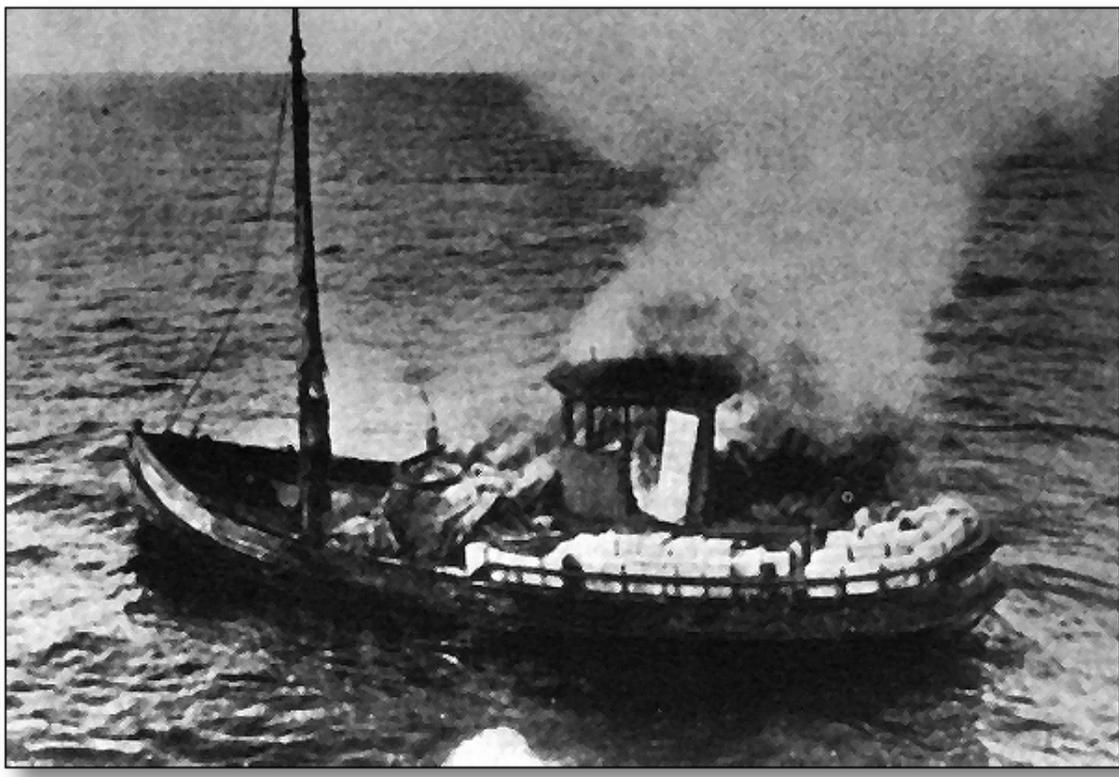
The problem of Florida drug trafficking is long standing. Indeed, in 1983 Governor Robert Graham's *Governor's Council on Organized Crime* found that 70 to 80 percent of all illegal narcotics entering the United States passed through Florida. In recent years the south Florida region has gained the dubious reputation of being the transportation and distribution hub for marijuana, cocaine, and heroin. The Miami-Dade area with its accessible coastline, international airports, numerous abandoned airstrips, and rarely used rural roads has made the importation of illicit narcotics a lucrative and relatively risk-free enterprise. Although drug trafficking has now become one of its leading industries, Miami has not always been the center of the illegal narcotics trade in the United States. In fact, the first drug trafficking network in Florida was found in Tampa during the early 1920s. At that time a loose confederation of smugglers established Tampa as second only to New York as the largest port of entry for unlawful drugs.¹

With the adoption of Prohibition in Florida, Tampa and its surrounding areas gained an infamous reputation for smuggling. Because of the region's numerous coastal inlets, hidden coves, and a tradition of lax law enforcement, Tampa immediately became a smugglers' paradise. Although early bootleggers made handsome profits, illicit liquor importation became increasingly competitive. To supplement their profits, some gangsters began to smuggle narcotics and aliens in addition to illegal alcohol.²

Historian David F. Musto has called Americans' historic addiction to narcotics "the American Disease." By 1900 perhaps a quarter million Americans had become addicted to opiates, such as cocaine and morphine. "Cocaine was especially feared in the South," argues Musto, because Southerners feared "that Negro cocaine users might become oblivious of their prescribed bounds and attack white society."³ In Tampa, the fear of unbridled drug use and its identification with foreign groups and ethnic minorities attracted attention in the early 1900s.

