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PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The last year of the 20th century was one of considerable achievements by Tampa’s history community. As I enter my third term as your president, my primary goals remain unchanged - to forge new relationships and build on those we have established with other history organizations and to work toward making our incredible history more accessible.

To achieve these goals will mean working more closely together and creating strong bonds that will pay off long into the future. It is about continuing to collect, display and interpret the materials that remain from our past. It is about inviting people to Oaklawn and Saint Louis Cemeteries to walk between the graves of pioneering men, women and children who came here and endured and built Tampa - people from places far away, of every religion, color and nationality. It is about raising awareness of historical people, places and events by the placing of historical markers. In every way possible, it is about bringing to life the rich and colorful past that makes us unique as a community. And especially, it is fulfillment of a dream of building a regional history museum which will bring our past alive for hundreds of thousands of residents, school children and tourists.

I will continue to work toward these goals with your help. We are a strong and vibrant group. Our Society enjoys a membership of almost 400 men, women and organizations. As we enter a new year, I can report that our financial condition for 1999 was excellent and future prospects through dues, publications and events seem very promising. Our headquarters, the Knight House, has never been as sound or looked as splendid as it does right now. Built in 1890, and surrounded now by modern commercial development, its interesting past and endurance is a great testament to its first owner, Peter O. Knight. We will continue to lovingly maintain it for future generations to enjoy.

This year’s annual banquet and awards ceremony, the End-of the-Century Celebration, was held in cooperation with the staff and Board of Trustees of the Henry B. Plant Museum. It was truly a gala celebration. The University of Tampa’s Fletcher Lounge was decorated in Christmas finery, a string quartet played and guests enjoyed bidding on a variety of silent auction items including memberships to MOSI, the Florida Aquarium, the Tampa Bay History Center, East Hillsborough County Historical Society, and tickets to the Kennedy Exhibition at the Florida International Museum. I thank all our friends in the community for their generous donations. This fun, black tie event was a perfect joining of organizations and purposes, in line with our stated goals and one I hope we will repeat in the years ahead.

I was so proud that my fifteen year-old son, Frank R. "Chip" North, Jr. was selected by our Board of Trustees to receive the first PRESERVE OUR PAST, LOOK TO OUR FUTURE Award for being a young, hardworking and dedicated member of the Tampa Historical Society family for many years. I couldn’t be prouder!

Pam Iorio, Hillsborough County’s Supervisor of Elections, our speaker for the evening, presented a fascinating overview of our local election history and the politicians and events that have helped shape our government and our city.

Following a dinner recreated from one originally prepared for guests of the Tampa Bay Hotel, everyone was invited to stroll the
Victorian Christmas in the Henry B. Plant Museum where gifts were waiting under the tree.

The highlight of each annual banquet is the announcement of the recipient of the prestigious D. B. MCKAY AWARD. J. Thomas Touchton, President of the Board of Trustees of the Tampa Bay History Center for ten years, was selected for his leadership of the History Center's efforts to bring a regional history museum to reality. The award goes each year to a person who has made a significant contribution to Tampa and Florida history. I applaud Tommy's dedication and commitment to a cause we all share. He is most deserving of our 1999 award.

I finished my year end report to you last year by noting that I had enjoyed the experience of editing this journal more than I would ever have imagined. My enthusiasm has not waned. An unexpected change in printers and search for a replacement were temporary setbacks but I am confident the final product will be outstanding.

The authors we present in the Society's twenty-fifth annual journal reward the reader with their enormous talent and obvious love for history. Their treatment of a great variety of subjects will add immensely to our understanding of Tampa's early years and the fascinating people whose collective contribution has made Tampa so great today.

The Tampa Historical Society has enjoyed a great year as a member of an ever widening history community. I hope we have brought some measure of togetherness and leadership to our common journey toward an even greater awareness of the importance of history in our lives.

As in years past, my job is made so much easier and my life truly richer for working with you. Thanks for every small and large contribution you have made to the Tampa Historical Society. Working together, the first year of the 21st century will be a tremendous success. I look forward to seeing you at events throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Frank R. North
"They . . . exalt humbug at the expense of science and truth:" Dr. John P. Wall and the Fight Against Yellow Fever in Late-Nineteenth Century Florida

Larry Omar Rivers

Instances in which an individual researcher's breakthrough discovery was ridiculed by his or her contemporaries prior to being generally accepted as fact fill the history of science. The experiences of John P. Wall, a late-nineteenth century medical doctor in Tampa, Florida, offer an excellent example of this recurring scenario in the area of scientific discovery. This study examines the motivations behind and impact of Wall's efforts to reform Florida's epidemic disease control methods. As will be seen, his work in 1873 and again from 1887 to 1895 constituted a crusade that centered around advancing his theory, not accredited, yet scientifically accurate, explaining how an extremely lethal disease entered the human body.

The illness in question was yellow fever. Most scholarly texts credit Dr. Walter Reed and the members of his 1900 United States Army commission as the first Americans to pinpoint mosquitoes as its principal carriers and transmitters. Florida sources, on the other hand, prove that at least one other American, Wall, advanced this theory twenty-seven years earlier. Unlike Reed and his co-workers, Wall's proposal of the mosquito-transmission theory merited him only an inundation of scoffs and criticism from medical contemporaries, who adamantly believed that dirt and filth were responsible for yellow fever's spread.

John Perry Wall's background hinted little at his future medical genius. He was born on September 17, 1836 in north Florida's Hamilton County during the state's Territorial Period (1821-1845). His parents, Perry G. and Nancy H. Wall were frontier settlers. From his birth until the age of nine, Wall resided with them, along with his two brothers and four sisters in Hamilton.

The year of 1845 brought several tremendous changes to not only the boy's family life, but also to the surrounding territory. The forced exodus of Indians and their black allies from much of South Florida at the conclusion of the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) provided an attractive opportunity for hundreds of families in Hamilton and other North Florida counties along the Suwanne River to migrate from their war ravaged communities into a new, promising, and unsettled frontier. During this year, Wall's father joined the southward migration by moving his family to Benton County (now Hernando) in South Florida. In February, the first Mrs. Wall died; in December, Perry married another woman, Barbara Baisden. During the same year, Florida's Territorial Period came to an end as Florida achieved Union statehood.

Although these changes in young Wall's family life and surrounding state were very rapid, the boy still enjoyed one important constant during this transitional stage in his youth: his father. Indeed, many traits characteristic of Wall's adult personality--namely his focus on helping others and serving his community--directly reflected his father Perry. Described as a man of "hardy and cheerful disposition," Perry Wall stood out as a respected leader in Hamilton and Benton. He served in numerous elected and
appointed offices in these two communities, including deputy marshall, county clerk, and probate judge. During the frequent violent clashes with local Indians in Benton, his home became a hospitable source of refuge for many white settlers.  

Not surprisingly, it was John Wall’s father who steered him toward a career in medicine. After receiving an education in local schools, John desired to study law, but the elder Wall objected, claiming that a medical career would be "more congenial and profitable." Honoring his father's wishes, Wall attended the Medical College of South Carolina from 1856 to 1858. Upon his graduation and return to Florida, he practiced medicine in two other towns in partnerships with other doctors.

With the Civil War’s beginning in 1861, Wall's medical training took a military turn, while his life saw other important changes. He enlisted as a surgeon for the Confederacy. Assigned to Richmond’s Chimborazo Hospital, he served Florida troops in the Virginia area. In 1864, he requested and was assigned duty as a combat soldier. He served initially in the Eighth Florida Battalion near Brooksville and subsequently rose to the rank of major as a member of the Fifth Florida Battalion. The next year, he married Pressie Eubanks, the nineteen-year-old daughter of a wealthy Brooksville planter. She would bear him five children. Following the 1865 Confederate surrender, he returned and practiced medicine in Brooksville. Then, in 1871 he moved his family to Tampa, an isolated south Florida cattle-shipping port of 800 inhabitants, where he continued practicing medicine.

Like many south Florida towns, Tampa—a steadily growing commercial trade center in its pre-Civil War days—emerged from the war in a very devastated state. It struggled to recover from the damage inflicted upon its central industry, the cattle trade, as well as from wartime seizures and naval blockades. Other barriers hindered its efforts to get back on its feet economically. The most formidable of them were epidemic diseases. Malaria, dengue, and yellow fever regularly plagued the community. During such outbreaks, practically every able-bodied citizen fled and took refuge in a neighboring town or woodland area.

At Tampa, Wall encountered the ravages of yellow fever first hand. During the town’s 1871 epidemic, Wall successfully treated a boy for the disease, only to be critically stricken himself by the fever. Pressie stayed by his side and nursed him. But just as he was recovering, she herself fell ill. On September 6, 1871, Wall’s wife died of the fever; two days later, his fourteen-month old daughter, Julia, suffered the same fate.

Following these tragedies, the grief-stricken doctor’s life and career took another sharp turn. The deaths of his wife and daughter prompted Wall to search out new paths beyond simply guiding patients through the fever's various stages. He now devoted his life to researching and studying how it could be prevented and destroyed more effectively.

Like all late-nineteenth century American physicians, Wall faced limitations in helping yellow fever victims. A physician’s options were essentially two-fold: (1) to diagnose yellow fever, and (2) to subdue painful and deadly symptoms as the illness ran its course. The challenge loomed as no easy task. Caused by an arbovirus, symptoms in individual cases ranged from mild and flu-like to excruciating. Violent shaking, fever, muscle aches, liver failure, jaundice,
hemorrhaging, and blood vomiting marked classic cases. A doctor succeeded if he kept a patient alive and minimally comfortable until his or her body produced an immunity.8

Some pre-Civil War insights corresponded with Wall’s quest. Specifically, the germ theory had been applied increasingly to the fight against yellow fever in America. Most physicians now believed that it was caused by some sort of transportable germ. Some believed this germ was indigenous to America, being produced from a confluence of heat, filth, and moisture. The majority maintained that this germ was of exotic origin and had to be introduced to the country in order to become an epidemic (generally by means of ships arriving from tropical locales). Such a germ would be carried in and spread through the "unhealthy" vapors, or miasma, arising from garbage and swamps; humans were thought to be infected when germ-carrying miasma was breathed into the body.9

As Wall pressed his research in the 1870s, Southern leaders attempted to prevent the spread of yellow fever with three principal methods: (1) quarantining against infected locations, (2) denying the suspected germ its external support system of miasmic mists by intensely cleaning public areas and draining swamps, and (3) disinfecting the suspected germ on ships, baggage, and passengers entering America with agents that halted fermentation and extinguished foul odors. Accepted disinfectants included chloride of lead, steam, and gas from burning sulphur.10

Wall, contrary to the accepted methods, devised a new approach in 1873. He advocated destroying mosquitoes and isolating citizens from them. From an intensive two-year study, he concluded that the fever was carried and transmitted by the "treetop mosquito" (later classified as the Aedes aegypti). He supported his findings with three principal observations:

"(1) Both the mosquito and the disease were prevalent in the summer months and both disappeared before the first frost. (2) Adults whose work did not take them out at night, when mosquitoes were most numerous, were rarely infected. (3) Children, who were generally kept in at night, with the exception of children of doctors and nurses, were usually spared."11

Wall’s theory hit the target. Yellow fever–carrying mosquitoes regularly entered the port town of Tampa aboard ships from the tropical islands and coastal areas, where the insects abounded year-round due to mild winters. Lurking and breeding in the damp holds and bilge water of sea vessels, these unwanted passengers posed a particularly dangerous threat during Tampa’s summer and rainy seasons. Then, the town’s own mosquito population reached its peak.12

The transmission-ides had found an earlier advocate. Venezuelan Daniel Beuperthuy had focused on mosquitoes in 1854. Because of a basic error as to whether yellow fever was a form of malaria, Beuperthuy’s work received little attention. Whether Wall even knew about Beuperthuy’s findings is questionable. It is known that Wall never acknowledged Beuperthuy’s work in his writings on yellow fever, although he was characteristically generous in recognizing the work of his contemporaries worldwide.13

As they had in Beuperthuy’s case, fellow doctors rejected Wall’s theory as pure nonsense. The lay press also ridiculed Wall’s discovery.14 Even Tampans, who generally held Wall’s medical knowledge in high esteem, shrugged off his suggestion. This would remain the norm in Florida and across
the country until the 1900 Reed Commission report. Even when Scottish-French doctor Carlos Finlay reached the same conclusion in 1881, experts ignored his findings.15

Why did it take almost three decades for American doctors to accept Wall's theory? First, the concept of insects transmitting diseases was not proven by experimentation until the 1890s. In 1893, bacteriologist Theobald Smith determined that ticks infected Texas cattle with plasmodium. Ronald Ross proved in 1897 that mosquitoes transmitted malaria. Then, the relationship between mosquitoes and human malarial infection was developed conclusively only about 1899.16

Additionally, Wall, unlike Reed, failed to convert his theory into a nationally recognized demonstration. His findings relied mainly on observational evidence. Reed, on the other hand, enjoyed the money, volunteers, and national government consent to experiment with human beings. In 1900 in Cuba, Reed isolated one set of army volunteers in a but with furniture and clothing soaked in the bodily discharges of yellow fever patients. He isolated a second set in a clean but and exposed them to the bites of mosquitoes that had recently bitten fever patients. The first group remained healthy while several of the second group became infected.17

One can only imagine how many lives would have been saved had Wall's theory been accepted in 1873 or what future insights the innovation might have developed. Unfortunately, his suggestion remained a misfit among scientific thinkers of the 1870s and 1880s; he subsequently abandoned the idea altogether. Instead, Wall soon after emerged as a leading proponent of the prevailing epidemic control methods, many of which directly contradicted his previous mosquito theory. Beginning in 1875, he attained widespread medical acclaim for an article that appeared in the Florida journal Semi-Tropical, in which he eloquently advanced quarantining and strict municipal cleanliness as tools for preventing yellow fever epidemics.18 As editor of Tampa's Sunland Tribune newspaper from 1876 to 1882, he reiterated these views to a statewide audience.19

Even then, the impact of Wall's advocacy experienced delays. Not until 1878 was he able to take an active role in putting such epidemic disease control methods into practice. During that year he achieved election as Tampa mayor and also accepted the presidency of Tampa's Board of Health.20 Immediately, Wall established sanitation and quarantining as city-wide priorities. As he proclaimed in an 1879 ordinance:

"All vessels arriving . . . from any port in the West Indies, Central America, South America, or any other port where contagious diseases are prevailing, shall be placed in quarantine . . . and all intercourse between the vessel and shore, or the landing of any goods, clothing, bedding or other textile goods and fabrics is hereby strictly prohibited."21

Any ship suspected of carrying yellow fever was to be "disinfected" with chemicals. Also, Wall enforced a strict code of hygiene outlawing filth and decomposing matter that could produce the "miasmic" vapors that carried the suspected yellow fever germ. He appointed a health marshall to inspect the town for violations.22

During this period, Wall also emerged as a leading voice urging reform throughout Florida's entire medical profession. As a member of the Florida Medical Association
(FMA) in 1875, he used the meetings of this organization as opportunities to hold forums for medical debate, hoping to inspire others to adopt more responsible and scientifically based methods of practice.

While delivering the FMA's annual address in 1877, for example, he articulated very frank and grave concerns about what he viewed as the lack of scientific approach in medical "cures" of the day:

"Our stock of positive knowledge . . . is really much smaller than our professional vanity may be willing to confess. Is there any evidence that the average duration of life has been lengthened by our superior skill in the treatment of diseased On the other hand, is there not considerable ground for the belief that thousands of lives have been sacrificed by the exhibition of our remedies?"

Instead, he favored a focus on preventing diseases rather than treating them, stating "we are much better prepared to exercise our knowledge in their prevention than their cure."

While many of his suggested reforms remained controversial among Florida's doctors, Wall's energetic leadership did merit him widespread respect within the FMA. He was elected to several terms as the organization's president. Also, Wall launched a career in state politics during this period. By 1885, he had resigned from his duties as Tampa Health Officer and devoted the majority of his time to being president of the FMA and roles in the state government. During this year, he was elected a representative to the state legislature and a delegate to the Florida's Third Constitutional Convention. However, success in the political arena did not hinder Wall's focus on medical reform. During this time he concentrated on bringing to life one of his most cherished dreams, the creation of a statewide board of health.

By 1885, Wall had been fighting for the adoption of a state board of health for over ten years. When he first proposed this idea in 1874, however, it was during the midst of Reconstruction, a political environment far too chaotic for Florida's or any other state's government to embark on such a costly and time-consuming endeavor. The 1880s, however, marked a return a semblance of normalcy across the South. Revived commerce, tax revenues, and stable governments in this "New South" era set the stage for southern legislatures to organize numerous public health reforms. By the middle of the decade, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina had all established state boards of health to battle against disease epidemics.

At the state constitutional convention of 1885, Wall seized the opportunity to emphasize Florida's need for a state agency to battle disease outbreaks. At the time, Florida still operated under a system in which each individual county established its own board of health that was responsible for maintaining the safety of citizens against epidemics. Communication between boards was difficult. Furthermore separate county boards often did not trust each other, making a collective effort against the spread of epidemics practically impossible. Wall implored: "The duty of preserving the health and lives of its citizens from the causes of disease is as incumbent on the state as that of suppressing rapine and murder... One has no adequate conception of how much sickness and consequently death, are preventable."

Wall's fellow convention delegates agreed; the Florida Board of Health was authorized

...
as part of the state’s new 1885 constitution. However, it was not immediately created. Supplying money to finance this new agency was not prioritized by leading state officials. Disappointed, but not discouraged, Wall continued pleading for a state board of health. Events during the years of 1887 and 1888 would finally set the stage for this feat to be accomplished.

As transportation, especially that of railroads, improved across Florida in the late 1880s, yellow fever steadily emerged as the state’s largest health problem and roadblock to economic growth. Largely because of Wall’s quarantines, which prevented yellow fever-carrying mosquitoes from entering Tampa on ships, the town lived free of yellow fever for nine years. Yet, in 1887, the disease again managed to sneak into what, by then, had become a city. Charlie Turk, a tropical fruit importer who frequently visited Key West while yellow fever was there, fell sick in September. By October, a full blown epidemic had begun. Panicky and disorderly conditions quickly prevailed. Individuals and families fled from the city so hastily that they left lamps burning and meals cooking on their stoves. Many evacuated to nearby woods and camped there until late fall. "Our city is desolate and distressfully quiet," lamented one remaining citizen.29 Several "remedies" were used to battle the epidemic, including burning barrels of tar and frantically cleaning streets. Nothing seemed to work.30

In the meanwhile, Wall resumed his research on yellow fever’s spread; Tampan C.C. Whitaker, writing in 1947, recalled the results of Wall’s 1887 yellow fever study:

"Dr. Wall was not only my physician, he was my friend... During the last yellow fever epidemic in Tampa [1887], Dr. Wall told me he was convinced that a certain type of mosquito was the carrier of the yellow fever germ. This was long before any other authority had advanced this theory. I recall he cited in support of the theory that none of the persons having business or employment in the city but who left town before sunset and did not come back in the morning until the sun was high had contracted the disease—most mosquitoes going into hiding when the sun is shining. His theory proved correct and I feel he should be given credit as the discover."31

Thereafter, Wall fought the disease by shielding victims from mosquitoes. The fever quickly abated. Out of the hundreds who had fallen ill, only seventy-nine died.32

The subsequent winter of mild temperature did little to kill the yellow fever carrying mosquitoes. The vectors lingered throughout this season and then climbed their way to North Florida in a series of smaller sporadic outbreaks. This culminated in a severe epidemic in Jacksonville in August of 1888. Out of the total 4,704 cases here, 430 died and many others were left with permanent disabilities. Still ignoring Wall’s theory, the doctors fighting this epidemic used a number of different "remedies," including: intense sanitation efforts, burning pine trees and tar, and firing cannons. It was the subsequent freezing cold winter that eventually killed the majority of mosquitoes and thus, ended the epidemic.33

The epidemic in Jacksonville, Florida's "commercial metropolis," had a very severe impact on state commerce. Millions of dollars were lost as businesses closed and the trade and transportation lines running through the city halted. The epidemic, cited as the worst yellow fever outbreak in ten years, was also a national embarrassment for Florida. Virtually every southern state quarantined against Jacksonville.
Neighboring states began placing pressure on Florida's government to create a state board of health. Calling the state legislature into a special session in February of 1889, newly elected Florida Governor Francis P. Flemming finally signed the law founding the Florida State Board of Health.34

Across the state, Wall became known as the "father of the State Board of Health" for his insistence for this provision be included in the state constitution. Joseph Porter, Wall's close friend and the first doctor appointed to head the agency claimed that the Board "stands as a lasting memorial to a man [Wall] of superior mental attainments and who, far ahead of his times, was looking forward to the future welfare and commercial prosperity of his native state..."35

While praising Wall for his ability as a legislator, prominent doctors across the state still rejected his theory on the transmission of yellow fever. In fairness to the "medical experts" who blamed filth as the cause of yellow fever, the experiences of Benjamin F. Butler, the Civil War general placed in charge of New Orleans after Union forces captured and occupied it, should be considered. Under Butler's control from 1862 to 1865, no yellow fever epidemics occurred in New Orleans, which had an infamous history of such outbreaks. Butler's straitlaced code of municipal hygiene generally received credit for the medical miracle.36

Courageously, Wall disputed this line of reasoning in his writings and lectures. He noted the transient nature of yellow fever outbreaks in New Orleans and questioned why filth, if the cause, produced them so inconsistently. In 1895, the FMA once again invited Wall to deliver the annual address. In what would become the most definitive and remembered point of his career, the doctor decided to use this honor as yet another opportunity to speak against what he now whole-heartedly believed was the fallacious "medical" connection between yellow fever and filth.

The annual FMA meeting was held in the East Florida Seminary in Gainesville, with Wall scheduled to speak at around 9:30 in the morning. Wall and a life-long friend, Dr. Sheldon Stringer, took up lodging with adjoining rooms in the on-campus Brown House. The night before the address, Wall and Stringer attended a reception at Odd Fellows Hall, sponsored by the host Alachua Medical Association. Returning to Brown House a little after eleven o'clock, Wall and his friend engaged in a long and lively conversation before finally retiring at midnight.38

Wall was described as being in high spirits the morning of his oration. "Cheerful as ever" he rose, ate breakfast, and then walked down to the local office of another close friend, one Dr. Lancaster. The two spent part of the morning visiting several patients. Consequently, Wall arrived a few minutes late to his speaking engagement at the Seminary, where the association's sessions were being held in the second floor lecture hall.

Upon his entrance, the present order of business was suspended and the chair announced the reading of Wall's paper: "Public Hygiene in the Light of Recent Observations and Experiments." Wall walked forward and assumed his reading position at the left end of the secretary's table. Facing the audience, which sat to his west, he began his presentation, reading from "a proof sheet printed by a publishing concern."40 An excerpt from this address follows:
"As to yellow fever, an epidemic disease only in the warm season, there is no evidence to show that filth or so-called sanitary conditions have any relation to its spread.

"To prove the filth and fecal origin of yellow fever, the sanitarians call attention to the exploits of General Butler, in New Orleans, who they loudly declare 'stamped out' yellow fever in the city in 1862 by removing the filth. To those who listen merely to the assertions of the sanitarians and General Butler himself, who told exactly how he did it, it appears that either by revelation or by intuition, he actually possessed some sanitary provision not vouchsafed to the rest of mankind.

"Dr. Chaille says he will not contest the general's claim as a warrior, a Democrat, a Republican, and again a Democratic statesman; but he protests against the validity of his fame as a great sanitarian. Dr. Chaille says that in 1861, when General Lovell was in command of New Orleans, many of the civilian and military inhabitants were unacclimated yet no death occurred from yellow fever, and, so far as is known, there was no case of the disease in the city during that year. Dr. Chaille cannot understand why General Butler should be so honored by men of science as a sanitarian, while better sanitary results of General Lovell are ignored altogether. The fact is that during both years there was no opportunity for the disease to arise from imported cases. But there have been many other years when New Orleans was nearly as exempt as 1861-62.

"Is it logical to assume that fecal matter in New Orleans caused only one death in 1877, and suddenly became so active that the next year it caused 4,000 deaths, or that in 1851 it caused 17 deaths and two years later it became so operative as to destroy 7,849 people

"... Any amount of evidence, all of the same tenor, showing that filth has no connection with yellow fever, might be adduced. It is now universally conceded that yellow fever is an exotic disease of an infectious nature and has to be introduced to be an epidemic in this country; and it would be about as logical to assume that the spread of measles was dependent on filth as that of yellow fever is ...

"In conclusion it may not be amiss to say that because I deem it due to truth and the scientific advancement of medicine to point out the fallacious teachings of hygienists and sanitarians, it is not to be inferred that filth is to be preferred to cleanliness; or that as physicians we are not to encourage all the means necessary to keep our houses well swept and garnished. A sense of decency and self respect can never fail to make us stand with the mass of the community in advancement of decorum and refinements of life. But we should protest against the use of these false teachings as both unscientific and harmful, whose effects is to needlessly excite and alarm the public mind. It is urged by the sanitarians that to insure the carrying out of their proposed sanitation method it is necessary to frighten the people.

"This is no justification at all. For the simple reason that they have failed, so far, to demonstrate the necessity of any sanitary measures in the promotion of cleanliness as a preservation of health or averting epidemic diseases. The sanitarians offer no experimental evidence of the truth of their assertions, but having come across a case of sickness, they at once set out to hunt up a cause for it, and finding something a little unusual, or perhaps offensive in the locality or environments, they at once claim
Eureka!'; and thus exalt humbug at the expense of science and truth."

As Wall went on, one observer noted that "he read with great difficulty and under suppressed excitement, under which he seemed to labor being so great at times as to cause him repeatedly to pause and sip water." Even while experiencing such obvious discomfort and difficulty, Wall's sense of humor did not fail. Remarking "high tones and toney meals do not seem to agree with me," he attempted to continue.

He resumed reading for a few minutes more when he again appeared very nervous and sickly. This time, it looked as if "he did not know what to do with his hands. He would put them up to his breast and then thrust them into his pocket, first one and then the other." The doctor then started turning pale.

Finally, a delegate, Dr. Caldwell, suggested that Wall sit down. Wall reached around with his hand to grasp the chair that sat behind him and started to move his body down in it. Without noticing, he accidentally sat on the chair's arm, which caused him to tumble down to the floor. The presiding officer and others rushed to his aid, but it was too late, Dr. John P. Wall had died in front of their very eyes.

John Perry Wall lived his entire life in a state that was constantly vulnerable to outbreaks of yellow fever. Born to a supportive family that taught him to take education seriously, he had also been fostered to accept a commitment to helping others. As an adult, he lost a wife and child to yellow fever, which resulted in his unrelenting dedication to freeing his state from the scourge of this deadly disease. Unfortunately, Wall could not convince fellow doctors of his theory that mosquitoes were the carriers and transmitters of yellow fever. Not until five years after his death, when Walter Reed vindicated Wall's unaccredited theory, did most Floridians finally accept the fact that mosquitoes carried and transmitted yellow fever. Only after this did Florida truly find itself on the path that Wall had set out toward eliminating yellow fever outbreaks.

ENDNOTES

1 For secondary works that profile Reed and his work, see: William B. Bean, Walter Reed: A Biography (Charlottesville, 1982) and Howard A. Kelly, Walter Reed and Yellow Fever (New York, 1906).


7 Daniels, Florida State Archives Survey Sketch, 153; *Tampa Florida Peninsular* 9 September, 11 November 1871.

8 Margaret Humphreys, *Yellow Fever And The South* (New Brunswick, 1992), 5-6.


10 Humphreys, *Yellow Fever And The South*, 41-42.

11 Ingram, "John Perry Wall: A Man for All Seasons," 710.


13 Ingram, "John Perry Wall: A Man for All Seasons" 710.

14 Ibid.


16 Humphreys, *Yellow Fever And The South* 35.


19 See: John P. Wall and Charles N. Hawkins, (Editorial Section) *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 2 June 1877; Wall and Hawkins, "No Danger" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 1 December 1877; Wall, "A Simple Disinfectant" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 10 August 1878; Wall, "Communicability of Yellow Fever" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 31 August 1878; Wall, (Editorial Section) *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 31 August 1878; Wall, "Hygienic Measures" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 3 August 1878; Wall, "Keep Cool and Serene" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 31 August 1878; Wall, "Public Hygiene" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 22 March 1879; Wall, "Sanitary" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 23 July 1881; Wall, "Sanitary" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 28 September 1878; Wall, "The Lesson of the Epidemic" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 28 September 1878; Wall, "The Yellow Fever Question" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 4 January 1879; Wall, (Editorial Section) *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 19 February 1881; Wall, "Valedictory" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 21 September 1882.

20 "John P. Wall, M.D." *Tampa Journal* 23 June 1887; Wall, "Sanitary Notice" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 31 August 1878; Wall, (Board of Health Resolution) *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 28 September 1878.

21 Wall, "Ordinance No. 26" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 24 August 1878.

22 Wall, "Sanitary" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 28 September 1878; Wall, "Sanitary Notice" *Tampa Sunland Tribune* 31 August 1878.

23 Ingram, 712.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid, 713.

26 See Humphreys, 40-46.


28 Burnett, "Dr. Wall Corrals Yellow Fever" in *Florida's Past*, 12.


30 185; Burnett, "Dr. Wall Corrals Yellow Fever" in *Florida's Past*, 11-12

31 C.C. Whitaker, quoted in McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, 437

32 Burnett, "Dr. Wall Corrals Yellow Fever" 12.


34 Ingram, 713-4.

There was a difference of opinion among doctors as to the cause of Wall’s sudden death. Some believed that it was heart failure; others thought that it was a cerebral hemorrhage.
"A LITTLE INSIGNIFICANT COUNTY:" An early pioneer’s view of the proposal to separate Pinellas from Hillsborough County in 1887

Donald J. Ivey

Although it is widely known that Pinellas County was created in 1911, what is less well known is the fact that the movement to "secede" Pinellas from Hillsborough County originally began in 1886. According to early Pinellas historian and St. Petersburg Times publisher William L. Straub,

"Away back in 1886, according to a little inside political tradition, a quiet little political deal had been planned, wherein and whereby W.A. Belcher, of Bayview, if elected representative, was to pass through the house a county division bill, and a certain Tampa politician, if elected to the senate, was to pass it there, then move over into the new county, and themselves and friends would be in charge of the ‘politics’ thereof. But the Tampa politician was not elected to the senate. Mr. Belcher was elected to the house, and introduced and passed such a bill there; and Judge Joseph B. Wall, of Tampa, who was elected senator, promptly killed it in the upper house. Being merely a political gesture, and Pinellas a comparatively uninhabited land, nobody took the incident seriously, and it was forgotten."1

Other than Straub’s brief mention, little was known of this event. Recently, however, a letter was discovered by members of the Dunedin Historical Society which sheds important new light on this movement.

The letter was written by George L. Jones (1847-1912), an early settler of Dunedin who is credited with giving the young community its first name of "Jonesboro." Jones moved to the area from Marietta, Georgia sometime during the 1870’s and built a general store on what is now the northeast corner of Main and Edgewater in downtown Dunedin.2

The recipient of Jones’ epistle was William A. (W.A.) Belcher (1846-1935), who had been elected the preceding year to represent Hillsborough County in the Florida House of Representatives. Originally a native of Virginia, Belcher moved to Florida in 1870 and eventually settled in Largo. He soon became a leading member of the community on the Pinellas Peninsula, and also served at various times as a member of the Hillsborough County School Board and the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners.3

A copy of the original letter is currently on display at the Dunedin Historical Museum in Dunedin, and with the kind permission of Museum Director Vincent Luisi, is here being published for the first time:

"Dunedin May 24th/87

"Hon. W.A. Belcher
"Tallahassee

"Sommerville handed me your letter of 9th inst. I must say that your letter is a very Sensible one in regard to the division of this County—"

"Dr Sir

"Sommerville handed me your letter of 9th inst. I must say that your letter is a very Sensible one in regard to the division of this County—"
"You know we would be a little insignificant county, not able to carry on our public schools, for we get more from the School fund than we pay in. Besides, this division cuts off a portion of Pt [Point] Pinellas. I talked with your Brother Elias last Saturday he says himself & many others are not in favor of the division.\(^5\)

"I have talked with a great many who signed the petition, who was scared into it by telling them that Tampa was going to build that large Bridge, Court House and Jail—and would be better to divide & build it ourselves.

"Admit that should they build the aforementioned, this portion pays a very small pro rata of the taxes collected—just think of the little valuable property in the proposed new co[unty]—out of which we would have to build a Court House, Jail, pay Jurors, Witnesses, and county officers—and also the transfer of or transcripts of deeds & [et]c. in the new co[unty]'s office—Records\(^6\)

"We [are] far better to wait until the little infant county can Stand alone before advocating a division—Besides if put to vote they would not get one third of the vote of the people—\(^7\)

"I see you have introduced the bill for the new county but your true friends know it was brought about by a petition who a number is not voters or property holders, And that you could not avoid introducing it—But that you would not lend your influence to have it passed—I know your friend Matchett understands it—Your particular friends and advocates here in D[unedin] have no fears as to its passage.

"Jim Sommerville, Jno. [John] Douglas [and] Rev. Holmes Send their respects to you—Old Capt. McMullen was here last week and laughed at the blunder of a new co[unty] and Such an oversight in cutting off a portion of Pt. Pinellas—and leaving in Hillsboro—They object to being cut off if we were to be so unfortunate as to divide—\(^8\)

"You know that Arthur Turner, Munnerlyn & co. who advocated Snedecor first and last—and they now want to use you—\(^9\)

"Mr. Turner in last weeks issue say that if our Representatives fail to divide the county they will be invited to Stay at home. I did not know that Turner put you all in. His influence is like Moffet McClung's—\(^1\)
would rather have him against me than for me—

"Holmes tells me that Munnerlyn is opposed to division. He says M. told Jim McMullen so—I expect he signed [the] petition for a stroke of policy [sic] in business. Give my regards to Hon. Matchett & Wall—Am sorry for our Bloxham. Pasco is preferable to Perry. These counties who instructed their Legislators to support Bloxham and they disregarded instructions and supported Perry—will have some difficulty in being returned at the next election, such as Polk, Manatee, Alachua, Marion, Hamilton, Madison, Sumter [Sumter]—Lieut. Governor Mabry desired to be governor & therefore supported Perry—I think he has killed himself politically—Stockton from Gadsden Co[unty] supported Pasco—his county was for Bloxham—

"A Savannah drummer says today who is just from Manatee & Polk Cos. That Davidson influenced Stockton to divide the vote in order to get himself elected; and people down in these counties is down on Davidson—Davidson has lost his political prestige—Bloxham is the masses favorite and idol of a man and statesman—

"I rec'd. Your message by Munnerlyn—am obliged but I had rec'd. Appointment before your letter arrived.

"Bill" do you get any good Lager Beer to drink—as there have been so many Candidates for Senator You should not but any—

"Yours truly

"Geo. L. Jones"

The original "petition" calling for the separation of the Pinellas peninsula from Hillsborough County which Jones mentions in his letter. Note the subheading of the document, "Our Declaration of Independence."

(Courtesy Mr. Michael Sanders)
Samuel Pasco, popular Speaker of the Florida House in 1887 and a compromise candidate in the U.S. Senatorial election of 1887.

(Courtesy Florida Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives)

Robert Hamilton McWhorter (R.H.M.) Davidson (1832-1908), Florida's Democratic Congressman from 1877 to 1891.

(Courtesy Mr. H. C. Davidson, grandson of R.H.M. Davidson)

William Dunnington Bloxham (1835-1911), two-time Governor of Florida (1881-1885 and 1897-1901) and Jones’ “idol of a man and statesman” who was Perry’s chief rival for the U.S. Senate seat up for election in 1887.

(Courtesy Florida Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives)

Edward Aylsworth Perry (1831-1889), Governor of Florida from 1885 to 1889, and a candidate for the U.S. Senate in the bitter senatorial election of 1887.

(Courtesy Florida Photographic Collection, Florida State Archives)
This portrait of the 1887 Florida Legislature originally belonged to William A. Belcher, who is pictured here with hat in hand, third from the left in the second row from bottom, with his arm on the shoulder of a young page.

(Courtesy of Miss Frances Belcher)

William Alexander (W.A.) Belcher (1846-1935), one of Hillsborough’s two representatives to the State Legislature in 1887 and the recipient of Jones’ letter.

(Courtesy Heritage Village - Pinellas County Historical Museum)

Milton Harvey Mabry (Sr.) (1851-1919), Lieutenant Governor in 1887. Although Jones believed that he had “killed himself politically” for favoring Perry in the Senate election that year, he later went on to become a Justice of the State Supreme Court, and a prominent attorney in Tampa.

(Courtesy Tampa: The Treasure City by Gary R. Mormino and Anthony P Pizzo)
END NOTES

1 William L. Straub, History of Pinellas County Florida (Saint Augustine, Fla.: Record Company, Printers, 1929), p. 52.
4 "Sommerville" is probably James "Jim" Sommerville, who is also mentioned later in this letter. Sommerville was a native of Scotland, who came to Pinellas by the early 1880's. Together with a partner, John O. Douglas, in 1882 he opened a general store at the foot of Main Street in Edgewater Park in what is now Dunedin. These two men are credited with giving the town its name, after the town of Dunedin, Scotland, where both originally came from. See Straub, History of Pinellas County, p. 104 and Douglas, History of Dunedin, pp. 109-110.
5 Jones is referring to the fact that the proposed county (which was incidentally to be named "Gulf County," not Pinellas) would lack an adequate tax base to support itself. The proposed bill would have also kept "Point Pinellas" (an area roughly comprising the southernmost tip of the peninsula) in Hillsborough, a move probably intended to placate Hillsborough officials by allowing them to retain control of shipping into Tampa Bay. Thus, with only one incorporated municipality (Tarpon Springs, which was incorporated in 1887) and a population of around 500-600 residents (the 1890 Federal census recorded a population of 601), the new county would have been slight indeed.

Jones also mentions Elias G. Belcher, brother of William A. Belcher, who had moved to Pinellas sometime prior to 1880 and was a local farmer. See Leland Hawes, "Founding father of Pinellas County," Tampa Tribune, 12 January 1992; 1880 U.S. Census for Hillsborough County, Florida; and "1880Census-Pinellas Peninsula," p. 2 of 23 in Harvey L. Wells Collection to Heritage Village Library and Archives.

6 Earlier that year (1887), a petition to the Legislature was circulated in Pinellas calling for the creation of a new county, which boldly declared itself to be "Our Declaration of Independence." Apparently one of the issues which sparked the petition was a proposal to build, as Jones states, "that large Bridge [probably a forerunner of the Gandy Bridge, which was the first bridge to span Tampa Bay and which was eventually built in 1924], court House and Jail" for Hillsborough. Residents in the Pinellas felt that their taxes were not going towards roads and bridges on their side of the Bay but were instead being drained off by Tampa and the eastern part of Hillsborough (Pinellas then being commonly known as "West Hillsborough"). It was a sentiment that eventually did result in the successful movement to create Pinellas in 1911. Some notable signers of this early petition included Pinellas pioneers Abel Miranda, John A. Bethell, John A. Donaldson (the first African-American to permanently settle on the peninsula), G.W. Meares, and Vincent Leonardy. See Straub, History of Pinellas County, pp. 52-58 and "Petition to Legislature," in Pinellas County-General History file at Heritage Village Library and Archives.

7 On May 18, 1887, Belcher introduced the county separation bill, House bill No. 316, "To be entitled an act to create and establish the county of Gulf out of the western portion. Of Hillsborough county, and to provide for its government." Interestingly, this passage suggests that Belcher himself introduced the separation bill in the Legislature only reluctantly. This was probably due to the fact that the "certain Tampa politician" which Straub alludes to in his history was not elected with Belcher, which was part of the original strategy behind creating the new county. With no ally in the Senate to support his bill, Belcher no doubt was only going through the motions in introducing the bill in order to carry out his part of the original bargain. See also Florida House of Representatives, A Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the First Legislature of the State of Florida Held Under the Constitution Adopted by the Convention of 1885 (Tallahassee, Fla.: N.M. Brown, 1887), p.482.