The illegal use of narcotics, a worldwide concern in the 1920s, had serious implications for the United States. Although the federal government began to recognize the destructive nature of the drug trade during the early 1920s, the clandestine use of narcotics was not a new phenomenon in American society. As early as 1909 the U.S. prohibited the importation of opium or its derivatives; five years later the federal government broadened its powers to enforce the regulation of illegal drugs with the passage of the Harrison Anti-Narcotics Act.⁴

The first recorded drug-related incident in Tampa occurred in 1903 in the Fort Brooke area. A notorious collection of jook joints, bordellos, and gambling dens, Fort Brooke was located east of East Street to Tampa's Union Station and south to the estuary. Fort Brooke remained a separate incorporated town until 1907. Several opium parlors operated by Chinese and blacks flourished in the city. These precursors of the modern day "shooting galleries" attracted the lowest segment of Tampa's population and became havens for the city's most opprobrious



A rumrunner burning in the Gulf of Mexico during the 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

misanthropes. According to the police, “Victims were led into these dens and induced to try an opium pipe. While under the influence they were easily robbed of their valuables.”⁵

From 1900 to 1920, while Tampa was growing from a small coastal town to a modern city, only a handful of individuals were arrested and prosecuted for violating federal narcotic laws. Beginning in the early 1920s, however, drug-related crimes in Tampa drastically increased. Tampa, argued Maurice Helbrant in *Narcotics Agent*, was “notorious for drug peddlers, large and small, both as a winter resort and a base of operations, and as an especially lucrative field in itself on account of the great number of vacationing addicts, addicted hotel employees, and addicts who poured into the state to work their rackets on the tourists.”⁶ In 1922 the *Tampa Tribune* believed the city supported 500 drug addicts, many of whom were resorting to petty larceny or other crimes to sustain their expensive habits. The situation became so alarming that the secretary of the Tampa Police Department estimated that crimes committed by “dope fiends” cost the city well over \$2,000,000 annually. More ominously, by 1920 Tampa had emerged as one of the nation’s major narcotics distribution points. The *Tribune* speculated in 1922 that more morphine was sold in Tampa than in Chicago, New Orleans or Philadelphia. Only New York City harbored a greater illegal drug trade than Tampa.⁷

The first coordinated municipal and federal attempt to eradicate drug trafficking in Tampa occurred in the summer of 1922. In a rare spirit of cooperation, local police joined forces with federal agents and arrested eight suspected ringleaders of the city's retail drug network. The federal government actively supported this sting operation. In fact, agents from the Narcotics Bureau of the Internal Revenue Service from Atlanta, as well as Prohibition agents from Miami, Pensacola, and Tallahassee, participated in the raids. These well-publicized arrests temporarily curtailed the illicit activities of Tampa's drug peddlers; within a few short months, however, narcotics were once again easily accessible in the city. In fact, C. D. Dickerson, a federal narcotics inspector, stated that drugs were so plentiful that the retail value of morphine, cocaine, and heroin was lower in Tampa than in any other city in the country.⁸

By the mid-1920s, Tampa's drug problems began receiving national exposure, especially after Charles McArthur, a reporter for William Randolph Hearst's *International Magazine*, wrote a series of sensational articles on the city's drug trade. The exposés created so much unflattering publicity that city fathers, concerned that the tourist trade would suffer accordingly, wrote scathing editorials in the *Tampa Tribune* and *Tampa Times* condemning McArthur and his magazine. Although unpopular, this series of articles mobilized a number of reform-minded individuals to help fight Tampa's drug problem. The Florida Federation of Women's Clubs offered volunteers to help drug victims. This coalition of organizations, representing Tampa's progressive middle-class women, pressed their state representatives to build a state hospital for drug addicts.⁹