"Matchett" refers to G.W. Matchett, Belcher's colleague from Hillsborough in the State House that year. See John B. Phelps, Clerk of the Florida House of Representatives, The People of Lawmaking in Florida 1822-1997, p. 73.

8 "Old Capt. McMullen" is James P "Capt. Jim" McMullen (1823-1895), one of the earliest settlers on the Pinellas Peninsula and a prominent member of the local community there. He originally came to the area from South Georgia about 1842 while recuperating from tuberculosis, and drifting over to Pinellas, found it "the closest place to heaven that he could imagine." In 1852 he settled permanently on the peninsula and built a log cabin in the area that
later became known as Coachman Station, near Clearwater. In 1977 the cabin was moved to Heritage Village, which now survives as the oldest existing structure in Pinellas County. McMullen became involved in both farming and cattle operations in the area and soon became one of the leaders of the young community. During the Civil War, he commanded a company of volunteers to protect Clearwater Harbor (now Clearwater) from Federal incursions, and later joined the Confederate "Cow Cavalry," which played an important role in helping to supply the Confederate Army with beef. He also served as a member of the Hillsborough County Commission both before and after the war, from 1853-1855, 1859-1861 and 1881-1883. For more on McMullen, see my article which appeared in the *Sunland Tribune*, "The Accidental Pioneer: Capt. Jim McMullen and the Taming of the Pinellas Peninsula," *Sunland Tribune* 22 (November 1996): 27-40.

Incidentally, McMullen was Belcher's father-in-law not once, but twice over: in 1872, Belcher married McMullen's daughter Mary Katherine and after her death in 1880, he married her sister Sarah Jane.

The "Rev. Holmes" mentioned here is otherwise unknown, although he was probably a relative of James Holmes, who was at the time bookkeeper of the Sommerville and Douglas store. James Holmes came to Dunedin in 1875 and homesteaded 160 acres on present-day Hercules and Sunset Drive. See Douglas, *History of Dunedin*, p. 124.

Arthur Campbell (A.C.) Turner (1844-1929) was an early pioneer of Clearwater. A merchant, farmer and citrus grower by profession, he also served as postmaster of Clear Water Harbor from 1872 to 1885, and from 1884 to 1892 was editor of the *West Hillsborough (Hillsboro) Times*, the peninsula's first newspaper. One of the area's leading proponents of division from Hillsborough, when Pinellas County was created in 1911, he served as the new county's first treasurer.

"Munnerlyn" refers to James K. Munnerlyn, an early pioneer of Clearwater who ran a general store at the foot of Cleveland Street. Together with Turner, he had apparently first supported the Rev. James G. Snedecor (the "Snedecor" mentioned here) for the Legislature before supporting Belcher. Snedecor came to the area from Memphis, Tennessee during the early 1880's and initially settled in Dunedin. In 1884, he moved to the Safety Harbor area, where he lived in a log cabin homestead that still stands on Sixth Avenue south of Main Street. He appears to have been involved with the movement to separate Pinellas from Hillsborough. See Rowland H. Rerick, "Munnerlyn stated that:

"On last Saturday there was a meeting here at this place [Clear Water Harbor] for the purpose of dividing the County. It was held by a certain clique who are not any popular with the local people here, and consequently not largely attended . . . a great many who are in favor of the measure object on account of opposition [sic] . . . I am in favor of the measure and am willing to use the men so far as we need them. I am anxious to know what you think of the move, and will appreciate any advice you will give in regard to any steps that it would be best to be taken in regard to making it a popular movement."

(Letter of James K. Munnerlyn to William A. Belcher, Clear Water Harbor, Florida, 22 April 1887, courtesy Michael Sanders Collection.)
12 “Wall” is Judge Joseph B. Wall of Tampa, who then represented Hillsborough County in the State Senate. Jones is referring to the bitter contest which was then underway that year in the Legislature to elect a U.S. Senator for Florida. (Prior to the adoption of the 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1913, U.S. Senators were elected by their respective state legislatures, not by the people.) Initially, two candidates for the office emerged: former Governor William D. Bloxham of Tallahassee, who was then serving as U.S. Surveyor-General for Florida; and incumbent Governor Edward A. Perry of Pensacola. After more than 50 ballots, the Legislature deadlocked, and a third candidate was nominated: State House Speaker Samuel Pasco of Jefferson County. Finally, on May 18th, both Bloxham and Perry withdrew, and after more than a month of balloting, Pasco was elected. See Phelps, *People of Lawmaking in Florida*, pp. 11, 88, 119; Allen Morris, comp., *The Florida Handbook 1995-1996*, 25th ed. (Tallahassee: Peninsular Publishing, 1995), pp. 336-337, 440; and Edward C. Williamson, *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age 1877-1893* (Gainesville, Fla.: University Presses of Florida, 1976), pp. 150-152.

13 This passage refers to Milton H. Mabry, Sr. (1851-1919), who at the time of this letter was serving as Lieutenant Governor of Florida. Mabry, a native of Alabama, came to Florida in 1879 and after serving one term in the Legislature, was elected Lieutenant Governor as a Democrat in 1884.

Although Mabry did indeed never become Governor, he was far from being "killed" politically, as Jones asserts. In 1891 he was elected to the Florida Supreme Court, and served twelve years there until his retirement from office in 1903. He died in March 1919 in Tampa at the age of 68. His sons Eldon Mabry and Milton H. Mabry, Jr. were also prominent in the legal profession in Tampa. Another son, Army Capt. Dale Mabry, for whom Dale Mabry Highway in Tampa was named, was killed in a dirigible accident in 1922. See McKay, Pioneer Florida, 3:15-16 and Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa* (St. Petersburg, Fla: St. Petersburg Printing Company, 1950), pp. 280-281.

Ironically, the office of Lieutenant Governor was abolished in the Constitution of 1885, although Mabry was allowed to serve out the remainder of his four-year term. Florida would not have another Lieutenant Governor until 1969, when the state constitution was revised and the office was re-created. (Incidentally, a Pinellas County resident—Ray C. Osborne, then a Republican member of the Florida House from St. Petersburg—was the first to hold the recreated office, being appointed Lieutenant Governor by Governor Claude R. Kirk on January 7, 1969.)

14 “Davidson” is Robert H.M. Davidson (1832-1908), a native of Quincy in Gadsden County, who was then serving in Congress as Representative from Florida’s 1st Congressional District—an area which included the Tampa Bay region. Elected in 1876 as the first Democrat to represent Florida in the House since the close of the Civil War, he was a leading member of the state’s “bourbons,” or conservative Democrats, which at the time largely controlled the state. Jones’ analysis of Davidson’s political strength in this instance was perceptive: while he was narrowly renominated and re-elected to a seventh consecutive term in Congress in 1888, Davidson lost the party’s nomination two years later to Stephen Mallory of Pensacola, son of the former Confederate Secretary of the Navy. For more on Davidson, see Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida*, 2 vols. (Atlanta: Southern Historical Association, 1902), ed. by Francis P Fleming, 1:504-505; and my unpublished biography of Davidson, “The Life and Times of Robert Hamilton McWhorter Davidson (A.D. 1832-1908), A Chronological Biography,” in the Heritage Village Library and Archives.
THE BUILDING OF THE NEW TAMPA BAY HOTEL: 1888-1897 Reminiscences of Alexander Browning

Alexander Browning’s original handwritten manuscript is in the collection of the Henry B. Plant Museum. Browning was born in Paisley, Scotland on June 5, 1866 and began work on the Tampa Bay Hotel when he was 22 years old. These reminiscences were written approximately forty years later shortly before his death in Sarasota on September 14, 1932.

Edited by Frank R. North

When Tampa people first realized that Mr. Henry B. Plant was going to build a Hotel in their City, it came with the fact that Mr. J. A. Wood, Architect, 152 Broadway, New York had already bought up part of the Hayden orange grove - a homestead where the family was living at the time on the west side of the Hillsboro River - the house the Haydens were living in was not bought at that time - only about 10 acres of their land and grove on the South side of their house.

They had received their home and a few acres in the land deal, but sold all from there to the old ferry road that led down to the river opposite the foot of Lafayette street. There was no bridge across the River at this time, just a sand road and a barge big enough to carry a double team across, pushed over with long poles. A flat bottom boat being used for passengers only - a small fee charged. I don’t know exactly how many of a family Mr. and Mrs. Hayden there were, but knew a son call “Doe” was one of them, a dentist travelling around the country pulling teeth - a good mixer with the boys around town.

The Hayden property extended from the railway track of the JT and KW R.R. to Lafayette St. along the River front - they crossed the River to go into the Village in their own skiff. Soon after the first real moves in building the Hotel was when a R.R spur line was commenced and surveyed into the newly bought Hayden property -then laid into the grounds of the New Tampa Bay Hotel as it was then called to bring in Building materials. All the other land had been bought up between their newly secured Hayden grove to the R.R. main line.

Mr. Wood took charge of the works as architect. He was on the grounds from early morning till the last man was through at night, truly a busy man - one could always know where he was. His voice was loud and shrill directing the Negroes or white mechanics. He always wore the same style and color of clothing - light gray - with soft felt hat to match and white tie. He was always neat and clean - very painstaking in all details of the work. Some of the foremen he brought from the North with him - E. B. Holt as supt; George Queseek a brick mason foreman from Orange, N[ew] Jersey and Fred Cooper a carpenter foreman. The Negro bossing was given to Jerry Anderson -then proprietor of the H. B. Plant hotel - a large two story frame building with 2 story veranda, the entrance on the corner of Tampa and Zack St where Maas Bros. Dept Store now stands. Mr. Wood had a suite of rooms in this Hotel where he could see across the river to the new building. All these foremen soon learned to submit to the will of Mr. Wood, when laying out the building and getting the foundation in place.

The plans were followed only as the Architect directed and the South Half of the building as far as the rotunda excavated and foundations put in. A culvert underneath this portion ran across the building to take care
of a little creek that guided the drainage of the back country to a circular pond excavated near the bridge and the river, which was later to be used for Aquatic plants and gold fish.

At this time there was not many mechanics in Tampa to draw from. Mr. Wood being of an inventive mind soon had some of the town boys as apprentices as brick masons and plasterers amongst them being Fred J. James, A.I.A, now President of the State Board of Architects; the two Webb boys - Ernie and his brother; Geo. Bean, now in Washington - politician; Lenfesty, now in the broom manufacturing business - all these served their time on the job before it was completed 3 years later.

In the years 1887-1888 the Yellow Fever was epidemic in Tampa and all who could got away as far from it as they could. But, this did not stop the Hotel work, although the forces were greatly diminished. Mr. Wood kept a supply of medicine for workers who were complaining - both white and colored - he used oat meal water for drinking carried around by the water boys in buckets with a dipper full of meal for each bucket - this kept the men strong and healthy and I believe was the reason there was so little sickness on the job. The Negroes got fat and sleek on it. Mr. Wood would point at them with pride as if exhibiting a slick looking mule. Although he was a hard task master, he had many good qualities.

After the Fever was over the building of the hotel commenced in earnest and another section laid out - marking 1200 ft in all the length of the main building. This work going on soon necessitated a bridge being built across the Hillsboro River. How this was accomplished by the city [was] with a wood built draw bridge - having U. S. permits etc. and I believe was put through the War Dept by S. M. Sparkman - our leading attorney at this time. In the meantime the workmen used the R. R. bridge about a mile further up the River and small boats. For those living on the S.[outh] side of town to get to work at the Hotel. One of the first building on the grounds was a large hip roof bldg - one story and basement used as an office, store rm. and Carpenter Shop with the shop and engine in the basement.

Mr. Van Bibber made all the moulds for casting the stone lintel courses, sills, and skew backs, and a crew were kept at work making the artificial stones. At this time all the Portland Cement came from Germany or Belgium - distinguished from the natural or Brooklyn brand by the Iron hoop on the barrels. I believe it cost delivered in Tampa - 3.00 a barrel for Portland and 1.75 pr Barrel for the Rosendale, made at Kingston on the Hudson River. This was the same cement the Brooklyn Bridge was built of - was brought from New York by the Bemmer line of schooners. All the foundations were made with a congregate of broke brick, oyster shells and Fla. woods sand. These oyster shells were brought by lighter [ A large barge used to deliver or unload goods to or from a cargo ship - ed.] from a mound at the mouth of the Alafia River down the Bay and all the brick bats broken up by hand to mix with it. Some years later I had occasion to cut through some of this concrete to put in some 4” sewer pipes and found it exceeding tough and hard to cut - these all mixed by hand on the sweat board. The lime came from Ocala in barrels. There was no brick to be had this side of Jacksonville, so Mr. Wood made arrangements with the Camps at Campville and established a brick yard - also another at Green Cove Springs - and for the next 3 years kept them both busy, although the Campville is a salmon colored sand and clay brick. They have stood the test and show no decay after 43 years wear. The
Photograph of the Browning family taken approximately 1890. Alexander Browning is shown standing at top left.

(Photograph courtesy of the Henry B. Plant Museum.)
Green Cove brick were a darker red and were used to radiate the colors around the horse shoe arches in the openings - the design of the Hotel being Moorish.

In 1889 I came to Tampa after a four months trip from Sarasota round Cape Sable and the Florida Reefs from Sarasota to Daytona and New Smyrna and started soon after with Mr. J. A. Wood, Architect, as his assistant, sometimes helping John Mahoney with the time. He was the time keeper and accountant and pay master - well liked by all. He had an old Circular Saw hung up by his office door. This was used for starting the men to work and at quitting time by banging with an iron rod – primitive but effective. Mr. Holt and myself had a certain number of strikes on this so called gong to call us to the office when wanted there. This saved a lot of time on a building 1200 ft long.

My work was principally keeping track of materials, brick lime, cements, steel, etc. and bringing lumber from Dorsey’s Saw Mill above the R.R. Bridge. The method of transportation used was an open lighter. Manned by Negro power with long oars or sweeps, I took the tiller sweep as captain and guided against the current empty and with the current loaded from the Mill dock back to our

This drawing depicts the original H.B. Plant Hotel which was located on the east side of the Hillsborough river at the corner of Tampa and Zack Streets. The Maas Brothers department store later occupied this site.

(Drawing circa 1890 courtesy of the Henry B. Plant Museum.)
hotel dock where the lumber was carried up and stacked carefully in the shed to season.

Some of this cypress seasoned here for over two years before being cut up and made into inside finish. To this day, forty three years later, [it] does not show decay or shrinkage. All the scroll work on the front veranda was made on the job from this cypress - sawn at Dorset’s Mill - from logs floated down the Hillsboro River. When being sawed, the Sawyer had to wear a South Wester and Fisherman’s oil skins to keep from getting soaked with the spray from the wet logs - some of them 3 feet in diameter, heavy to handle at this time, but light when seasoned. Mr. Wood took a good deal of interest in this material to see that it was properly stacked straight and true - anticipating all his requirements for this when it came to the finishing of the job.

While at the Mill one day getting the barge loaded, I took a vomiting spell and became quite sick. My old Negro Frank Hardaway, noticing me, said, "Boss you going to be mighty sick soon. Better start back with what load is on." I managed to steer down to the Hotel dock and went in the shed and lay down. Frank went and got John Mahoney and sent me home in a buggy. This developed to a violent attack of Malaria Fever and Bloody __?__. Dr. Weidon attended me and I nearly died. Peter Bruce Stewart, an old friend, called. He was a Pharmacist who came from Glasgow with us.

This photograph, taken July 26, 1889, shows the New Tampa Bay Hotel under construction. Photographed from the town side of the Hillsborough River looking east, the hotel's distinctive minerets are not yet visible. In the foreground are steam powered boats and a sailing vessel possibly delivering building materials to the site.

(Photograph courtesy of the Henry B. Plant Museum.)
on the "Turnessia," and made me a medicine that cured me in about two weeks - was back to work although very weak. This Fever was contracted while on the trip around the coast.

Mr. Wood kept me at the Drawing Board, making details and checking up materials, mostly in the shade, till one day Jerry Anderson let a car loaded with bricks get away from him which ran through the back wall of the Hotel - at this time two stories high. For a punishment, his job was given to me and Jerry made a straw boss for a time cleaning up the mess he made. Nobody was hurt, and the change of occupation only made the job more interesting. This didn't last long, and Jerry soon had his old job back again bossing the Negroes unloading material.

The Carpenter shop foreman, Fred Coyne, was kept busy making window and door frames. All the machinery he had was a band saw driven by Negro power with handles on the fly wheel. Later on there was a small engine and upright boiler installed, and a whistle for time keeping. It was my job to see that this was kept up - with a Negro helper - then a circular saw and planer was installed making a real handy place to work. The tin shop was in the basement under here - in charge [was] "Pete", an octoroon tinker. As the building advanced the South end was roofed first. Then Dan Shea came from New York to take charge of the plumbing. I believe he was
recommended by the Durham fittings people. Consequently, all pipes and fitting was got from them - the whole system of plumbing was screw fittings - soil pipes as well.

Then John Shea, Dan's brother, came and went on as Mahoney's assistant and time keeper while I got an advance to assistant Supt with increase in pay. Then McKeever got my job - Negro bossing most of the time.

As time advances I find there was many things quite remarkable about building this Hotel. We had no level instrument, only hand levels, yet when a survey was taken later, it was found that in 1200 feet there was less than a course of brick out of level.

The method of fireproofing halls were distinctly unique at that time and I was told by Mr. Gus Kahn of the Truscan Steel Co that as far as he knew this was the first job of re-inforced concrete work in the United States. The aggregate of concrete work was broken bricks, oyster shell and white sand and the reinforcing was 1" T -iron laid across from beam to beam and galvanized steel cable wire, with the cable tensile still on it laid across the tees - all buried in the shell concrete. This steel cable was got from Punta Rassa - an old sub-marine cable across to the West Indies brought up by schooner as deck load. Whenever wanted, a piece the length required was sawed off and unwound. The copper cable in the centre almost paid for the freight of bringing it to the job.

Construction of the New Tampa Bay Hotel is shown in this scene taken from the northeast corner.

(Photograph circa 1890 courtesy of the Henry B. Plant Museum.)
The concrete was later plastered underneath and is easily seen in the Halls without a crack to this day. At this time the cars running across the Brooklyn Bridge in N. Y was run by cables and an accumulation of old cables was stowed under the New York end tunnels. Part of this was brought as deck load on the Bemmer line of schooners to Tampa and used as reinforcing steel on the Hotel.

Underneath the Hotel there was large rain water cisterns built of concrete reinforced with cable wire. Although filled with water for years, I never knew them to crack or leak - all built with shell sand concrete. Whenever structural steel came on the job -I-Beams especially - [it] was not fabricated. There was a hydraulic punch where a 20” I-Beam could be punched with a 7/8” hole -a short handle was all the working parts -where a lathe could punch a hole of this size with ease. This was filled with Alcohol and a few drops of sperm oil. There was a small air hole on top to relieve the suction on the plunger. The pump became mysteriously dry, so a watch was put on it - when we discovered a Negro slip up to it with a straw and get a good jag on- After this there was a sign put on that "poison" was put in the Alcohol and there was no more trouble from this source.

There was a well driven for Artesian water but it was not a success. The water came to within 3 ft of the surface, so Tom Smith (later the owner of the White Rose saloon) and myself were given the job to cut a hole thru the 6’ casing - below this level and attach a 2” pipe. This water was piped into the basement and formed a stead[y] stream of water where the water boys came to fill their buckets. This was used until such time as the City Water was brought across the river from the water tank on the hill -this developed 60# pressure - in the City.

When the Main Building was finished on the outside and the roof was on, the Dining Room and Solarium was laid out on the North end. This was a very elaborate and imposing place with Pantrys and Kitchen and cold storage refrigerator rooms. The Annex joined the Dining Room, the second story being about the same level of the Gallery around the Bomb [dome] which formed the Roof of the Dining Room - 90 ft. from the floor to the apex. As I said before the style of Architecture was Moorish and this gallery above the dining tables, while used by the orchestra, was following out the idea that the Women of the Harem should look upon their Lords while eating without being seen themselves - a little far fetched for Tampa but quite effective Architecturally all finished with Mahogany carved pillars and carved fret work - horse shoe arches.