Another reform-minded member of the community, alarmed at the growing drug menace afflicting the city, was Hillsborough County Judge Julian Hazard. Appalled at the state's insensitivity and its lack of adequate facilities for the treatment of drug abusers, the judge told a group of concerned citizens: "At least a half dozen drug victims come to me every week and voluntarily ask that they be given treatment to cure them. The state hospital has requested me not to send any more there. Local institutions refuse to accept them and they are left to wander the streets, begging and stealing for money to ease the pain."¹⁰

Largely owing to adverse publicity and community outrage, the federal government increased its law enforcement presence in Tampa. The city received much needed support in 1923 when an Internal Revenue agent was permanently stationed in Tampa. Earlier, drug enforcement was the responsibility of the local police, or of federal agents stationed 500 miles away in Atlanta, Georgia. Congress also assisted the war on drug trafficking several years later by passing the Aid to Narcotic Enforcement Bill, allocating money for the purchase of illicit drugs. Before the passage of this act, drug agents had to buy evidence with their own personal funds; in most cases they were eventually reimbursed by the government. This inefficient system allowed large drug peddlers to avoid arrest and prosecution because most narcotic retailers refused to sell small quantities, and officers did not have sufficient funds to make the necessary purchases that could be used as evidence under the Harrison Act.¹¹

This additional federal support seriously disrupted the availability of illegal narcotics in the city. Whereas in 1923 there were over 500 drug addicts in Tampa, four years later that number had dwindled to approximately fifteen or twenty. In order to squeeze the drug retailer and curtail the drug supply, the federal government conducted a series of highly visible raids during the middle and late twenties. One such operation occurred in September 1925. Using undercover

officers, who for six months had successfully penetrated Tampa's largest drug network, federal agents arrested nineteen people for violating the Harrison Act and seized over \$1,000,000 worth of cocaine and morphine. Among those caught in the dragnet was Joseph Cacciatore, reputed mastermind of the organization and self-professed "king" of the Ybor City drug traffickers. Only eighteen years old at the time of the arrest, Cacciatore functioned as a "traffick manager" for the smuggling ring that supplied narcotics to a number of large cities in the Northeast.¹²

According to police, Cacciatore's retailers conducted their transactions from Ybor City, selling their sordid goods from restaurants, coffee shops, cafes and private homes. Even more offensive, these drug peddlers used children in their operations. Throughout Ybor City scores of children, ranging from ages six to fourteen, sold a variety of narcotics to the city's drug-addicted population. Worst of all, according to newspaper reports, drug traffickers often took young girls on "joyrides," forcing them to experiment with drugs. Once addicted, they began living low lives as retailers in the city's drug trade.¹³

The arrest of Cacciatore and his runners received nationwide publicity. Accounts and editorials on their notorious activities were reported in newspapers throughout the Southeast. The harshest commentary on Tampa's latest drug round-up, however, appeared in the *Mobile Register*. The Alabama daily told its readers: "Such conditions in Tampa cannot be contemplated without a shudder. The debauchery of school children by drug peddlers is not a new thing. There have been frequent reports of the sale of narcotics to school children in larger cities, but the use of mere babies to foster and pander to narcotic addiction is about the limit of depravity."¹⁴

The sharp condemnation from within the community, as well as concerted nationwide criticism, probably accounted for Cacciatore's swift conviction and stiff sentence. The young criminal was given three years in federal prison and fined \$1,000 on each of his three indictments. Moreover, Judge William Jones, presiding over the sentencing phase of the trial, ordered that the penalties run consecutively, thus increasing his jail term to nine years and his fine to \$3,000.¹⁵

Perhaps the most sensational drug-related arrest in Tampa's history occurred in 1928 when two of the city's most notorious and flamboyant gangsters Charlie Wall and George "Saturday" Zarate – were accused of violating federal drug laws. Wall, the product of one of Tampa's wealthiest and most socially prominent families, was the city's undisputed crime lord for several decades. A former morphine addict with visible needle marks all over his body, Wall not only controlled the incredibly lucrative *bolita* trade, but also ruled the political precincts in Ybor City and West Tampa; few candidates won election without Wall's support.¹⁶

Zarate had left Cuba as a young man and found employment in Tampa as a cigar maker. Apparently bored and disillusioned with his chosen occupation, he turned to a life of crime, quickly becoming one of Tampa's most recognized underworld personalities. "Saturday" operated several *bolita* parlors and was the owner of Pote's Cafe, a huge gambling establishment that featured roulette, dice, and other games of chance.¹⁷

Wall and Zarate were both arrested in May 1928 in a massive drug sweep that netted forty-six ounces of various illegal narcotics. Although fifteen people were indicted for violating the

Harrison Act, the federal government's main targets were Wall and Zarate. The case against the two well-known gamblers centered on the testimony of Isabell Knowles, a morphine addict who had met Wall ten years earlier in the Melvill Club where she was employed as a prostitute. According to Knowles, "a woman well known in Florida among the gambling and liquor-importing crowd,"¹⁸ Wall helped her to get morphine by writing a note to Zarate: "This party is OK. She will explain her business to you. I've told her you could get what she wants. By helping her you will oblige Charles W."¹⁹

Upon receiving the note, Knowles, who was working as a government informant for the sum of \$500 plus expenses, sought out Zarate and induced him to sell three ounces of morphine for \$120. A few hours later Zarate sold Knowles and an undercover federal drug agent more morphine.²⁰

In a surprise move, Wall's attorneys allowed Tampa's crime boss to take the stand in his own defense. The humanitarian-sounding Wall told a shocked courtroom that he had indeed written the note for Knowles, but only to help the woman who was suffering from morphine withdrawal symptoms. The jury after considering the evidence and weighing Wall's testimony deliberated for several hours. When the jury returned, they found Zarate guilty on four counts of selling morphine. Zarate's codefendant fared better; the jury was unable to agree on Charlie Wall's innocence or guilt.²¹

"Saturday" Zarate received a ten-year jail term for his crimes. When imposing punishment, Judge Alexander Akerman sternly turned to the defendant and intoned: "In my thirty-three years in and about courts of justice I have never seen the equal of your defiant countenance and demeanor. Your offense. . . is a hundred fold worse than murder, for the man who traffics in narcotic drugs destroys the body to a lingering death of physical and mental suffering."²²

After receiving his sentence, Zarate, helped by Ralph Reina a member of Tampa's elite gambling fraternity, immediately posted a \$40,000 bond and waited for the Federal Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans to review his case. Anxious about his impending fate, he fled the United States and returned to Havana. Although Cuban authorities refused to initiate extradition proceedings, Zarate, having received word that the court had upheld his conviction, returned to Tampa. After a perfunctory hearing, he was taken to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta to serve his ten-year sentence. With Zarate on his way to Atlanta, drug agents could relax for a time. But their relaxation was short-lived. Hopeful that Zarate would serve his full sentence, they were



Charlie Wall, Tampa's long-time gambling czar.

Photograph from *Sunland Tribune*, 1990.



Located at the southeast corner of 8th Avenue and 14th Street in Ybor City, the El Dorado Gambling Casino featured dice tables, a roulette wheel, and a plush lounge where guests played faro. Customers gathered nightly for the bolita throw. A balcony ran along the interior, from where a machine-gun-toting guard watched events.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

soon disappointed. Described as a “model prisoner,” Zarate somehow managed to obtain a pardon from President Herbert Hoover.²³

Paroled after serving only thirty-three months in jail, “Saturday” immediately reestablished himself as a member of Tampa’s criminal elite. Unfortunately for Zarate, he returned to the underworld at a very unstable and dangerous time. From the early 1930s and to the mid-1950s, Tampa’s gangs fought a series of bloody gang wars rivalling those in New York and Chicago. In fact, Zarate was the target of a would-be assassin’s bullet. While waiting outside the El Pasaje Restaurant, he was shot in the shoulder. Although eventually recovering from his wounds, “Saturday” Zarate temporarily quit the rackets. Later in the mid-1950s “Saturday” showed up in New York’s underworld, becoming one of “Lucky” Luchiano’s chief henchman. Zarate, like many organized crime figures, could never retire and enjoy his gangland gains; he mysteriously disappeared before the Kefauver Committee on Organized Crime could question him, never to appear again.²⁴