While building this a near accident happened. One of the main supporting columns, built of brick, was nearly up. It began to settle and lean over. On investigation, we found the foundation was not setting and [was] still soft. Nobody could account for this till it was discovered that the Mortar Mixer had got some fire clay barrels mixed with the Rosendale cement barrels, and this had been used as cement -necessitating taking down this column to the foundation. My brother Hugh had charge of the carpenter work gang erecting the dome - the structural ribs are all built of wood put together on the ground then hoisted in place by Negro power, and sheathed over. The turret above was built on the dome and all covered over with standing seam - Taylors Old Style Pointiminter tin -the same roof is on today - forty two years later - and good for many more years wear.

Mr. Woods health was not so good at this time and the job had been seemingly
slowing up. I believe this was mostly due to the fact that the budget of weekly allowance was not sufficient to employ more expensive mechanics in finishing up. This and the chills and fever soon broke down Mr. Wood who was confined to bed at the H. B. Plant Hotel and ordered north by Dr. Wall his Physician.

This necessitated a change of management - when Mr. T. Cotter from Sanford, Fla. was appointed General Manager in full charge to finish the Hotel in a year - so that the Plant System could advertise the Grand Opening at a certain time. When Cotter came he brought all his force with him. This consisted of an old draughtsman, a foreman brickmason named Dan Bailey, and foreman painter Dan Wiggens, also a carpenter foreman named Nungasser. Each of these brought some of their following - straw bosses and mechanics, Doyle as foreman Brick Mason. Mr. T. Cotter was a catholic -and lived with John Savarese so was Dan and John Shea, as also was John Mahoney and Parslow and a good sprinkling of the workmen and J. Gordan Sullivan.

Things were soon humming. There seemed to be no stint of money now. While some of the old hands got canned, there was good judgement used in retaining the others.

The office force was increased and a telephone put in - John Mahoney as head time keeper with 3 clerks under him, while J. Cordon Sullivan was private secretary helping Mr. Cotter in the buying of materials - Willie Beam [was] office boy.
The draughting room now had four draughtsmen - the old draughtsman (I forget his name - Smith), Alfred H. Parslow, myself and Miller (who died while the job was running.) Mr. E. B. Holt quit and started contracting in Tampa. Before long there were 500 mechanics on the job working day and night.

The Servants quarters was built a frame building, then the Power House was started as soon as we could get the plans ready. This was followed by the foundation of the Smoke Stack - quite a job down by the side of the river where piling had to be driven by Jim McKay, uncle of the present mayor of Tampa to carry 600 tons. Sheet piling was used to keep the mud from caving in when the concrete and cross sills were being placed. In the dirt taken out, we found plenty of flint Indian arrow heads and pieces of pottery. The smoke stack was built of brick and capped with stone -140 ft. high.

The Power House was two stories high with rooms for the engineers and firemen to live in up stairs. The Boiler Room contained 3 Babcock and Willcox boilers and the Engine room had 3 Westinghouse engines driving large armatures by belts. There was also a Pump room to take care of the returns from the heating system. The electric wiring was contracted for by the Eureka Electrical Co, 19 Broadway, New York City -Mr. Caezer, manager, and Billie Kelting and Keating as foremen on the job. The Otis Elevator Co. put in the hydraulic elevators.

Most of this time Mr. H. B. Plant and his wife were travelling through Japan buying up all sorts of Bric-a-Brac and sending it to the hotel. Some of the teak wood trimmings in the Writing Room and the Bar was used there, while the mantles and the ladies parlor was set up then. All this necessitated a lot of work in the draughting room to make parts to correspond. With five hundred workmen on the job each day saw a lot of work done and everybody was busy -overtime being paid time and a half. A good plumber made $200.00 a week with overtime at this price. Some of the mahogany finish such as the Staircase and Rotunda Railings were made outside by contract and erected by our carpenters. The plastering was done, day work, with Jim Brown of the firm of Brown and Frazier as foreman. The plaster cornices was mostly run by Dave Cowden - a Scotchman. The plaster used being the Windsor Brand. Metal lath was still unknown so wood lath was use throughout made by Carter of Cartersville, Fla.

The grounds were laid out, and put in charge of Anton Feigh, a German gardener and palms and palmettos were transplanted.

The Gate Entrance and walks built and paved, then a Conservatory contracted for and built by northerners. Wharfs and boat houses being added along the river and water pipe sprinklers installed all over the grounds. Soon the place was a perfect paradise of roses and tropical plants.

As the hotel construction got finished, the carpets were laid. It had been my job to measure up and make drawings of each individual room and hall to send to New York. The carpets then came and were numbered to correspond to the Bed Rooms, etc. Mr. Cotter congratulated me later to say that they all fitted, no mistakes in the sizes. When the furniture was all in place Mr. Hayes came as Hotel Manager bringing with him a staff of cooks and Mr. Trowbridge as House Keeper who had here assistants as chamber maids who soon had the place all nice and clean.
John Shea was appointed Night clerk, Arthur Schlerman, Guide, Dan Shea, chief engineer and electrician.

The laundry building was built and the Troy Laundry Machinery installed. This building was placed at the R.R.Y[ard] so as to take care of the R. R. laundry as well as the Hotel and the Inn at Port Tampa.

At this time I had a chance to make Plans for the Catholic Convent over town and quit the Hotel to make them. While working on them, Mr. Hayes sent for me to come and see him. He wanted me to make plans of the grounds showing all the water outlets, also plans of the electric wiring throughout the Hotel and establish an office over the Power House. Then he gave me an order signed by Mr. H. B. Plant to go and get anything I wanted from Cotter’s office, at that time in the servants quarters. There was evidently some feeling between Cotter and the Hotel Co. which I found out afterwards had been caused by reports made to them by J. Cordon Sullivan acting as Private Secretary to Cotter - he being a Pinkerton detective spying all the time the job was running. Soon after Cotter quit and started contracting, but his first job, a heavy building for the Phosphate Works on the Alafia river about broke him - when he went back to Sanford.

The Grand Opening of the Tampa Bay Hotel was in Dec. 1892 when many R.R. and express notables and New York[er]s were present including John Jacob Astor, [and] the Vanderbilts. I danced with Mrs. Margaret Plant while Mr. H. B. Plant shook hands and called me Alex. I had often met him on the job.

After a successful season the Hotel shut down. Then John Shea became Purser on the "Margaret." Mr. Wood, in the meantime, had written me to come to N. Y with him as the "Margaret" was making the trip to Bar Harbour. I went with them in 2 weeks - made N. Y - where I stayed 20 months. Mr. Wood went south and started to build the annex addition to the Hotel and had got this partly done when he sent for me to come from New York as he had to go to Matanzas, Cuba about a large Hotel to be built there. These plans I had been working on in New York. He left me in charge of the job along with John Mahoney as time keeper and accountant. When Mr. Woods came back the job was about finished. In the meantime, I got married and did not see Mr. Woods for seven or eight years when I met him again in Havana, Cuba. Mr. Henry B. Plant died in 1899 leaving his wife Margaret and only son Morton F. Plant his heirs.

EDITOR’S NOTE:
The original handwritten manuscript of Alexander Browning’s reminiscences is in the collection of the Henry B. Plant Museum in Tampa, Florida. I wish to thank Susan Garter, Curator, and Cynthia Gandee, Executive Director of the Henry B. Plant Museum for the opportunity to work with this remarkable first-person account of the hotel’s construction. Browning used very few periods, commas or conjunctions. Incomplete and run-on sentences abound and are separated by dashes in the original manuscript. His unique style of capitalization of proper names, job titles, places, companies and building materials has been reproduced as faithfully as possible. I corrected typographical errors and misspellings only if the author’s meaning would otherwise be unclear. Infrequently, punctuation has been added to ease readability. Brackets have been added within the text to clarify certain sentences (e.g. S. youth). A word substitution has been made in every instance for the use of a particular racial epithet. Every effort has been made to faithfully reproduce Browning’s original manuscript. Any deviation from the author’s original meaning or errors in the spelling of proper names are the fault of the editor. - Frank R. North
The article “Life with my father the undertaker” is current unavailable.
THE CREATION OF FORT SULLIVAN: Document and commentary

Dr. Joe Knetsch

Fort Sullivan, like many of the fortifications on the Florida frontier created during the Seminole Wars, was a temporary structure. It was not meant to be a permanent home for the military serving this vast wilderness. In the documents that follow, the purpose of the fort was clearly set out, it was to be a part of the line of defense for the settled areas of Florida. It was not a pretentious building campaign and would serve only as long as the "Indian menace" remained a threat to the settlers. Other forts established on this "chain of posts" included Fort Cummings, Fort Davenport, Fort Gatlin, Fort Maitland and Fort Mellon. Significantly for the future of Florida, almost every one of these fortifications became the focal point for later settlements. Fort Gatlin became the basis for modern Orlando, Fort Maitland became part of the city of the same name and Fort Mellon, after passing through the hands of Henry A. Crane, became the foundation for today’s Sanford. It almost goes without saying that the western end of this chain of posts was Fort Brooke, in the heart of modern Tampa.

The chain of posts grew out of a desire to protect the frontier settlements and was part of a larger strategy conceived by General Zachary Taylor. The main thrust of Taylor's plan was the famous construction of one post per twenty mile squares stretching from the Gulf to the Atlantic and from the Georgia line south towards the Fort Brooke [Tampa] to Fort King [Ocala] road.

The road along which Fort Sullivan was located was meant, originally, to stretch only to Fort Gatlin, however, as supplies came to that post overland from Fort Mellon, on Lake Monroe, it was later decided to continue to the construction of the road and posts to Fort Mellon. Part of the delay in first constructing the road and the posts was the want of medical staff to take care of the troops. On January 10, 1839, Taylor's adjutant, Lieutenant William Grandin, notified Lieutenant Colonel Cummings: "As Dr. Worrell has arrived at Tampa there is no necessity for delay in opening the road and establishing the Posts between Tampa Bay and Fort Gatlin, besides which so soon as the General knew that no Medical Officer had accompanied Major McClintock, Dr. Archer was ordered to report to you. It is therefore hoped and expected that said road if not completed is in a great state of forwardness, and that at the Central post or that nearest Lake Ahapopkha 10,000 Rations of provisions and 5000 of forage will be deposited as soon as it can be conveniently done by the Qr. Mts. Dept."¹ At this point in time, the Tampa Bay to Fort Gatlin road was the southern most line of defense for all of Florida, the posts along the Caloosahatchee and other points south having been either abandoned or reduced to supply depot status.²

Although Fort Sullivan was meant to be a temporary post, it is interesting to note, both in the letters and on the sketch, the existence of large gardens, sufficient to feed "75 or 80 men". According to an Act of Congress passed in 1819, only permanent posts were to be allowed to grow such vegetables and forage. In Florida, because of the lack of local production (and population) and the expense of shipping supplies into the
Copy of the "Map of the route from Fort Brooke to Fort Maitland." The forts were meant to be a line of defense for the settled areas of Florida, not a "permanent home for the military serving this vast wilderness."

(Copy of sketch courtesy of author.)
Territory, the U. S. Army was very lenient in allowing this slight transgression of the general regulations. There is abundant evidence in the reports found in the Adjutant General’s Office to verify the regularity with which such gardens were founded in so-called temporary posts.

Fort Sullivan E Florida

February 22nd 1839

Sir

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Genl order No 60, calling the attention of Commandants of Posts to par 2 Art 19 Genl regulations and in obedience thereto have the honor to report that this the first in a line of Posts established from Tampa Bay to Fort Mellon. Its distance from Tampa Bay is twenty six miles, the road generally good, the next post in advance of this (Ft. Cummings) is twenty miles the road to which Post I have learnt is good, there are the remains of several old Indian towns near this, but from appearance they do not seem to have been occupied for the last twelve or eighteen months. This section of the country is generally flat Pine woods, Dry hammocks, ponds of water & cypress swamps, near this there is a stream of water running North Westerly direction supposed to be the main branch of the Big Hillsborough river, its power or junction with other Streams hav[sic] not been ascertained. Game is abundant, such a[sic] Deer, Turkey, Fish &c. The land at, and near this, is more fertile than any I have seen in C. Florida. I have now under cultivation between 6 & 10 [unclear] acres planted in Garden seeds, Corn & Beans, which I think will yield vegetables sufficient for 75 or 80 men. I regret that I have not been able to make a more full and complete report on the various points enumerated in consequence of my Knowledge of the Topography of this section of the Country being confined alone to the vicinity of this Post.

Genl R Jones  
Aat. Gl Washington  

Very Respectfully yr ob Servant  
H Garner Capt 3 Arty  

Fort Sullivan E. Fl.

Sir.

I have the honor to Transmit herewith a sketch of Fort Sullivan E.F. and the surrounding country prepared by Lt. W. A. Brown 3d Arty,

Very respectfully  
Yr ob Servant  
H Garner  
Capt 3d Arty  

Gnl R. Jones  
Aat. Genl  
Washington

"Fort Sullivan" is the first of a chain of posts extending from "Tampa Bay" to Fort Mellon (on the St. Johns). It is 26 miles from and in a direction a little E. of N E. of Tampa Bay, and 72 miles from Fort Mellon. Fort Cummings is the next post on the line, twenty miles distant & nearly due north. The roads both east and west are generally good. First post (Fort Sullivan) was established by Col. Cummings command of Artillery & Infantry in the month of January last & is garrisoned by Comp. G 3d Artillery under the command of Capt. Garner. The work is a pine picketing 110 feet square with two block houses at diagonal corners & store houses at the extremity of the other diagonal.
Copy of a "sketch of Fort Sullivan E. F. and the surrounding country prepared by Lt. W. A. Brown" United States Army 3rd Artillery sent on August 31, 1839 to Captain Garner. The locations of the gardens, target range, well, stable and parade ground are clearly drawn. Note the "Road to Tampa Bay" marked by an arrow leading west from the fort.

(Copy of sketch courtesy of author.)
The fort is situated in the centre of a small pine barren, encompassed with wet & dry marsh & small hammocks. The surrounding country is generally low and flat consisting of Marshes, Grassy Lakes, Cypress Hammocks & Pine Barrens. A small stream called the Hichipucaissa passes within 300 yards of the fort running in a north westerly direction; this stream was supposed to be the main branch of the Big Hillsborough, (which empties into the gulf at Hillsborough Bay) but from the fact of its being dry in April last, whilst the Hillsborough was in its usual state, precludes the idea of a connection with it at all seasons. The land in the vicinity of the post is very fertile, some points having before been cultivated by the Indians: many kinds of vegetables are produced in abundance in the gardens cultivated by the command. The water is obtained from a well near the fort: it possesses a disagreeable flavor and odour, passing over Rotten Lime Stone, & appears to be strongly impregnated with a Sulphoric of Iron, up to this period its use has not been attended with bad effects; on the contrary the command has enjoyed excellent health, though from the nature of the surrounding country and the waters, a different result was anticipated.

There are remains of two or three Indian villages, about two miles from the fort in a south-westerly direction and one close to the fort; these are supposed to have been deserted about two years since. The features of the country for a considerable extent around the post are similar to those already described.

For/Capt. Garner 3d Arty Commanding Post 31st in August 1839.

W. A. Brown
Lt. 3d Arty

The above is an accurate sketch of Fort Sullivan and the surrounding country.

H Garner
Capt. 3d Arty

ENDNOTES


THE HARDSHIPS AND INCONVENIENCES: The Manatee River Forts during the Seminole Wars

Dr. Joe Knetsch

Descriptions of the land in Florida found in the promotional brochures of the mid to late nineteenth century tell of a new Riviera or "The Italy of America" or some other such romantic vision. One would hardly suspect that the vision presented in these fanciful writings of the early advertisers would somehow be a misrepresentation of the truth. Convincingly, they often told of a verdant land being exposed for the first time to the pulse of civilization and capable of growing any number of exotic tropical fruits which would readily find a market in the thriving industrial towns of the northern cities. It would be very apparent to anyone who came to this new Canaan that the land was very well worth fighting for and the Seminoles, notorious murderers and lazy savages, had every reason to attempt to prevent the progressive forces of Anglo civilization from seizing this Eden and making it their own. Indeed, why let any group of uncouth Indians prevent the settlement of this new land by those wishing to plant oranges, enjoy walks on the beaches and generally bring culture to the wilderness?

Those who served the forces of "civilization" in places like Forts Armstrong, Myakka, Starke, Crawford, Hamer or Camp Smead found that romance was far from the reality of the frontier. Life was difficult, tenuous and often short. A raid by hostile Indians could bring instant death, loss of property and life savings or the end of a dream. The reality of intolerable insects, dangerous reptiles, crowded conditions, constant fear and an unpredictable nature made life in these outposts almost insufferable to those forced by circumstances to endure these hardships. The constant demands for food, water and fuel meant a daily exposure to possible death. The often overcrowded area meant short tempers, instant rivalries and the threat of violence, domestic or otherwise. Culture and civilization were far from the reality of these outposts of defense.

As those who have read Janet Snyder Matthews’ *Edge of Wilderness* or heard Dewey Dye, Jr. back in January of 1967 know, there was only one "permanent" fortification on the Manatee River during the Second Seminole War, it was called Fort Starke and was situated near the mouth of the Manatee River. It was established on November 25, 1840, and abandoned on January 5, 1841. This fort served as a jumping off point for expeditions up the Manatee River and its tributaries. Dewey Dye, Jr. reports that the Post Returns for this installation indicate that it was manned by officers and men from the U. S. Army First Infantry, headquartered at Fort Armistead on Sarasota Bay, and commanded by Captain A. S. Miller. Companies B, E and F comprised the garrison and totaled about 140 men. Dye also speculates that no actual construction of a fortification took place and that the position was simply referred to as a "post", indicating no permanent buildings. The river had been visited many times by the military prior to the establishment of this post.

One of the first such scouts took place on March 18, 1836, very early in the Second Seminole War. The expedition from the U. S. Ship *Vandalia* produced no results and
the report of the territory along the river is bereft of information describing the physical nature of the area. The only indication of the topography is found in the following:

"In conformity with your orders of the 16 inst., directing me to reconnoitre an Indian encampment in the neighborhood of the Manatee river etc., I have to inform you that I landed the same evening, within one and a half miles of the spot where the Indians were supposed to be encamped. Our forces amounted to twenty five men including Lt. Smith from your ship, Doctor Rassler and the Seamen from the Vandalia, it was nearly dark before we arrived on the spot where Mr. Johnson saw the Camp the day before, we strictly examined the ground and the adjacent wood, but could not discover either Indian or Cattle, but we saw evident indications of a recent encampment, such as prints of Indian feet, tracks of Cattle, etc. We remained in the wood until seven in the evening, at 8 we arrived on board. Yesterday morning we again landed our whole force and commenced our march into the wood, taking a Southerly direction, after passing the ground that we visited the day before, we fell in with Indian and Cattle trails of recent date, all of which evidently tending in the direction of Sarazotta having an Indian guide with us we concluded to march on, and did so until we found ourselves ten miles in the interior of the wood. Men and Officers being completely jaded down, deemed it prudent to commence our retreat on the cutter. We arrived on board at 6 P.M." 

The march brought the command through woods on the southern bank of the river, however, because the exact location is not known, it would be nearly impossible to pin-point the spot today. The ground covered must have been soft and the going slow, because the normal distance covered by an army command in that day was anywhere from twelve to sixteen miles. However, the only true notation seen is that they went south through woods and no species is identified.

Although not the only reconnaissance of the Manatee River area during the war, it is one of the more complete reports found to date. The major reason that fewer scouts were sent via the Manatee is that the Indians were farther away from that area than any other in South Florida. If one reviews the correspondence, it is easily seen that the highest concentrations of the Seminoles and their allies were in the Big Cypress, around Lake Okeechobee, near the coontie grounds on the southeast coast and along the Kissimmee River. None of these positions is accessible by taking the Manatee River or any of its tributaries. This leads to the question, why establish Fort Starke so late in the war in an area not frequented by the Indians or their allies.