Charles Wall, unlike Zarate, never spent a day in jail. In November 1930 he was again tried for violating the Harrison Act. The government re-prosecuted its case, and Knowles retold her story. The jury again could not reach a verdict. Tenaciously refusing to concede its case, the federal

government retried Wall a third time. On December 6, 1931, in a verdict that shocked the city, a Tampa jury finally convicted Charles Wall and sentenced him to serve two years in jail. However, he never went to prison; the appellate court in New Orleans reversed the lower court's decision on the grounds that Judge Ackerman erred in not having informed the jury of the legal question of entrapment.²⁵

Despite his legal difficulties, Wall continued to reign as lord of Tampa's underworld. His *bolita* enterprises and other gambling businesses continued to grow and prosper. His long and notorious career as Tampa's crime boss ended in the late 1940s when the Trafficante family gained enough strength to force Wall into retirement. After a brief hiatus in Miami, Charlie Wall, still symbolizing the power and prestige of an older generation of criminals, returned home. Shortly after testifying before the Kefauver Committee on Organized Crime, Wall was found murdered in his home. The murderers slashed Wall's throat and next to his bloody body lay a copy of his testimony given before the Kefauver Committee.²⁶

Just as national prohibition had aided drug running, it also went hand-in-hand with alien smuggling. Those participating in the illegal importation of foreigners were also usually engaged in the bootlegging trade. Many seacaptains transported aliens on their liquor-laden vessels in exchange for quick profits. During the 1920s scores of rumrunners clandestinely delivered an untold number of desperate and brave aliens to Tampa. There they found temporary refuge and protection; however, many unsuspecting foreigners hoping to start a new life in America were exploited, robbed, and even murdered by dangerous and greedy smugglers. One source familiar with alien smuggling described the trade in this manner: "The masters of the schooners brought the aliens over, more as cargo than passengers, and a nondescript one at that. Some care is usually devoted to the stowage of cargo, goods of one kind are not mingled with those of another kind, and they are kept clean of spray or bilge water. Not so with the 'white ivory' being brought over. They are kept in smelly holes which a day or so before contained fish or odorous sponges well along decay. The hatches are battened down tightly when the suspicion of a coast guard cutter appears."²⁷

Before 1882 gaining entry into Tampa and the rest of the U.S. was relatively easy for any foreign national. Yet beginning in the mid-1880s a wave of intolerance and a nativistic fervor swept across the nation. The first victims of this intense discrimination were the Chinese, who were used as cheap labor in the American West. Migrating to California to build the great railroads, the Chinese constituted approximately one-ninth of the state's entire population by the early 1880s. Unfortunately, the railroad boom quickly ebbed, leaving thousands of Chinese unemployed. Isolated and frightened, many accepted lower salaries, thus undercutting the wages paid to American workers. The inevitable confrontation between American workers and Chinese laborers exacerbated nativistic tendencies, resulting in tough federal immigration restrictions. Responding to pressure from California, Congress in 1882 passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, effectively ending the free flow of Chinese laborers into the United States.²⁸

This exclusionary act seems to have deterred few Orientals determined to live in the U.S. Instead of entering the country legally, thousands of Chinese paid large sums of money and risked unknown dangers to enter the United States illegally. By the mid-1880s most Chinese

nationals entering America came through California; however, a substantial number were also smuggled into the country via the port of Tampa.

The smuggling of Chinese and later southern Europeans flourished in Tampa for a number of reasons. First, Tampa was the home of several well-organized criminal groups that quickly realized the money-making potential of alien smuggling. Secondly, Tampa's unprotected coastline made the importation of aliens, or "dummies" as customs officials called them, a relatively risk-free enterprise. Finally, Tampa became the hub of illegal immigration in the Southeast because of its close proximity to Cuba. The island's corrupt government and open-door immigration policy attracted a countless number of Chinese and Europeans, who went to Cuba looking for agents willing to smuggle them past American custom officials. Smugglers were usually paid between \$750 and \$1,000 per alien landed on American Soil.²⁹

Alien running, a serious problem for Tampa's custom authorities since the 1880s, intensified with the advent of national Prohibition. For example, in May 1920 officials uncovered a massive alien smuggling operation, calling it "international in scope with powerful backing."³⁰ Law enforcement authorities discovered the ring when they seized the *Remplazo*, a Cuban vessel carrying seventeen Chinese, as well as thousands of bottles of cognac, whiskey, and wine valued well over \$50,000. The ill-fated ship was captured off Tarpon Springs by the flamboyant prohibition agent Major Frank Williams, later the most controversial police chief in Tampa's history. Williams and a custom's agent boarded the *Remplazo* without being recognized and immediately drew their guns. Surprised, and not wanting to be shot, the captain promptly surrendered his vessel. Although Williams and his compatriot expected a short and uneventful journey back to nearby Tampa, local Greek fishermen surrounded the captured ship and fired a volley of shots at them. Luckily for Williams and his partner, a passing Coast Guard cutter dispersed the angry Greeks and towed the *Remplazo* safely back to Tampa. As with most alien smugglers, those arrested for the crime refused to cooperate with authorities. For example, a crewman aboard the *Remplazo* told police, "You can cut my heart out, but I won't tell you the truth."³¹ His intransigence, as well as that of others arrested for alien smuggling, prevented authorities from penetrating and crushing the various rings operating in Tampa.

The seizure of the *Remplazo* and the subsequent arrest of its captain and crew members seem to have hardly affected the illegal importation of aliens into Tampa. The trade in human traffic continued unmolested for nearly two years when police finally cracked another gigantic ring operating in the city. In April 1922, federal prohibition agents seized the *Etta Mildred*, which was carrying twenty-nine Chinese. Apparently, the ship was a mere pawn in a complex network that illegally transported Chinese nationals from Cuba to Tampa and then to the Northeast. The capture of the *Etta Mildred* proved important because it revealed the connection between alien smuggling and Tampa's underworld. This connection was established when authorities arrested Constable Norris McFall, one of Tampa's most notorious gambling czars, for conspiring to smuggle Chinese into the U.S. He and his gang were accused of representing a well-organized syndicate that was paid large sums for each Oriental they smuggled past immigration officials. Although the federal government marshalled sufficient evidence for a conviction, McFall was never tried for this particular crime.³²

Undaunted by his legal problems, McFall apparently continued his smuggling activities. Within two months he was once again arrested, this time with DeWitt Adams, a career criminal, for breaking U.S. immigration laws. McFall was taken into custody when nineteen Chinese were discovered in Hillsborough County. Thirteen were found huddled together in a lean-to near the fork of the Doley and Alafia rivers in Plant City, and the rest were apprehended on Second Avenue in Ybor City.³³ Once again McFall escaped prosecution.

Norris McFall lived a charmed life. Not only did he escape several prison terms, he also made a sizable fortune from the alien trade. This money was invested in several gambling houses and helped to establish McFall as one of Tampa's most powerful gambling lords. Yet Constable McFall's luck finally ran out in 1928. Returning after collecting receipts from one of his gambling houses, he was gunned down in front of his Branch Avenue home. Tampa police investigating the homicide suspected Alphonse Capone's hand in the murder; however, gambling rival Charlie Wall may have ordered the hit.³⁴