It can be seen from the report of November 24, 1840, that a concern of the army was the gathering of Indians along the islands of the coast. This short report simply noted that: "The 1st Regt. is scouting along the Gulf shore below Tampa with boats accompanied by a steamer and two schooners." Four days later, the 1st Infantry arrived at Fort Starke: "B, E, & F companies 1st Infty arrived here this morning, bad weather having delayed them. The Boat did not arrive at Fort Armistead until 24th inst. & was dispatched the next morning."
be obliged to swim two creeks with our horses on the trail leading to Peace Creek, and so far as I went the water was half-leg deep most of the way, and a very blind trail that the Indian was unable to follow."6 The watery way from anywhere to Fort Stark and the remainder of the territory made life difficult and lead to charges that the area may have been unhealthy, or "miasmatic" in the language of the day. However, the real reason for the fort’s founding is found shortly thereafter in a letter of December 11, 1840: "It is the direction of the Commanding General that during the present cessation of operations in your district, a detachment under a competent officer be employed to stake out the inner passage leading to Fort Armistead, and any other channels which it may be deemed expedient to indicate in that manner. From their superior durability cedar stakes should be employed, if practicable."7 Thus, the only reason for the founding of Fort Starke is the protection and scouting out of a route via an "inner" passage from Tampa Bay to Fort Armistead, on Sarasota Bay. This passage being established and staked out, the fort was soon disbanded.

The navigability of the Manatee River made any form of reinforcement in the area relatively easy. This was early recognized by everyone and may be the reason Indians did not establish themselves on the river after the occupation of Tampa Bay by the United States Army at Fort Brook. The early settlers of the area certainly noted the ease of communication available via the river and almost everyone of those who settled under the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, chose sites on or near the river’s banks. The success of the early settlers depended greatly upon the ease of shipment and receiving of goods and materials. That the area attracted the such capable leaders and plantation men as the Gambles, Gates and Bradens is ample indication of this ease of communication.

The almost constant threat of Indian attack made the Manatee frontier highly susceptible to rumor of same and led to much correspondence between the settlement and Tampa Bay, the regional headquarters for the army. Through most of the year 1846, these communications were carried on with the colony’s leader, Sam Reid.8 His passing in 1847 meant the leadership fell upon the capable shoulders of Josiah Gates and Robert Gamble. These men, along with Joseph Braden, carried on communication with the major State and army leaders in Tallahassee and Tampa. Yet, some of these very same leaders, like Senator James D. Westcott, also kept the tension at a near fever pitch with their questioning of the army’s representatives in the area.9 Trader John Darling, then at Charlotte Harbor and later at Payne’s Creek, also brought doubt on the army’s judgement, directly attacking the personal motives of Indian Agent John Casey.10 By 1849, enough of this type of material and rumor had spread that suspicions were running high.

In that year, two incidents, well known and discussed by Dr. James Covington and others, took place at Indian River and Payne’s Creek which set the whole country on fire with war fever.11 The incident, which cost the lives of Captain Payne and others brought about a nearly full-fledged Indian war on the frontier. Only quick response by Billy Bowlegs, agent Casey and others prevented the final eruption at that time. On the Manatee frontier, the scare led to the establishment of Camp Manatee, Forts Myakka, Crawford and, most importantly, Hamer. The Post Returns from all of these encampments indicate that Fort Hamer was the nerve center for response to this crisis. Mail for all of these places was delivered to Hamer for distribution, Court Martials were held there and when the two remaining
posts, Crawford and Myakka, were abandoned, their companies were sent to Hamer. When the army left Fort Hamer, in October of 1850, the stage was set for the next move in the game to remove the Seminoles from Florida, namely the petition drive and public meetings requesting State action.

Fort Hamer, always an object of interest to Manatee citizens, has not been precisely located by proper archaeological and historical research, at this time. Many claim to know the exact location, and they may be very correct. However, for our purpose, the situation of the fort being approximately fifteen miles west of Fort Crawford, on the south bank of the river and about ten miles up river, near the head of steamboat navigation, will suffice. What exactly did this outpost look like and what were the conditions under which men and women lived in or near this forth Dewey Dye, Jr. reports finding Lieutenant Hayes’ report to the Quartermaster General in which the following description is found:

"... a hospital building had been completed (by April 1850), 60 feet by 25 feet, containing three airy wards with ceilings 11 feet high. He reported that porches extended the whole length of the hospital building, in front and rear. Ends of the front porch had been enclosed to make two shed rooms, one a dispensary and the other, the store room. He also reported he had completed a hay house that had been erected to the dimensions 80 feet by 21 feet, height 15 feet. He also reported that three sheds had been completed and it looks like a ram of log houses under construction to accommodate a garrison of three companies... He also reported [says Dye] that the beams, rafters and heavy timbers were cut from the nearby pine woods."
center surrounded by and enclosure. As seen on any map of the forts during these wars, the most common plan, and it became the symbol for a fortification, was a rectangular or square structure with two blockhouses at opposite corners. Not surprisingly, none of these types describe exactly what Fort Hamer must have looked like as detailed by Lieutenant Hayes.

It has long been a popular misconception that all forts basically looked the same and provided the same protection. As can be seen from the above, this is definitely not the case in Florida. From the open air style found at Fort Pierce to the tight, blockhouse-enclosure type of Fort Mellon, Florida’s fortification differed widely. Perhaps the greatest reason for this diversity is the availability of useable wood. In areas where pine and hardwood are plentiful, the enclosure type of fortification was used, whereas in neighborhoods where such wood was scarce or expensive to procure, the more open style was adopted. This would help to explain the rich variations found in Florida fort construction.

Life for those living at the fort may have been a bit dull and routine, once the pattern had been set. Troops were constantly on rotation scouting the territory for possible Indian signs and keeping whites from the designated "Indian Boundary". If the post were to be permanent, there would have been regular gardening to attend to, as, by an 1819 law, permanent military installations were required to have a garden to provide vegetables and grains for the troops. However, as Fort Hamer was not regarded as a permanent post, this probably did not happen. Which meant that subsistence for the troops and those dependent on them had to be shipped into the area and stored, which was probably the purpose of the large "hay building" constructed by Lieutenant Hayes.

It is notable that the location of the fort, as noted by Ms. Matthews in her book, was at the head of steamboat navigation for the river. This reinforces the conclusion that the materials were shipped in and stored at Fort Hamer, which then distributed the materials and rations needed to Forts Crawford and Myakka. Shipping rations and materials to other posts meant that the army, most likely, had to construct the roads to these outposts. It is significant that George Cordon Meade, the leader of Union troops at Gettysburg, when constructing his maps of southern Florida in 1850-51 noted that the road from Fort Crawford to Fort Myakka, a distance of between 16 and 17 miles, was a "good road" while that headed east from Fort Crawford needed a lot of work to make it usable. Road duty, like gardening, was part of the required work routine found at most military posts.

One of the major reasons for the location of Fort Hamer, as just noted, was its position at the head of steamboat navigation. It must be noted, regardless of the fertility of Manatee’s fabled lands, that forage and food were very expensive in Florida and that it was cheaper to have it shipped to the military posts from places such as Baltimore, Philadelphia and elsewhere. During the Second Seminole War, for example, one consignment to Florida was described as follows:

"I herewith transmit a statement showing the quantity of Forage shipped to several depots in Florida since the 26th ultimo. Captain Crossman reports that he is now loading a vessel with Hay at Boston destined for Tampa which will carry 700 bales, and one for Savannah which will carry 800. Captain Tompkins is loading a vessel at Philadelphia with Forage which will carry from six to seven hundred bales of hay and 6 to 8 thousand bushels of grain. Captain Dusenberg has taken up a vessel for the
same depot which will carry about 7000 bushels of grain and will sail in a few days; and Captain Hetzel is now loading a vessel at Alexandria for Saint Marks which will carry about 8000 Bushels of grain and is expected to sail on the 12th instant.”

These large quantities of forage and grain indicate some of the problems of supplying troops for campaigns in Florida. The major reason for these shipments is the relatively undeveloped state of agriculture in the state in the 1840s and 1850s. The concentration on cotton in the northern tier of counties and the disorganized state of affairs in the southern portion caused by the wars, or threats of war, made these types of shipments a necessity.

The forts also provided medical treatment, such as it was, to the surrounding population. Although this was not the recommended way to get medical attention and the army did not encourage the practice, it was fairly common to have the post surgeon look at the local populace when time and facilities warranted it. One of the reasons for this was to check this group for possible communicable diseases which may infect the fighting force. The rate of sickness at many of the posts in Florida was the major factor in closing most of the installations during the so-called "sickly season", i.e. the rainy season. Fort Hamer was served by an "Assistant Surgeon", the title given to doctors who did not have enough time in the army to rise to the rank of surgeon, which Dr. William Strait, who has written extensively on medical history in the Sunshine State, informs me, could take as many as ten to fifteen years. Thus, when Assistant Surgeon Sloan replaced Assistant Surgeon Ballard on March 24, 1850, this did not mean that the post, and surrounding population, received less competent medical attention than a station with a full-fledged surgeon.

One of the major problems on the frontier posts was that caused by alcohol. Not only did the troops have to guard against unscrupulous whites illegally selling liquor to the Indians, but they had to also attempt to control the sale of same to their colleagues. Most everyone has read or heard of the problems suffered by U. S. Grant while stationed on the isolated California frontier, yet the same problems occurred many times in Florida. Although I have found no specific references to Fort Hamer or the other Manatee posts, one can assume that the problem was evident here as elsewhere. During the preceding war, Fort Micanopy had a severe problem with local grog shops, run by former soldiers. In the rather unique journal of Bartholomew M. Lynch, edited as the "Squaw Kissing War", this literate common soldier tells numerous tales of officers, under the influence, beating recruits for no reason and constantly covering up for each other. At Fort Stansbury, outside of Tallahassee, in 1843, Lt. Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, then of the 3rd Infantry, noted the reasons for asking the discharge of twenty-eight men of his command. His reasons included: "habitual drunkard", "intemperate and uncleanly in his habits", "An incorrigible Drunkard", "A common Drunkard, broken down in health and from that cause", and "Drunkenness and bad conduct, being one of the greatest smugglers of whiskey extant." These incidents of the life of a frontier outpost give ample example of the problems created by alcohol and the boredom of post routine.

Violence to persons, too, was found in every post on the frontier of Florida. It is inconceivable that the Manatee forts escaped this plague. Hitchcock noted that one of the reasons for his dismissal of one of his troops...
was, "for the murder of a fellow soldier". Lieutenant Colonel William Whistler reported that, in January of 1842, "Sir, Private James Steck of C Compy 7th Infty murdered his wife on the 11th Inst. for which crime he has been turned over to the civil authority." For such a crime, he continued, "I have to request that he be discharged [from] the service." The almost constant threat of violence between regular troops and the local militia forces has been well documented by James M. Denham and needs no further comment here. However, more pleasant past-times also found their way into the life enjoyed by the frontier soldiers and local inhabitants. Fishing in the river seems to have been universal wherever in Florida a post was established near water. Hunting in the woods, too, was enjoyed by many, although sometimes with additional adventure. George Ballentine recorded the following in his memoirs:

"Having so much spare time on hand, our men frequently took long rambles in the woods, especially during the fine dry weather; and on these occasions, for some time after our arrival in Tampa Bay, there was a danger of getting so utterly lost in the woods, as not to be able to find the way home; thus incurring the serious risk of dying of starvation. An occurrence of this description happened shortly after our arrival . . . A young man belonging to our company had gone out shoot one day, by himself, and in his eagerness for the sport he had gone a considerable distance away from the path, without having paid sufficient attention to the direction in which it lay, to be able to find it again . . . . After a few hours search, he was discovered about six miles from the garrison, and within a mile from the footpath. He was very nearly exhausted when found by the party, and but for measures taken by the lieutenant, it is probable that he would have soon died of sheer hunger and fatigue . . . "

These instances are well known and documented by many of the soldiers who left memoirs and letters, e.g. George McCall and Alexander Webb, and need no further elucidation.

The area of the Manatee River presented many opportunities such as those described above, however, as soon as the Scare of 1849 was over, the attention of the citizens returned to the ever present "danger" of a serious outbreak of hostilities. This was not long in coming with, in late 1855, the attack on Lieutenant Hartsuff's command in the famed banana patch of Billy Bowlegs. Once again the call came for the establishments of fortifications along the Manatee River. In early 1856, Hamlin V Snell's home was burned: "We have reliable information direct from Tampa," the Alligator Advertiser reported on March 13th, "that in the early part of last week, twelve Indian warriors attacked the premises of Hon. H. V. Snell at Sarasota, about sixty miles south of Tampa, and nine miles from the Manatee settlement. A man named Cunningham was in the house at the time the attack was made, and was killed; a negro man preparing dinner in the kitchen made his escape. Mr. Snell happened to be out, at the time, and upon discovering the smoke of his burning residence, fled to Manatee." Shortly thereafter, the home of Asa Goddard, located near the headwaters of the Manatee, and within two miles of "Capt. Addison's fort", was plundered and burned. The John Craig home, nearly one-half mile away was also robbed of its remaining contents. Less than a year later, Captain Clarke, of the 4th Artillery, found signs of fresh inhabitation on an island at the mouth of the Little Manatee River and again sent out the alarm. The war was again active on the
Manatee frontier and the call for protection came fast and loud. The result was the establishment of Fort Armstrong, Camp Smead, on the 2nd of September in 1856.\footnote{33}

Most of the Manatee settlers appear to have scrambled for the protection of the post(s). When the army threatened to leave the area, for lack of Indian signs, William H. Johnson took pen in hand and wrote to Washington to protest. "If all the troops are withdrawn from here," he noted, "the whole frontier from the Gulf to the Atlantic will be sacrificed beyond a doubt, all the settlers here have gathered together at different Posts along the frontier, have been away from their homes since January 1856, believing that the Government would move with energy against the Indians, and that they would all be permitted soon to return to their homes, but now after enduring all the hardships and inconveniences of a Camp life for Sixteen months we are told that all the troops are to be withdrawn, and we the poor sufferers to take the best care of ourselves that we can." He went on to encourage the government to allow the volunteers to remain on duty to protect the settlements until "Maj. Blake tries his experiment with Billy Bowlegs", which he doubted would succeed.\footnote{34}

Not all of the Manatee settlers agreed with Johnson's assessment of the situation and also took their pens in hand to counter his opinions.

"The undersigned having been informed that the residents at the settlement on the Manatee River are petitioning for a guard of Regular Soldiers to be stationed at that place, beg leave to state (1) That nearly, if not quite all of the said residents; are now paid by the United States for protecting themselves at home & have their horses fed also, (2) That we do not believe that there is the least apprehension of any danger from Indians on any part of said River, (3) That we are residing on much more exposed situations on, or near, said River, having no neighbors near as some having families, two having stores with goods & owning land & negroes, & hitherto no guard has been furnished us, Nor do we now consider any necessary, But if Regulars are to be sent to this River, we ask that a fair proportion of them be stationed with us in order that we may derive a fair proportion of the profits to be made out of them, as they can be of no other use on the River."\footnote{35}

This letter was signed by Joseph Atzroth and others residing at the mouth of the river at what he sarcastically called "Fort Atzroth". The fact is, Atzroth may have been closer to the truth of the matter than is generally accepted, because, most of the action was taking place in the Everglades and along the Peace River frontier, not near the settled areas of the Manatee, at least after the beginning of 1856. This debate may warrant more investigation.

The land of the Manatee River attracted many during the 1840s and 1850s despite the trouble with the Seminoles. 2nd Lieutenant F. M. Follett, 4th Artillery, described the land he saw at the time as he scouted the lands of Manatee in early 1857 as mostly pine barren with an undergrowth of saw palmetto and an occasional sawgrass pond. He mentioned only two hammocks of hardwood and notes that they were not of great extent, the largest being only one thousand yards across. The description is one of rather plain land, monotonous to a point.\footnote{36} Yet this land attracted some of the most important men in Florida during the Territorial period and continued, under Snell and Gates, to provide the leadership for southern Florida into the days prior to the outbreak of the War Between the States.
What the army missed in its reports was the obvious fertility and potential of the area for crops like sugar, tobacco and citrus. Although Braden and Gamble surely provided excellent examples of successful plantation agriculture on the Manatee, the army hardly reports anything on their efforts. Life on the frontier may have dulled their senses to the potential greatness that lay ahead for the Manatee River so preoccupied were they with just trying to survive in the new environment we know as the Manatee frontier.

ENDNOTES


4 Ibid. 48.


7 Ibid. Letter of December 11, 1840. W. W. Bliss to Major Dearborn.


11 James Covington. "The Indian Scare of 1849." Tequesta. 1961. This is the best and quickest source of information regarding these events. For Manatee County specifically, see Janet Snyder Matthews' fine work, Edge of Wilderness: A Settlement History of Manatee River and Sarasota Bay (Tulsa: Caprine Press, 1983) pp. 181-203.

12 See Post Returns. Fort Hamer. Roll 1514. The first return in this series begins in December 1849, two months after Camp Manatee was established, and it was disbanded in October of 1850. The notations along the bottom under "remarks" indicate the date that the forces at Crawford and Myakka were sent to Hamer.

13 Matthews. 199.


26 Ibid.


30 *Floridian & Journal* (Tallahassee) Saturday, March 15, 1856.

31 *Floridian & Journal* (Tallahassee) Saturday, April 26, 1856.


The September 1848 hurricane constituted merely the first in a series of events that would jeopardize Tampa’s continued existence. Of paramount importance, damage at Fort Brooke prompted the army to propose relocating the post elsewhere. Local leaders naturally battled for a continued military presence. Quickly, though, other disasters beset the community and diverted its leaders’ efforts. Nature lashed out, hurling wind, water, and pestilence against the remote village’s residents. By late 1853 Tampa’s streets would lay empty. As the quiet settled on the land, however, fortune’s wheel shifted once more. With the turn, almost unbelievably Tampa’s prospects would begin to brighten.

The Fort Brooke controversy exploded twenty-three days following the hurricane. On October 18, 1848, the secretary of war ordered a board of officers to survey Charlotte Harbor "for the site of a new post within the limits assigned for the temporary residence of the Seminoles, in place of Fort Brooke, destroyed by the recent gale at Tampa Bay." The news panicked Tampans. They snatched at any ray of hope, such as the arrival in November of an apparently sympathetic commanding officer, Major W. W. Morris. "[He] regrets the order," recorded Juliet Axtell, "and says that he does not believe that they will find as pleasant a location."

Optimistic thoughts deceived. On January 20, 1849, the officers’ board endorsed the garrison’s removal to Useppa Island. It further recommended creation of a military reserve on the Peace River. "The grant of a township immediately adjoining [Fort Brooke]," the officers wrote, "has already embarrassed the objects of the Government in keeping a Garrison here, & in the event of an Indian War—almost inevitable when the removal of the Seminoles shall be attempted—a reserve [away from Tampa] will be still more important for the efficiency of military operations." The report softened the blow by suggesting a continuing military presence at Fort Brooke. "So long as the Seminoles remain in Florida the Post & reservation at Fort Brooke should be retained as a Depot from which to supply posts or conduct operations north of the limits or between the Indians & white people."

Fate then smiled upon the beleaguered Tampans. At the time of the report, General George M. Brooke commanded the army’s southern department. Concerned about his namesake fort’s condition, he visited in late December. "It is supposed the Gen. came to see about the removal of the garrison," observed Juliet Axtell. Brooke’s tour reinforced his desire to protect the Tampa Bay post. He objected to the Useppa Island plan and urged an alternative. "It appears to me that the new fort should be somewhere on Peas Creek," he informed superiors. Brooke continued by recommending construction of "a good wagon road" between Fort Brooke and Peace River. He added a caveat. "Should there be objections to the line proposed," Brooke commented, "I am of the opinion that Fort Brooke is to be preferred to any island in Charlotte Harbor."
Major General Edmund P Gaines, another old Fort Brooke hand and now the army’s commanding general, approved his old friend’s request on February tenth.5

Brooke’s intervention bought Tampans a little time, just as money began to circulate with the return of a regular army garrison in the Mexican War’s aftermath. Tensions between the military and local citizens ran high, though, with many officers disdaining the town and its residents. "There is a small town—inhabited by the scum, well refuse of creation," typically noted Lieutenant Francis Collins. "[It] contains about fifty—or seventy-five inhabitants," he continued. "Among these, are three or four lawyers, as many preachers, three stores—half a dozen grog shops, and these live on each other." Collins concluded: "I do not believe there is a dollar per head among them. They hate the sight of an honest man."6

Town leaders faced a host of other problems, many of them arising out of frontier settlement patterns and local politics. Since 1846 Hillsborough County’s board of commissioners had run Tampa’s affairs. Increasingly, the panel had reflected the wishes of farmers and cattlemen living well east of town. After the hurricane, the rural settlers expressed concerns about protection from Indians and demanded the placement of Fort Brooke’s garrison at a point between their cattle herds and the Indian lands. This slap at Tampa’s economic underpinnings found its echo in a lack of enthusiasm among commissioners for assisting in and supporting the post-hurricane cleanup.7

Given the circumstances, some Tampans decided to grasp control of municipal affairs. At a courthouse meeting on January 18, 1849, fourteen men chose to incorporate the "Village of Tampa." The community contained, they insisted, 185 individuals. One week later voters chose a board of trustees consisting of M. G. Sikes, Thomas P. Kennedy, Jesse Carter, Culbreath A. Ramsey, and William Ross. Interestingly, most of the men were newcomers. Jesse Carter stood most prominent among them. A state militia colonel, Democratic politician, stagecoach line operator, and mail contractor, he had served repeatedly in the legislature from Alachua and Columbia Counties. Sikes, of Savannah, practiced the craft of stonemasonry. Ramsey and Ross made their livings as carpenters. Construction work ongoing in town and at the fort had attracted the three artisans to the area. A few other families—that of John T. and Nancy C. Givens offers an example—also had arrived soon after the storm to take advantage of the building boom.8

When they assumed office, the new magistrates could see the possibility of economic salvation for their town despite the possible garrison relocation. The countryside to the east continued to benefit from a small but steady immigration, and some business
could be derived by merchants from country needs. The old Charlotte Harbor Indian store had succumbed to the hurricane, and owners Thomas P. Kennedy and John Darling had received permission to reopen it on Peace River in today's Hardee County. Profits would flow to Tampa. More importantly, the Manatee River sugar plantations were just reaching a state of high development. Here, fortunes could be realized, with an extensive trade flowing through Tampa. The hurricane caused some damage, but calamity waited until after the town's incorporation to strike. Then, in February 1849 the plantations and sugar works of the Gamble family and of Josiah Gates burned. Damages ran into substantial amounts, the time required for rebuilding seemed uncertain, and Tampans suffered accordingly.⁹ For months local fortunes ebbed, as uncertainty lay heavily upon the community. Then, on July 17 a tragedy created opportunity. A small band of outlaw Indians attacked the Kennedy and Darling store at Peace River, killing two men and burning the building. The incident offered the chance for a war. Such a conflict would prompt enhanced government spending and create numerous civilian jobs. It might also result in the expulsion—peaceful or not—of Florida's remaining Indians to the West. In turn, vast cattle ranges along the Peace and Kissimmee Rivers would be opened for exploitation, thus drawing a larger civilian population and lucrative trade.¹⁰ Yet, military officials appeared little desirous of war or even much excited about the isolated attack. A few weeks later General David E. Twiggs, who had been
placed in charge of the government forces, expressed his opinion of the affair. "It is astonishing to find how many persons, in & out of Florida, are whetting their appetites, expecting to share in the plunder of another Florida affair," he declared. "I will make every effort to disappoint them." 11

At Tampa, the men of whom Twiggs spoke included four old friends and business associates—State Senator Micajah C. Brown, State Representative James T. Magbee, Thomas P. Kennedy, and John Darling—joined by militia colonel Jesse Carter. Within one week following the attack, Captain John C. Casey, the Indian agent, had discerned their thinking. "I think K. D. & B. are all anxious for a war," he recorded. 12 Meanwhile Magbee headed for Tallahassee to demand troops, while Carter and Darling circulated inflammatory accounts of the Peace River incident. The efforts achieved their goal, and the army received orders to hasten to Tampa. "Magby raised a panic," admitted Captain Casey. 13 "Your paper is so full of lies," one calm Floridian informed an editor who published the Carter and Darling letters, "there is no room for a single fact in it." 14

Bewildered and frustrated by the public relations campaign and political manipulations, many military men hardened in their attitudes toward Tampa and its residents, with potentially drastic consequences. "What the Indian panic will lead to, it is impossible to say," remarked one young officer. "There does not seem to be any call for all this stir of the military." 15 General Twiggs, in particular, found little use for the town and its inhabitants and soon determined to rid himself of the place. He chose to favor a "new Paradise," the more genteel environment at the Manatee River. "He says he intends to move all the garrison from Tampa to his point," an aide recorded at

This delightful wooden structure was the first church in Tampa. The original First Methodist Church featured fanciful detailing, steeple and tall peaked roof. Under the leadership of Reverend L. G. Lesley, "the little white church" was built in 1851 on the corner of Lafayette (Kennedy Blvd.) and Morgan Streets. It was destroyed by fire in 1898.

(Photograph courtesy of the Anthony R Pizzo Collection.)

Surveyor John Jackson, an Irish immigrant, was awarded the first contract to survey the Town of Tampa. First surveyed in 1847 under the original incorporation of the town, it was again surveyed by Jackson in 1853. Jackson would later serve as mayor of the city in 1862.

(Photograph courtesy of the Anthony P Pizzo Collection.)
Manatee on October 12, "and make it the grand depot for his future operations." The aide added, "I left at Tampa what I never hope or expect to find again in this world."\textsuperscript{16}

Mostly, the army commander's initiative met with failure. "When Gen. Twiggs was ordered here seven years ago he took a prejudice against Tampa and tried to make the Manatee (lower down the bay) the depot," explained a Fort Brooke officer in 1856. "He ordered roads to be cut, bridges to be built, store houses to be constructed and after it was all done he had to return to Tampa," the man continued. "He then tried to remove everything to Ft. Myers, but after he got down there he found the Indians had come north and it was necessary to follow them."\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{THE DIVIDENDS OF NEAR WAR}

David E. Twiggs may have failed to close Fort Brooke in 1849 and 1850, but he succeeded at keeping the peace. With help from Indian Agent Casey and the Seminole chief Billy Bowlegs, the general averted armed hostilities in return for a promise by Bowlegs to withdraw his people away from the upper Peace River and toward Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades. To secure the peace, Twiggs established a line of posts to keep white settlers away from the Indians. The most important link came at the main Peace River crossing point. Near the ruins of the old Upper Creek town of Talakchopco, he founded Fort Meade, named after Lieutenant George Cordon Meade. To service the posts the general ordered construction of a road sufficient to allow passage of heavy military wagons from Fort Brooke to Fort Meade to Fort Pierce on the Atlantic Ocean. In doing so, Twiggs inadvertently gifted Tampans with access to markets and interior settlers.\textsuperscript{18}

Other efforts funded by the army also paid off for Tampans, just as Kennedy, Darling, Brown, Magbee, and Carter had hoped. With jobs and money in plentiful supply, old and new residents hovered to take advantage. In late 1849, for example, John Jackson erected a store and opened a mercantile business at the northwest corner of Washington and Tampa Streets. C. L. Friebele pursued his general store on the northwest corner of Washington and Franklin, while Antonio Castillo prospered with his oyster house. That year, Tampans saw numerous men, many with families, traveling down sandy trails toward a new home. Among them, Robert F. Nunez arrived to clerk and keep books for Kennedy and Darling; Jose Vigil introduced candy making; and Domenico Ghira added to the port's small collection of seafarers. From Hernando County came James McKay's
friends Mitchell and Elizabeth McCarty. The McCartys constructed their own store building on Washington Street between Morgan and Marion.\textsuperscript{19}

The good times and growing population brought with them new community institutions, endowing a slightly more civilized quality to Tampa life. On March 12, 1850, twelve men met in a room above James McKay’s store to found a masonic lodge, what would become Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, F&AM. They were Joseph Moore, John M. Palmer, Martin Cunningham, Michael L. Shannahan, Sherod B. McGuire, Thomas James Cook, Jesse Carter, Daniel P. Myers, John H. Myers, Dr. John W. Roberts, Benjamin F. Drew, and James T. Magbee. A lodge of the International Order of Odd Fellows followed on April 21 at the behest of James McKay, Micajah C. Brown, William G. Ferris, Magbee, and Lawrence Ryan. Joining them were Christopher Q. Crawford, Claudius L. Graves, John Darling, and Darwin A. Branch.\textsuperscript{20}

The fraternal lodges may have enjoyed more enthusiastic support in the community in 1850 than did organized religion. The Methodist society had been meeting since 1846. Its struggle to survive had turned the corner when the circuit riding minister Leroy G. Lesley took up the leadership reins shortly after the 1848 hurricane. The congregation met in private homes or else at the courthouse, since it lacked a proper church building. In fact, the closest church stood on the north side of the Alafia River, constructed in 1850 by Benjamin F. Moody. Father Edmund Aubril, CPM, celebrated Tampa’s first known Roman Catholic mass later the same year. The ritual occurred at the John Jackson family home, likely with Collar family members and their relations also in attendance.\textsuperscript{21}

The local governments, buoyed by the renewed prosperity, also acted to enhance Tampa life. The county commission ordered courthouse repairs and caused the erection of a jail nearby. The panel directed that the compound be planted with "China Tree" seeds "in regular rows." The officials saw to the needs of the departed, as well. On April 1 they dedicated a tract of land north of Harrison Street and east of Morgan as a public cemetery. In subsequent years Tampans would bestow upon the cemetery the name Oaklawn. Continued access to the Hillsborough River’s west bank had been guaranteed a few months earlier when Benjamin Hagler received permission to conduct the ferry established years before by Thomas Piper, now deceased. About the same time, the county allowed W. P. Wilson to reopen his courthouse school, while admonishing the teacher to find private

\textit{Perry G. Wall}

(Courtesy of J. Edgar Wall, III)
quarters by April 1850. The municipal government complemented the county improvements by opening a municipal market at Lafayette Street where it touched the river. Finally, a new town survey by John Jackson reached completion. When accepted on February 4, the "new map of the Town of Tampa" permitted renewed land sales and clearer understanding of property lines.22

Private initiative resulted in what may have been the most significant innovation at Tampa in 1850. Immediately following the hurricane two years earlier, James McKay had purchased a schooner, which he named the Sarah Matilda after his wife. He then commenced a shipping business between Tampa, Mobile, and New Orleans. His ship docked at the military wharf located at the Hillsborough River’s mouth. "This was the only vessel that was being used commercially for this port," recalled James McKay, Jr. In 1850, the captain bought another ship, the Emma, to link Tampa with Fort Myers. To service his small fleet, he constructed a private wharf at the foot of Washington Street. Pens located between the two wharfs held cattle destined for shipment to Key West. The town no longer depended upon Fort Brooke for access to water-borne commerce.23

The needs and wants of interior settlers absorbed the goods brought into the port of Tampa by James McKay’s schooners. With the withdrawal of the Indians deeper into the southern peninsula, pioneers began to press the frontier eastward into present-day Polk County where unspoiled cattle ranges abounded. Behind them, new arrivals took up homesteads and farms. As the number of residents grew, the character of those nearest to Tampa also changed. The earlier pioneers, many of them Armed Occupation Act claimants, had tended to be poor. That was not true of the latecomers. "The Occupationists are beginning now to give way to a better class and I hear almost every day of some one of them selling out," explained John Darling.24

A growing rural population meant bigger volume for Tampa merchants, although the total trade remained small in the early 1850s. The slow recovery of the Manatee sugar output after the 1849 fires rated as a major factor in the equation. This, when coupled with the growing interior population, helped to divert the attention of Tampans away from the Manatee River and toward the east and that region’s frontier products. "Cattle are the principal article of export with a limited market, some sugar, a very little sea island cotton, less tobacco,
and a few Hides, make up the list," John Darling observed, "still business steadily increases showing healthy progress of the country, and although we have no money now, we live on hope and look for better times ahead."25

Tampa businessmen labored with other handicaps in 1850. A principal one arose out of the difficulty of obtaining clear title to lands close to the town. The United States government in 1848 had reduced the Fort Brooke reservation to the post quarters and their enclosures, in good part the area lying south of Whiting Street. The authorities also donated 160 acres of land above Whiting Street for the town of Tampa. The remainder of the former sixteen-mile-square reserve could not be sold, however. The law required that it first be surveyed.26

Local and national events postponed action. "In 1849 a Petition from the inhabitants received a favorable hearing at the General Land Office and an order was issued to the Surveyor General of Florida to cause the relinquished Reservation to be surveyed," recounted one Tampan in 1851, "but about that time the Indians broke out, and the order was recalled." Then, the nation lurched into crisis over the question of slavery in territories gained from the Mexican War. "In 1850 another Petition was forwarded for the same object; but ... the government were too much engaged with the subject of slavery to attend to it," the resident added. Yet another appeal issued forth in 1851, but several years would pass before the government acted.27

SEASONS OF TROUBLE

Tampa's brief honeymoon with prosperity ended suddenly by the fall of 1850. The Indian crisis had subsided, and the troops quickly went on their way to other assignments. Those who remained in southwest Florida grouped at Fort Meade and Fort Myers. By November Tampa's post stood almost empty. "There are few officers left here," Indian Agent John C. Casey informed a friend. "Occasionally, I visit Caloosa Hatchee and they are now building a House for me there (at Fort Myers)," the captain continued, "when I shall move down and take up my residence."28 By early the following year only a caretaker stood watch.29

Thereafter, small detachments served at Fort Brooke from time to time, until army needs required a slightly enhanced force in 1853. No one remained in the military's hierarchy to protect the facility once General George M. Brooke died on March 9, 1851. Colonel John H. Winder, commanding Florida troops from Fort Myers in January 1852, ordered Fort Brooke abandoned in favor of a new position on the Peace River. Tampans pleaded with Winder's superior David E. Twiggs, who reluctantly countermanded the directive. A few months later, General Thomas Childs assumed command at Fort Brooke and renewed Winder's authority to build at Peace River. Tampans feared the military's stay in their town had about ended.30

Given their history, Tampans not surprisingly renewed their campaign for Indian removal, hoping to recapture military expenditures while opening new lands for settlement. They achieved a victory in January 1851 when the Florida legislature called for action and authorized a regiment of mounted volunteers to accomplish the task. Thereafter followed two years of pressure from Florida upon the federal government, convoluted negotiations, and sordid incidents of violence against Indians. On one such occasion in mid-1851, three captives held in the Tampa jail were found
hanged to death. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis lost his patience with the whole matter by December 1853. He reinstated Captain Casey’s Indian agent authority and more-humane approach but warned that he was ready to use force.\(^{31}\)

As the Indian-related turmoil simmered and seethed after 1850, Tampans strove to make the best of their situation. James McKay once again led in initiative. In cooperation with the New York firm of Blanchard and Fitch, he attempted to revive the lumbering business originally envisioned by the Hackley family in 1824. Over the years other men had sought to exploit area forests on a limited basis, but they usually ran afoul of agents protecting government-owned resources, especially live oak groves whose timbers were needed by the wooden navy. The Blanchard firm, for example, had been prosecuted in 1843. Six to seven years later, though, the government’s need for timber at Fort Brooke and on the Manatee River prompted agents to look the other way as the entrepreneurs stripped public lands on the upper Hillsborough River.\(^{32}\)

Once commenced, the lumbering operations grew at a modest pace. A small saw mill set up by Blanchard and Fitch cut cedar logs into boards, which James McKay transported in his ships. The firm then milled the cedar into pencils. In June 1851 McKay expanded the operation by erecting a larger steam saw mill on the Hillsborough River’s banks north of town at what residents one century later would call Waterworks Park. He perceived a local need for construction lumber. Previously, most area inhabitants had settled for log cabins or else imported lumber from Mobile. Now, those who could afford to pay could enjoy plank-board homes. By-products also found a local use. "Sawdust from this mill was placed on the municipal streets to assist teams in hauling," recalled James McKay, Jr.\(^{33}\)
Sad to say from the standpoint of Tampa's economy, the timber industry quickly reached arbitrary limits. The state was gaining ownership of large tracts of federal land with a great deal more to come. It naturally wanted to husband its resources, preserving property values and potentials. To facilitate these goals, the legislature created a board of internal improvements. In May 1851, Governor Thomas Brown designated John Darling as south Florida's board member. Darling thereupon became the state's eyes and ears in the region. As he informed the governor, "In regard to Depredations on the state lands, I shall consider it my duty to notice all that comes to my knowledge." The agent first targeted Blanchard and Fitch, doubtlessly causing hard feelings with McKay and forcing the timbermen to exercise a high degree of caution when it came to cutting trees. Still, by 1851 lumbering had emerged as a viable business at Tampa and would remain its principal industry for the next three decades.

A second industry also had shown modest promise. Tampa's warm climate and beautiful vistas had begun to attract a few winter visitors anxious about health problems, especially ones associated with the throat and lungs. Clement Claiborne Clay, scion of a prominent Alabama family, stayed over in March 1851 for that reason. At first he thought poorly of the place. "It is badly improved & scattered over a white sandy plain & would be intolerably hot if it was not almost constantly farmed by the balmy & soft Gulf breeze," he recorded. Clay overcame his reservations and remained for several weeks, living at a boarding house operated by Jesse Carter. There he discovered others similarly situated. "There are some twenty invalids, besides many who are making this their homes on account of their diseased lungs," he informed his father. The sojourn resulted happily for Clay. Within days he would write: "My throat is certainly getting well, for my cough has almost ceased. — I weigh 139 lbs., without my coat & am hearty as a plowman." And so, Tampa's winter tourism industry had come into being.

With the military cutbacks, however, Tampa's economy faltered despite a growing interior population, lumbering, and winter tourists. Through 1851 and into 1852, it eased slowly into the doldrums. "Tampa is a poor village, without any object of interest save the Indian mounds & old barracks," Clay insisted. The Methodist minister Richard M. Tydings concurred, remembering sand as the principal characteristic of the "small village." He recalled, "There were no sidewalks then, and the sand was so deep that we young men would invite the girls to go wadeing, as anything like graceful walking was impossible." The economic situation deteriorated further in 1852 when Thomas P. Kennedy opened a store at Fort Alafia, twenty-five miles east and a little south of town. Interior settlers now could trade and receive mail closer to their homes, minimizing the need for travel into Tampa.