Following the capture of the *Etta Mildred*, federal authorities monitored Tampa's coastline. Not only were they looking for illegal booze and aliens – they were also keeping an eye out for illicit drugs, especially since an excessive amount of narcotics was currently circulating the city. Custom officials realized that morphine and other Asian opium derivatives were brought to Cuba and eventually smuggled into Tampa, along with illegal aliens. After a two-month surveillance, their tenacity paid a major dividend when authorities seized Captain Dorey Rice and his ship, the *Success*. Initially, officials charged Rice with conspiring to smuggle aliens into the U.S. But they later accused him of violating the Harrison Act when large quantities of morphine, which he had dumped overboard, began to wash ashore along Tampa Bay. In order to receive a lighter sentence, Rice exposed the complex and widespread smuggling network that operated in Cuba, Tampa, north Florida, Virginia, Philadelphia, and New York. He also revealed the names of the “higher-ups” involved in this nefarious trade. Among those Rice implicated were B. H. Sutton, a former sheriff from Okaloosa County; C. D. Moore, a former detective from Crestview; J. H. Givens, a banker; and Charlie Suey, a wealthy Chinese-American from Apalachicola.³⁵

From Rice's testimony officials learned that narcotics and aliens were frequently brought from Cuba to Tampa by large schooners and then transferred to small and powerful motorboats. The narcotics usually remained in Tampa, but the Chinese were almost immediately moved out of the city. Smugglers secretly transported the Chinese to designated “safe houses” in rural north Florida. From there they boarded the Apalachicola Northern Railroad. If all went well, the illegal immigrants arrived at their ultimate destination in the North by truck.³⁶

Beginning in 1922 Chinese nationals were not the only immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. illegally. Following World War I, a massive flow of Europeans into the United States prompted President Warren G. Harding to call for emergency immigration legislation. The new restrictions imposed by Congress set up a quota system that effectively reduced southern and eastern European immigration into the U.S. to a mere trickle. Few were legally permitted access to American shores. As a result, many prospective Americans were willing to endure unknown hardships and pay as much as \$1,000 to professional smugglers. Like the Chinese, many European aliens began their trek to America from Cuban ports.³⁷

According to custom officials familiar with the alien trade, illegal Europeans wishing to enter the U.S. were first transported to the barrier islands off Florida's southwest coast. There they were taken by automobile to Tampa's Latin quarter, or Tarpon Springs, a heavily populated Greek community. A few aliens preferred to stay in Florida, but most were routed through north Florida and eventually the Northeast, where they were reunited with friends and family.

For example, in early January 1923, nineteen Italians found themselves stranded in Carrabelle, a tiny fishing village outside Tallahassee. These aliens, originally believed to be Japanese nationals, raised suspicion when they boarded a train in Sopchoppy and asked the conductor in broken-English "for tickets to a destination as far as possible." Suspecting that these foreigners had unlawfully entered the U.S., State Senator H. B. Lindsey from Bonifay, who happened to be on the train, stopped the group and made a citizen's arrest. A protracted investigation by the Wakulla County Sheriffs Department discovered that the men Lindsey apprehended were not Japanese, but in fact Italian citizens. Unfortunately, the authorities did not capture all members of this alien party; three Italians were later found dead in Crawfordville. Police theorized that since they were wearing expensive suits, silk shirts, and stylish shoes, these Italians were probably robbed and then murdered by alien smugglers wishing to conceal their crime. The cold-blooded murder of these three Italian nationals in Crawfordville was not an isolated incident. Throughout Prohibition scores of unsolved murders were committed in the desolate areas of Hillsborough, Pinellas, Collier, and Lee counties; many of these individuals were undoubtedly victims of alien smugglers.³⁸

By the mid-1920s the number of alien smuggling cases sky-rocketed in southwest Florida. In 1923 alone, Tampa immigration officials arrested 398 aliens scattered from Tarpon Springs to Naples. A year later that number increased to 540. Although immigration authorities occasionally scored a major victory against smugglers and temporarily disrupted the flow of illegal aliens into Florida, they were clearly outnumbered. At the outset of Prohibition the Department of Labor had only six immigration inspectors in the entire state. The number increased slightly in 1924 when the Secretary of Labor added twenty more immigration agents throughout Florida.³⁹

Much to the delight of underpaid and overworked immigration officials, the alien trade peaked in 1924 and rapidly declined in subsequent years. For example, in Tampa between January and April 1925 not one single individual was arrested for illegal importation of aliens. This trend continued throughout the 1920s. I.F. Wixon, Chief Supervisor of Immigration, reflecting upon this phenomenon wrote, "There was a time when smugglers' headquarters strongly established in New York, Chicago and Philadelphia for the conduct of alien smuggling operations from Cuba to Florida. Chinese, as well as other classes of aliens. So far as we know, there is no organized smuggling [currently being conducted] in Florida."⁴⁰ Although few officials were as optimistic as Wixon, the alien trade was seriously hurt by tougher federal legislation and longer prison terms for those convicted of violating the immigration statutes.