With conditions so depressed it is little wonder that religion received greater attention during the period. On April 8, 1851, the county deeded to Leroy 0. Lesley, Franklin Branch, William B. Hooker, Alderman Carlton, and C. A. Ramsey as trustees a lot on the northeast corner of Lafayette (now Kennedy) and Morgan Streets for use by the Methodist church. John H. Whidden had bequeathed $00 in 1848 for the structure, and the funds recently had become available for use. The Reverend Tydings solicited an additional $00 and launched construction. The congregation's nineteen white members celebrated its dedication in 1852 or, possibly, early 1853. "Plain and sturdy of
line, it was no picture of ecclesiastical grandure," described historian Theodore Lesley. "Hand-hewn logs were its sill and frame works," he continued. "Characteristic of the time the clap-board siding ran the long way, up and down, giving the building from the outside a taller appearance than it actually had." Lesley added: "The windows were square and paneled in glass."\(^{40}\)

Other community institutions also sought permanent homes. The county's clerk of court Martin Cunningham arranged in late 1852 for the gift of a lot for a Baptist church. It lay on the southwest corner of Tampa and Twiggs Streets. Cunningham's effort met with frustration at the time, since not enough Baptists yet lived in the town. The fraternal orders enjoyed greater success. The Masons and the Odd Fellows joined together to construct a two-story frame building on the northeast corner of Franklin and Whiting Streets. It cost the breathtaking sum of $2,000. The lodges met on the upper floor while the local school held classes below.\(^{41}\)

Readers should not envy the comfort or support Tampans drew from the church or the fraternal lodges, for hard times were about to turn tragic and the local people would need all the comfort and support that they could get. The first blow came in September 1852. "Tampa Bay and the surrounding country was visited by a terrible gale on the 11th instant, which carried away all the wharves at Tampa," one report declared, "and caused considerable damage to the sugar crops and orange groves in the adjacent settlements."\(^{42}\) The winds hammered so fiercely and the waters rose so high that they drove a schooner 200 feet eastward from the river into the woods. Ever ready to capitalize on opportunity, James McKay purchased the vessel from W. G. Ferris, dug a canal from the river, and floated the ship back to deep water.\(^{43}\)

The storm struck a terrible blow to an already weakened Tampa. Within one month residents gathered at the courthouse to admit defeat. On October 10 they agreed to dissolve their town government. Its possessions consisted of three small record books, one market house, some dog chains, three candlesticks, one sand box, and a small table. The county accepted the property as it took over control of village affairs. It assumed, as well, the town's debt of $42.50.\(^{44}\)

One year following the hurricane, a second tragedy befell the community with calamitous results. A government steamer arriving from New Orleans deposited mosquitoes infected with yellow fever at Fort Brooke. Tragically, General Thomas Chills hesitated to inform Tampans that soldiers had fallen ill until "the Doctor can pronounce upon their cases as to whether they will worsen."\(^{45}\) On behalf of his fellow citizens, on September 21, 1853, Jesse Carter attempted to discover the truth. "It is reported in town that yellow fever has appeared in the Garrison—that there has been one, or more, deaths & several cases now in the Hospital," he informed Chills. "You will confer a favor by informing me whether there be any foundation for such reports."\(^{46}\) Late in the day, the general's adjutant finally acknowledged the fact. "The General directs me to state that yellow fever is amongst the troops," he responded to Carter.\(^{47}\)

There followed months of suffering and death, compounded by ignorance of the disease's origins. The McKay family emerged as a scapegoat to some because they spread their mill's sawdust on the town's streets. "When the yellow fever appeared in town
many of the citizens claimed it was from decayed sawdust," recalled James McKay, Jr., "and the practice was stopped."48 Fears leapt out of control when General Chills died in October, followed by two of his three fellow officers. "The yellow fever is bad at Tampa," William R. Hackley of Key West noted in his diary on October 26, "and the place is deserted for the pine woods."49

In November, authorities relocated the headquarters of United States forces in Florida with its military band to Fort Meade. Only in December would the terror begin to ease.50

The death toll ran extremely high for the village and tiny garrison, and it would have soared higher had not some local residents displayed tremendous courage. Perhaps fifty persons caught the fever all told, with twenty-three soldiers and civilians succumbing. "Of the citizens, nine resided in the town, and two in the country, from two to three miles out," explained the military physician. "Nearly all who died with this disease were comparatively strangers," he continued, "but two of those who died where thoroughly acclimated."51 John Darling, who headed the town's board of health, stood out as a hero. So, too, did Methodist ministers George W. Pratt and Joseph J. Sealey. Both survived, although Pratt lost his little daughter. When he passed away over thirty years afterward, memories of Sealey's dedication survived him. "We shall never forget the yellow fever scourge of 1853, in Tampa," observed one editor, "when this man of God never ceased, day nor night, to visit and nurse the sick."52

Fortunately, in January 1854 Tampans could look out of the abyss and see a ray of hope. Unlike the desperate times they had confronted in the past, they now enjoyed concrete prospects for growth and prosperity. A wave of momentum already had begun to rock their community by 1853 that eventually would prove to be the catalyst for its dynamic growth. A great question would remain. Would that growth happen now or would it happen later?

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Tampa At The Turn Of The Century: 1899

Leland M. Hawes, Jr.

One hundred years ago in Tampa, nobody seemed excited about the impending turn of the century. In fact, the entire country made little fuss that December of 899, because everyone seemed convinced that the 20th Century wouldn’t start until Jan. 1, 1901.

In fact, Jan. 1, 1900, was just another New Year's Day in Tampa. Fireworks kept the town jumpy and agitated, while New Year's Eve socials at Ballast Point and in Ybor City swung into the wee hours of the morning.

The Outlook, a national weekly magazine, reflected prevailing opinion when it editorialized: "There was no year naught. The year 1 was the first year of the first century. The year 101 was the first year of the second century. And the year 1901 will be the first year of the 20th Century."

Apparently Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany was the sole national leader who decreed that his court and his army would mark the new century on Jan. 1, 1900. All others, including U.S. President William McKinley, were willing to wait until 1901.

The year 1899 had stirred plenty of events and emotions in Tampa, whose population was just pushing towards the 15,000 figure. In many ways, it reflected a letdown from the stresses of the Cuban invasion of 1898, when some 60,000 troops swarmed into an ill-prepared town to board ships for an ill-prepared war.

Merchants looked back wistfully on the cash windfalls in a boomtown atmosphere, but were grateful to avoid the wilder side of the wartime "invasion" - a mule stampede, a race riot and an outbreak of typhoid fever.

But 1899 proved to be a landmark year also. Among the major developments that occurred in Tampa that year:

• Railroad tycoon Henry Bradley Plant died in June. His South Florida railroad had put Tampa on the map as its terminus in 1884 and brought construction of the giant Tampa Bay Hotel in 1891 as a luxury destination for northern vacationers.

• An effort by cigar manufacturers to introduce weight scales into Tampa's factories brought the first total industry shutdown. Workers won in the strike/lockout, but their success was short-lived.

• A "cineograph" of the Jeffries-Fitzsimmons prize fight gave Tampans a taste of crude film action on a screen.

• Three institutions had their beginnings: Tampa Electric Company which replaced the Consumers Electric Utility; Jesuit High School, then known as Jesuit College; and The Home, originally called The Old People's Home.

The Morning Tribune paid tribute to Plant as "Florida's firmest friend." Plant, who was 79, died at his home on Fifth Avenue in New York City. His death would set off a years-long legal battle over his will. Eventually it would result in the sale of the Tampa Bay Hotel to the City of Tampa. (Its distinctive minarets became symbolic of the city. Today it is Plant Hall of the University of Tampa and houses the Henry B. Plant Museum.)
Plant’s steamships were an important link in enabling Cuban cigar workers to travel cheaply between Tampa and Havana. After Cuba’s "liberation" from Spanish rule, several thousand Cubans left Tampa for their native island. Finding conditions there still unsettled and jobs scarce in the aftermath of the war, many came back to the immigrant community of Ybor City.

But Ybor City was stirring with ferment, too. Labor issues were rising to the fore, provoked by an effort of the manufacturers to allot certain amounts of tobacco to each cigar maker for the production of his or her hand-rolled cigars. Traditionally, the cigar filler had never been weighed, but now the owners were distributing scales to regularize the output.

Workers viewed the move as questioning their integrity. The manufacturers’ effort "galvanized an unorganized Ybor City work force into a unified front," historian Gary Mormino wrote in The Florida Historical Quarterly. Factory lockouts provoked as many as 10 meetings a day among the workers, vowing not to give in.

But the shutdown cost Tampa, basically a one-industry town, between $60,000 to $70,000 a week in lost wages. Store owners believed unfriendly to the workers’ cause found themselves being boycotted. "Wholesale paralysis” of the industry, as the Tribune characterized it, proved painful to the entire community.

Tampa was a town of approximately 14,000 when this photograph of Franklin Street was taken just before the turn of the century. Although electric lines and trolley tracks are visible, horse-drawn wagons and dirt streets are evident.

(Photograph courtesy of the Special Collections, USF Library.)
On Aug. 14, an abrupt cave-in by the owners brought victory for the workers. Not only were the weight scales removed, but the workers won the right to work under a "general committee" - in essence, a local union.

Within weeks, 120 factories were turning out cigars by the hundreds of thousands again. But even as the cigar makers relished their triumph, the nature of the industry was changing. By September 1899, a Cigar Trust was being formed, enveloping the major factories in a massive cartel.

As Mormino pointed out, the weight strike of 1899 was the last one ever won by the cigar makers of Tampa.

A Labor Day parade brought a crowd of 3,000 to watch cigar makers and their families parade through Tampa. A Tribune writer noted the presence on a key float of "a very dark brunette" surrounded by young Cuban girls attired in bright colors. A legend on the float read, "Labor Knows No Color, Creed or Class."

But color and class issues cropped up periodically in 1899. A black newspaperman, M. J. Christopher, began publishing a newspaper called the Labor Union Recorder, taking potshots at the Tampa establishment, the police in particular.

Christopher used terms such as "overgrown tramps" and "sneaking curs" to attack policemen involved in a case of alleged brutality of a black woman who refused a vaccination in a smallpox scare.

In a confrontation with several policemen in a Polk Street restaurant, Christopher was beaten about the head and shot fatally. At the funeral, more than 5,000 people marched to protest his death.

A near-lynching was avoided in another case in which an Italian, Giuseppe Licata, was accused of killing a Pasco county man in a dispute over a cow. A posse of farmers sought to extract Licata from the Hillsborough county jail, but without success. Licata did go to trial later in the year and was found innocent.

A Republican editor who lived in a rural Hillsborough community called Peck ran up against "unreconstructed" Southern sentiments that left him painfully humiliated. W.C. Crum, postmaster in the area near today's Harney Road, had the temerity to employ a black man to assist him in the post office. He thus became a victim of what was then called a "whitecapping."

On a Monday night in August, Crum was accosted by a dozen masked men wielding shotguns and revolvers. According to his account, they dragged him from his horse, tied his hands and legs, stripped him, beat his back "almost to a jelly," poured carbolic acid and tar on his wounds, then lashed him with a whip. Crum's whiskers were sheared from one side of his face.

Although twelve defendants later stood trial in federal court, a jury turned them loose.

Another form of "Tampa justice" was dispensed by Police Court Judge C.C. Whitaker. After finding two youths guilty of stealing from a riverfront boat, he decided against sending them to jail. Instead, Whitaker consulted the parents of the youths and settled on an alternative: whipping the teenagers with rawhide. "The justice administered the medicine on the spot," the Tribune reported.

Chinese laundymen had their legal problems in Tampa that year, as well. A license of $25 was assessed by the city
councilmen, aimed specifically at the Chinese. G.A. Hanson spoke in their behalf, calling it an unjust, inequitable tax. Hanson cited a federal court ruling that legislation could not be "enforced against Chinamen simply because they were Chinamen."

But several councilmen insisted the laundrymen were not desirable citizens, for they sent money back to their homeland. The "critics" view prevailed, and the license fee continued on the books.

Cigarette smokers were relieved when a Jacksonville judge knocked down a law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of the "coffin-tacks," as they were called by opponents. The American Tobacco Co. sent in its legal artillery to attack the law which had been passed by the legislature in the spring.

The "Duke" brand of cigarettes was promptly offered for sale in two Tampa saloons, following the ruling. Other offbeat events attracted the attention of Tampa residents in 1899.

One of those rarities in Florida, a snow storm, hit town in mid-February. Although the Tribune gave no details of how long the snow stood on the ground, it did mention a three-hour snowfall on a day when the

The V. M. Ybor cigar factory was one of dozens of factories throughout Ybor City and West Tampa. The cigar industry provided employment for thousands of men and women and economic capital to spur Tampa's growth as it entered the new century.

(Photograph courtesy Special Collections, USF Library.)
Ballast Point was a favorite destination of Tampa residents in the 1890s and could be easily reached by the street car line which ran along the Bayshore. This fanciful scene of the Ballast Point Casino includes rowers enjoying the bay.

(Photograph courtesy Special Collections, USF Library.)

Roland A. Wilson in uniform in a standard studio portrait taken in 1899. He would soon meet and begin courting Miss Martha Leiman of Tampa.

(Photo. courtesy of Roland A. Wilson III.)
temperature ranged from 28 degrees to 32 degrees.

Other area temperature lows reported: Fort Meade, 20; Wauchula 21; Ellenton 21; Seffner 26; Bartow 26; Gainesville 18; Jacksonville 10. "Florida Is Hit Hard," a Tribune headline reported.

Among those hit hardest was former Mayor Myron Gillett, who lost 10,000 budded orange and grapefruit trees he was preparing to send to Cuba. An early account had them frozen to the ground.

Gillett wasn't the only Tampa businessman hoping to cash in on the American occupation of Cuba. A Tribune correspondent told of well-known local figures in Havana and in other Cuban cities in the aftermath of the war.

Perry G. Wall of the Knight and Wall hardware firm had set up a Havana branch of the store, managed by John Harllee. A real estate man, Leon J. Canova, was seeking colonists from the U.S. to grow oranges on tracts in the island nation. And H.J. Cooper, formerly editor of a Tampa newspaper, had become postmaster of Santiago, Cuba.

Another offshoot of the Spanish-American War had an ironic twist. More than a year after the end of hostilities in Cuba, coastal artillerymen began arriving in Tampa to take over fortifications just constructed on Egmont Key, at the mouth of Tampa Bay. Fort Dade would continue as an active military installation into the 1920s.

December brought a bicycle race to Tampa, with Fred Ferman, founder of the automobile firm of the same name, as starter. First prize - a medal valued at $30 - went to O.J. Campen, who pedaled 10 miles in 23 minutes.

Another name-in-the-news that would become well known in the future was 13-year-old David Paul Davis, son of the engineer aboard the bay steamer Manatee. It seems young Davis took over the engine room when he heard the "go ahead" gong sound. His father was still ashore.

But the Manatee returned to the wharf to pick up its regular engineer as well as some excursionists left behind. The son's accomplishment in running the steamer for a while apparently went unpunished. He later gained fame as the developer of Davis Islands, dredged from Hillsborough Bay in 1924-25.

In addition to what may have been its first movie, Tampa saw another spectacle which the Tribune headlined as a "Revolting Exhibition." An admission of 25 cents was charged to witness a fight to the death between a wildcat and a bulldog. "The death of the feline ended the conflict," a correspondent wrote. More than 200 people watched the event Christmas afternoon.

Amusement of another nature was in prospect with the sale of Sulphur Springs by the Krause family to Dr. J.H. Mills for $10,000. The transaction involved 93 acres of land and was already considered a resort destination for town residents.

As 1899 drew to an end, the Tribune ran an editorial predicting: "The New Year, which dawns tomorrow, promises to be a great year for Tampa - a year of accelerated growth, of increased population, of new enterprises, of valuable developments of natural advantages."
Roland A. Wilson and his new bride, Martha Leiman of Tampa, are shown in their formal wedding portrait taken in 1901 at the Burgert studio in Ybor City.

(Photograph courtesy Roland A. Wilson III.)
It went on to say: "The purpose of every citizen of Tampa, in the new era which 1900 will introduce, should be to work with a determined purpose for the general good of the city. All differences that militate against progress should be amicably adjusted...

"On Jan. 1, 1901, the first day of the 20th Century, Tampa should be a larger city and a greater city. It will be, if the people do their part."

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The author wishes to express his thanks to Julius J. Cordon, whose index of events in the year 1899, as found in *The Tampa Weekly Tribune*, made the writing of this article immeasurably easier.

Two Men With Tampa Ties Fought 'The Filipino Insurrection' As The Twentieth Century Began

Although the war with Spain had resulted in quick takeovers of Cuba and Puerto Rico in 1898, the United States' armed forces still had plenty of action going on in the Philippines in 1899.

"The Filipino Insurrection" had turned into Vietnam-like guerrilla warfare, with native troops resisting American occupation forces. Although the Spaniards were gone, the Filipinos were not eager to submit to a different form of outside domination.

U.S. Regular Army troops who had fought in Cuba were now seeking to suppress the rebellion that broke out in the strategic islands of the far Pacific.

At least one young Tampa woman was awaiting the return of an Army sweetheart from the Philippines.

Martha Leiman had met South Carolinian Roland A. Wilson when he was stationed in Tampa Heights, preparing to take part in the invasion of Cuba. A sergeant in Company B of the Fourth Infantry, Wilson happened by the Leiman home on Seventh Avenue one day.

Grandson Roland A. Wilson III passes on the family account that the Leimans had baked cakes and pies for the troops, doing their "patriotic bit" by placing treats on their front porch railing.

Sergeant Wilson accepted the Leiman family hospitality, was invited in for a visit and met young Martha. From that first visit, "he knew then he was going to marry her," the grandson related.

"He came back whenever he could," Wilson said, "and they started writing letters."

The courtship continued after the Army sergeant returned from Cuba, then proceeded to the Philippines. Not until 1901 did he return for his discharge at the Presidio in San Francisco. The couple were married April 23, 1901, in the Leiman family home in Tampa.

Wilson later joined his father-in-law in a firm manufacturing cigar boxes out of cedar wood. At that time it was owned by New Yorker William Wicke, and Roland Wilson joined Henry Leiman in buying the company. The Tampa Box Co. became locally owned, the predominant source supplying boxes to Tampa's cigar industry when it was at its peak.
The family is now in its fourth generation in Tampa.

Another Regular Army man with Tampa ties had also gone to Cuba in 1898, then reenlisted for the campaign in the Philippines. David Fagen was a 23-year-old black man, described as five feet six inches tall and with a curved scar on his face. A resident of Tampa, he had enlisted in the 24th Infantry, a black regiment in the Army, when the unit was readying for departure from Port Tampa City.

After the Cuban campaign, Fagen was discharged in the cutback to peacetime strength, but he somehow reenlisted at Fort McPherson, Ga., in February 1899.

Four months later, Fagen and his regiment sailed for Manila. By the fall of 1899 his unit was engaged in a major campaign near Mount Arayat, an extinct volcano in central Luzon.

In an article in the Pacific Historical Review, Michael C. Robinson and Frank N. Schubert tell of the Tampa man’s growing bitterness with the Army and his difficulties with his superiors. He unsuccessfully sought transfers to other units.

November 17, 1899, Corporal David Fagen left his company and slipped off into the jungle with a Filipino insurrecto officer. He basically changed sides - joining the native forces. According to the authors, "... the audacity and vigor with which [Fagen] led insurrectos over the next two years illustrates the depth of his commitment to the Filipino cause."

Fagen was promoted from lieutenant to captain in the Filipino insurgents, gaining a reputation for cunning and skill as a guerrilla. Stories of his activities in at least eight clashes with American troops appeared in the New York Times.

By the spring of 1901, the Filipino cause began to dwindle, and "Fagen’s superiors had begun to give themselves up," the Pacific Historical Review writers assert. There were reports Fagen and two other deserters asked through intermediaries if they might leave the islands if they surrendered.

But U. S. officials made it plain Fagen would be court-martialed and probably executed. They posted a reward for "Fagen, dead or alive," and hunted him like "a bandit."

On Dec. 5, 1901, a Filipino hunter brought in a sack which contained the "slightly decomposed head of a Negro" which he said was Fagen’s. Along with the head were weapons, clothing, Fagen’s commission, and the West Point class ring of a former captive of Fagen’s.

The hunter claimed Fagen’s head had been severed with a bolo in a melee. But there were doubts as to the identity of the head, and searches continued. The authors raise the possibility that Fagen and his Filipino wife may have spent the years to come "in the dense, overgrown back country" of the Philippines.

At any rate, the one-time Tampa man never came home.

- Leland M. Haves, Jr.
"The most well utilized building... in the United States:"
CITRUS PARK COLORED SCHOOL

Geoffrey Mohlman

Born during the height of Jim Crow, inadequately funded, and ignored by the school system, Citrus Park 13 Colored School persevered through the sheer determination and love of its African American founders. Situated in northwest Hillsborough County, the school's historical roots extend back to the beginning of the 20th Century. Originally housed in a Methodist church located on Mr. Tony Lewis' -- a locally prominent African American -- property at 9201 Gunn Highway, the church and community organized and supervised the school. A few years later the church was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. By 1921, Mrs. Barbara Allen -- an influential African American property holder in Citrus Park -- donated land to the Hillsborough County School Board for the purpose of erecting a school. In 1924, Rev. Charlie Walker went to the Hillsborough County School Board requesting help in establishing a new school. The school board eventually donated materials, and local citizens, through sweat and labor, constructed Citrus Park Colored School in 1926 on the land donated by Mrs. Allen.