In summary, Prohibition fostered Tampa's drug and alien traffic. Throughout the 1920s the city witnessed a rapid rise in organized crime, especially in the area of illegal drugs and aliens. Because of endemic municipal corruption and public apathy, a loose confederation of drug and alien runners established Tampa as a mecca for the illegal drug and alien trades. Despite the

efforts of reform-minded citizens, these networks grew and prospered. Although law enforcement officials successfully crushed the alien trade in Tampa by 1925, the importation of narcotics remained a serious problem in the city throughout the Roaring Twenties. In fact, as Tampa grew into a major city, so its drug trade became big business; by the 1950s the illegal drug industry had become as sophisticated as the city itself.

¹ State of Florida, *Governor's Council on Organized Crime: 1983 Annual Report* (Tallahassee, 1983) 30.

² Frank Alduino, "Prohibition in Tampa," *Tampa Bay History* 9 (Spring 1986): 17; see Thomas Coffey, *The Long Thirst* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975).

³ David F. Musto, *The American Disease: Origins of Narcotics Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 3-6.

⁴ W. W. Willoughby, *Opium as an International Problem: The Geneva Conference* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1925), 6; William Walker, *Drug Control in the Americas* (Albuquerque: New Mexico Press, 1981), 15.

⁵ *Tampa Tribune*, October 10, 1903.

⁶ Maruice Helbrant, *Narcotics Agent* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1941), 237.

⁷ *Tampa Tribune*, June 9, 1922.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, April 16, November 7, 1923.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, November 1, 1923.

¹¹ Laurence Schmeckebier, *The Bureau of Prohibition: Its History, Activities and Organizations* (Baltimore: The Brookings Institute, 1929), 145-47.

¹² *Tampa Tribune*, September 22, 1925.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Mobile Register*, September 25, 1925.

¹⁵ *Tampa Tribune*, October 10, 1926.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, May 6, 1928; Harris Mullens, "Florida Close-Ups," *Florida Trend* 8 (March 1976), 49.

¹⁷ Oral Interview, Ed Blackburn, Tallahassee, Florida, October 10, 1987.

¹⁸ Helbrant, *Narcotics Agent*, 147.

¹⁹ *Tampa Tribune*, June 6, 1929.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, June 6, 24, 1929.

²¹ *Ibid.*, June 29, 1929.

²² *Ibid.*, April 2, 1930.

²³ *Ibid.*, May 5, 1930, July 11, 1933.

²⁴ Blackburn Interview; U.S. Senate, *Hearing Before a select Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1950-1951), 41-60.

²⁵ *Tampa Tribune*, December 7, 1931, June 28, 1933.

²⁶ Harris Mullen, "Close-Ups," 50; *Tampa Tribune*, April 21, 1955.

²⁷ "Captain Sweeney," "Confessions of an Ex-Rumrunner," *Florida Suniland Journal* 6 (March 1925): 52.

²⁸ Geoffrey Perrett, *America in the Twenties: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 82; Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1951), 287.

²⁹ *Tampa Tribune*, May 23, 1920.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, May 17, 1920.

³¹ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1920.

³² *Ibid.*, April 29, May 10, 1922.

³³ *Ibid.*, June 11, 1922.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, October 11, 1928.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, August 18, 1922.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Oscar Handlin, *Uprooted*, 292; *Tampa Tribune*, March 5, 1924.

³⁸ *Tallahassee Democrat*, March 1, 13, 1923, March 15, 1924.

³⁹ *Tampa Tribune*, June 17, 1924.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, January 19, 1930.