Miss Leona Allen, daughter of Barbara Allen, taught the first class. Teaching grades one through five, Miss Allen had 13 children during her first year. After serving one term, Miss Allen was replaced by Early Ernestine Ballard. Following in the footsteps of Miss Ballard, Eunice Roundtree, Edith Allen Footman, Ruby Clark Smith, Vernease Hadley, and Corene Prince-Hardy all taught at the one room school house. Finally, in 1934, Mrs. Eliza Davis began teaching and remained at Citrus Park until the school was shut down in 1948.

Originally all wood, the one room school house was painted red, had four windows, one door, and raised off the ground on wood foundation piers. Shortly after the school opened, Mr. Tony Lewis, Mr. Dave Allen, Rev. Charlie Walker and others expanded the building, through materials donated by the Black community, adding on to the back and reconstructing the front porch. Additionally, they supplanted the wood piers with concrete block and replaced the wood floor of the building with concrete (Figure 1). The school remained this way with no more than 30 students at any one time until its closure. On October 13, 1949, the school and the property were officially deeded to Harry Lewis, James Walker, Barbara Robinson, Mable Walker, and Florence Bruce in trust of Mount Pleasant African Methodist Episcopal Church. Henceforth, the school building has served the Mt. Pleasant AME Church.

Unlike the original parochial school, the Hillsborough County School Board operated the Citrus Park Colored School. However, Mt. Pleasant AME held services on Sunday in the school building until the 1950s. Because of the multiple uses of the building, it is impossible to separate the school and the church’s history. Many of the people involved in building the school and keeping it operating were members of Mt. Pleasant AME. Last names including Allen, Walker, and Lewis grace the corner stone of the church erected in the 1950s on the same property, next to the school building. Along
Survey map of T27R17 S and E – Citrus Park area surveyed in April 1846 and approved February 8, 1847.
with Mt. Pleasant AME, a Baptist church also used the school building on Sundays. Mt. Pleasant worshiped in the church two Sundays of the month, while the Baptist worshiped in the church during the other two Sundays.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Citrus Park is located in the northwest corner of Hillsborough County, six miles south of the Pasco County line. Citrus farmers and/or cattle raisers have lived in the Citrus Park area from the mid-19th century, including such family names as Gant, Lynn, McCarty, Mobley, Moody, and Spivey. William L. Mobley, along with his family and slaves, moved from North Carolina to the Florida Gulf Coast in 1860. Fearing the possible escape of his slaves, Mobley resettled in the Citrus Park area shortly thereafter. Pioneer families like Mobley were sparsely settled in northeast Hillsborough County throughout the 1880s.5

Things changed, however, when W.P. Lutz, a railroad engineer and an Odessa sawmill owner, engineered the Tampa Gulf Coast Railway (aka, the Peavine) which connected Odessa to the Tampa Northern Railroad in 1909. Sawmills began laying narrow-gauge tracks throughout the region in 1910 to have access to virgin timber lands. By 1915, the Tampa & Gulf Coast Railway scheduled three daily round trips between Tarpon Junction, located at present day Wilsky Boulevard and Linebaugh Avenue, and Tarpon Springs. Residents continued to hear train whistles until the 1960s when tracks and routes were abandoned. Coupled with the railroads, in 1924 the county paved 15 miles of John T. Gunn Highway from Waters Avenue north to the county line. Yet, for years most of the rural roads were little more than tire tracks in sand.6

Enough White families lived in the area to establish Gant School on July 14, 1893. N.M. Moody served as supervisor. The following year F.H. Lynn became supervisor. Key Stone Park School was another early school in existence by 1883. While located in another community, Key Stone Park School may have drawn upon children in the Citrus Park area before the creation of Gant School. Citrus Park received another school in 1911 at 7700 South Gunn Highway, located west of the present day Ehrlich Road/Gunn Highway interchange. A few years later, Key Stone Park School was closed and many of the students were transferred to the Citrus Park School (not to be confused with the Citrus Park Colored School). The school became a focal point for the White community, where local residents joined the PTA, held dinners and bake sales, and learned how to can vegetables.7

Sawmills and turpentine stills dominated northwest Hillsborough County and southwest Pasco County shortly after the turn of the century. Gulf Pine Lumber Company bought 50,000 acres in 1907 only to sell it two years later to bowling Lumber Company. Dowling and the Lyon Lumber Company erected sawmills, both in Pasco County near Odessa, employing several hundred men to cut trees and operate the mills. To ensure access to trees, the mills constructed narrow-gauge rail lines throughout the region. Not only supplying jobs to recent immigrants and pioneer families, the sawmills also provided lumber for the new homes, schools, and business being erected. The lumber industry prospered until the 1920s by which time they had over-exploited the area’s forest resources. In 1925, both mills burned to the ground, foreshadowing the bust of the Florida land boom and the Great Depression.8
Figure 2: 1913 Plat of Citrus Park – Plat Book 1, page 13-1, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Hillsborough County, Tampa, Fl
Trains, sawmills, and turpentine opened up the Citrus Park region for investment. However, not until the birth of the 20th century did businesses move into the territory. C.E. Thomas, D.P. Robertson, and F. Ben Davis -- all Chicago, Illinois, residents -- incorporated the North Tampa Land Company on September 9, 1911, with its main office in Tampa. The company platted Citrus Park on September 30, 1913, with the Tampa & Gulf Coast Railroad (T&GC) running through the heart of the plat (Figure 2). The area surrounding the new plat consisted of lakes, railroad tracks, a lone store that doubled as a rail stop, turpentine stills, and lumber yards. Charles H. Brown, a T&GC Railroad official, George Broadhurst, and E.T. Young, filed for incorporation of the Citrus Park Mercantile Company on July 12, 1916. Two years later residents could buy supplies at the Citrus Park Mercantile Company's general store and purchase their groceries at M. Bruton's store. By 1925, the same year that Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* were published, Citrus Park had at least one telephone and several businesses. E.B. Gould, E.A. Mack, E.J. Spivey, and Citrus Park Mercantile Company each operated general stores. James I. Mobley served as the community's notary, and E.J. Spivey, the postmaster, also sold real estate and operated as a live stock breeder.9

Despite this growth, Citrus Park was still predominately rural when Mrs. Inez Richardson moved to the region in 1923:

"When we came out here . . . it was really in the wild then. It was really wild. Lakes and streams and ponds, wild animals, cats and dogs, and everything, alligators, turtles, whooping cranes, frogs. Anything you wanted, it was out here, and it was just a beautiful place to live."10

Citrus Park's 617 residents in 1930 consisted of 363 males and 254 females. The majority of Citrus Park’s 488 Whites were U.S. born, with only 49 foreign born. Compared to other rural sections of the county, Citrus Park had a large African American population, consisting of 129 individuals. This may in part be explained by the fact that nearly 75% of the timber industry's workers were Black. Additionally, William Mobley donated a sizeable amount of property just north of Citrus Park to his emancipated slaves shortly after the Civil War. With the death of the timber industry and the onslaught of the Great Depression, northwest Hillsborough County's population dwindled as people looked elsewhere for greener pastures. Many of the businesses patronized by Citrus Park's population fell upon hard times during the 1930s and closed their doors forever. Citrus Park weathered the economic drought and began to prosper in the 1950s with the addition of churches, businesses, boy and girl scout troops, and little league teams. Since World War II, the area has increasingly become a bedroom community to Tampa. Today's Citrus Park is undergoing an intense transformation as suburbanites from Tampa move farther north in Hillsborough County, building gated communities and shopping centers, expanding roads, and constructing schools. Yet, the area is still rural in many sections.11

HISTORY OF CITRUS PARK COLORED SCHOOL

Despite only existing as a county school for approximately 20 years, it is impossible to speak of Citrus Park's African American community without discussing Citrus Park Colored School. According to Lillie Mae Nix Madison, "History in this [Citrus Park] community to us, takes us back to three important factors and they are: The Home, Church, and School."12 Mrs. Mable Walker,
a former student and substitute teacher at Citrus Park Colored School who later went on to be Supervisor of Hillsborough County Schools, echoed Ms. Madison's statement by saying "the school and the church was all that we had" in Citrus Park. The school's genesis began around the turn of the century in a church building that no longer exists. Located on a parcel of property behind the present Mt. Pleasant AME Church, the church was situated in the middle of a cemetery on what was at that time Tony Lewis' property at 9201 Gunn Highway. Mr. Lewis was a former slave from Mt. Dora, Florida, who moved to Citrus Park in the 19th Century and became a large property owner and successful farmer. The church was an impressive building according to Amanda James, the oldest member of Mt. Pleasant AME Church in 1996 who also attended Citrus Park Colored School:

"It was a big white church with a big bell, steeple and a bell up on it. And it burnt down one night. It was a Methodist church. Everybody, the Baptist and the Methodists all went there."

Later in the interview, Mrs. James went on to say:

"It was a big wooden church. It was built different [from the present day Mt. Pleasant AME Church]. A big nice church. It had a steeple on it and a big bell sitting up on top of it. And they used to ring that bell. You could hear it everywhere. And they say it was time for service and you'd see the folk just getting out, getting ready, getting to church."

In this building, the church operated a school for the few Black children from Citrus Park and surrounding communities. As with many African American schools during the early 20th Century, this one was realized without any assistance from local or state government. Due to Jim Crow laws, Florida's 1885 constitution, and the 1897 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling, African American children were not allowed to attend White only schools. Education discrimination did not stop here though. Racist ideology even went so far as to separating school books that African American children used so the text books would not be "forced upon white children at a succeeding term of school." Thus, according to J. Irving E. Scott, author of The Education of Black People in Florida, the school on Mr. Lewis' property was typical of Black Florida schools where, "in most cases, black children were housed in church buildings, lodge halls or buildings vacated by white children."

According to Mrs. Mable Walker, Miss Barbara Hamilton, who later became Mrs. Barbara Allen, taught the local Black children at the church. Not a native of the area, Miss Hamilton moved from Seffner, Florida, to Citrus Park at the request of the church. After her arrival, Miss Hamilton met and married Rollie Allen -- an influential property owner who was one of several children born in Citrus Park to a servant slave named Sevilla and her owner, an Anglo-American architect -- and began raising a family. Mrs. Allen was described as a prosperous farmer in a circa.1909 Tampa Bay Land brochure:

"Barbary [sic] Allen, colored, has a two-acre orange grove in the southwest quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 26, from which she receives an average of $350 per annum. She also sells about $100 worth of garden truck every year. On her farm she raises an average of 200 bushels of sweet potatoes to the acre and receives 75 cents per bushel for them. She also sells about 75 gallons of syrup made from sugarcane, and 100
Figure 3: Plat of Township 27 South, Range 17 East in the Atlas of Hillsborough County, Florida (Tampa, FL: Dixie Survey and Atlas Company, 1916), 37

(Courtesy USF, Special Collections.)
bushels of corn, all grown on her little place."\(^{21}\)

Not only did her move to Citrus Park forever change Mrs. Allen’s life, but her move also had a tremendous impact upon African American residents of Citrus Park. Because of her tireless efforts and contributions for the betterment of local citizens’ daily lives, Mrs. Allen became the matriarch of the Black community, respected and praised by every person who met her. According to Mrs. Inez Richardson, who moved to Citrus Park in 1923 and grew up knowing Barbara Allen, Mrs. Allen was, "a leader in her community. . . but very soft, very kind, very gentle, and when Barbara said ‘no,’ she meant no. It's like I said, she was a leader in her community."\(^{22}\) Mr. Allen passed away by 1921, and consequently, Mrs. Allen, by herself, raised her five daughters and one son, operated a farm and a small store, donated land for community use, and opened her home to orphaned children.\(^{23}\) Mrs. Allen’s legacy serves as a role model to present and future generations of Hillsborough County.

Even disastrous events brought out the best in Mrs. Allen and Citrus Park’s other African American residents. One fateful evening in the early 20th Century the church building was struck by lightening and burned to the ground:

"One night we were eating supper and we looked out there and there was the biggest fire going. My grandpa and them -- you know we didn’t have water then, water around then like they do now -- there was

(Figure 1) The Citrus Park Colored School as it appeared in 1996.

(Photograph courtesy of the author.)
nothing they could do but just look at it burn down. It was a nice white church."24

In spite of this tragic setback, the Black community was undaunted. For a while classes were taught on the back porch of Mr. Lewis’ house. However, the few families with children in the area left; consequently, the classes were stopped. As early as 1920, Citrus Park’s African American population petitioned the school board for a school. The board, however, tabled the petition for further discussion. Less than a year later, on August 9, 1921, Mrs. Allen, administratrix of her husband’s, Rollie Allen, estate, sold to the Hillsborough County School Board for the sum of one dollar (for all tense and purposes she gave the land to the school board) one acre of land in the Southeast Corner of the Northwest Quarter of the Southwest Quarter of Section Twenty-six (26), Township Twenty-seven (27) South, Range Seventeen (17) East (Figure 3). African Americans donating land for the construction of a school was not an unusual event. In the early 1930s, William Glover bestowed ten acres of land to the Hillsborough County School Board for a school to be built in Bealsville. Despite the donation of land by Mrs. Allen, a school had not been established by late December 1923, the arrival date of Rev. Charlie Walker and his family to Citrus Park.25

Participating in the Florida Boom and becoming part of the flood of immigrants, both Black and White, to the west coast of Florida, Rev. Walker moved his family from Fort Valley, Georgia, to Port Tampa in April 1923. Hearing of the good business opportunities in the area from his mother, Rev. Walker went to work in a hotel in Clearwater, Florida. Deciding that hotel work was not for him, Rev. Walker relocated to Port Tampa, going into business for himself clearing land all across the state. While working along Gunn Highway and Cosine Road in 1923, Rev. Walker brought his family out for a visit. They liked the area so much that they moved to Citrus Park later that year. Several years later, during the 1930s, the Walker family acquired ten acres of land in the area, and eventually Rev. Walker purchased an additional 70 acres.

Rev. Walker, having five children of his own upon moving to Citrus Park, went to the Superintendent of Public Schools and the Hillsborough County School Board one Monday morning for the purpose of requesting a school for Citrus Park’s African American children. Yet, not until Wednesday was Rev. Walker granted a meeting. School officials told Rev. Walker that they kept him waiting for three days to see if he was serious in his intent to obtain a school.

They agreed to supply the materials for the school, but he would have to find a teacher. They then directed him to Blanche Armwood, the Supervisor of Black Schools, for help in obtaining a teacher. This effort produced no results; thus, Rev. Walker renewed his determination and searched until a teacher was found.26

Mrs. Amanda James remembered the school board contributed materials to build the school, but the Black residents had to donate the labor and expertise to complete the construction:

"Mr. Tony Lewis and Mr. Dave Allen [and Rev. Walker and others] . . . they all got together and built that school. The county give them the stuff if they would build it. And they give them that stuff and they put that school up . . . They all helped and built that."27
Approximately 15 feet by 20 feet, the entire structure was made of wood and painted red (Figure 3). Miss Leona Allen, daughter of Mrs. Barbara Allen, in 1925 became the school’s first teacher, instructing thirteen children, several of whom came from the Allen, Lewis, and Walker families. In subsequent years, the number of children taught never exceeded 30 students. Only having four windows and a front door, the children and teacher made due with what little they had. Like other rural schools of that time period, the children utilized an outhouse, obtained water from an outdoor pump, and the school consisted of one room in which several different grades were taught by Miss Allen.28 Mrs. Muriel Manning, a former student at Citrus Park Colored School, described the condition of the school and school supplies in the early years:

"Here, we had, it was difficult. We came back and we had regular school then, and we had books, some of them were old. I can remember one year we went back to school and they had clean(ed) up the [White] school down at Citrus Park, and this big box was sitting on the porch of our little school that you saw out there. And in this box was a whole lot of old books, parts of books, and crayons, and pieces of chalk, and just a whole lot of just really junk. But we were happy to get it. I can remember we had a chalk board with, that stand behind the pulpit, because the school was used for church, it was used for the AME church."29

Typically during this era most African American women were relegated to bottom rungs of the economic ladder, constituting a significant portion of the state’s agricultural, domestic, and personal service labor force. Teaching, however, was one of the few professions opened to Black women during the first half of the 20th century. Between 1930 and 1950 the number of Black teachers grew in Florida from 539 to 3,796. Reflective of other jobs in the state African American women faced the double discrimination of color and gender when it came to pay. In 1930, the average Florida Black female teacher made $61.60 a month in comparison to her White male counterpart who earned a monthly salary of $169.20. White men were followed by White women who averaged $115.80 a month and Black men who made $84.20 monthly.32 The unequal distribution of pay did not stop here. The lowest paid educators were those that taught in one-teacher schools. During the 1928-29 school year, 523 of Florida’s 866 Black schools were of the one-teacher type. According to the Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1930:

"The lowest salaries are paid in schools of this [one-teacher types] where the term is shortest, work is hardest, and the poorest buildings, furniture, and teaching equipment are provided. Needles to say, the poorest trained teachers are employed in these schools. The average annual salary paid Negro teachers in one- and two-teacher schools in 1928-29 was $182."33
J.H. Brinson, State Supervisor of Negro Education, stated in 1924 that poor pay accounted for the lack of Black teachers and the inadequate training of those that did teach. Throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, the lack of funding, inadequate training of teachers, and poor facilities would plague most one-teacher African American schools. Despite the dismal pay, the typical African American teacher fared better than her female counterpart in 1939 who picked strawberries in Plant City for an average of $7 to $9 a week or the typical Tampa domestic servant earning $8.50 a week in the 1920s.34

By the 1932-33 school year, 25 Black schools existed in Hillsborough County, 11 of which were of the one-teacher type, four were of the two-teacher type, three were of the three-teacher type, and seven were of the five or more teacher type. Of the 120 African American teachers employed by the county, the average teacher received $462 a year in comparison to Hillsborough’s 929 White teachers who averaged $816.64 annually. Twenty-five teachers were college educated, 35 had graduated from normal schools, and 55 had high school diplomas. These educators taught 5,542 students, averaging 46 students per teacher. Hillsborough owned 16 of the 25 school buildings with the remaining nine county schools operated in Black owned churches. Nine of the buildings had no water and four had no lavatories.35

Figure 4: Citrus Park Colored School building and the Mt. Pleasant AME Church in 1996.

(Photograph courtesy of the author.)

Following Miss Allen’s departure in 1925, the school closed its door while Rev. Walker scoured the country side, roaming from Lakeland to St. Petersburg before securing Miss Early Ernestine Ballard as a teacher on
January 14, 1926. Miss Ballard received her high school diploma in Macon, Georgia, and moved to Florida to live with her uncle and aunt. According to Mrs. Richardson, one of her former students, Miss Ballard not only taught the standard educational requirements of the day, she also instilled upon the students the importance of patriotism and the value of community. As with her predecessor, Miss Ballard did not stay long, only until June 1926 -- she went to college to continue her education -- and was followed by Eunice Roundtree, Edith Allen Footman, Ruby Clark Smith, Vernease Hadley, and Corene Prince-Hardy. In 1934, Mrs. Eliza Davis, for $63.00 a month, began teaching at the school and remained until the school closed in 1948. Mrs. Davis, in an interview with Rosemary Brown, a reporter for the *Tampa Times*, stated that she stayed at the school for so long because “she fit right into the picture’ and she and the students latched onto each other.”

Shortly after the school was constructed, local residents expanded the building. To accomplish this, the community donated both materials and labor. Mr. Tony Lewis, Mr. Dave Allen, Rev. Charlie Walker, and other members of Citrus Park’s African American community returned to the school and added additional square footage onto the back of the structure, rebuilt the porch on the front of the school, replaced the wood piers with concrete block, and ripped out the wooden floor and replaced it with concrete. The school grew in size from 15 feet by 20 feet to 15 feet by 30 feet. Additionally, another outhouse was built so that the boys could use one and the girls could use the other.

Because of the rural setting and the distance from any other Black schools, Citrus Park Colored School’s student body came from beyond the borders of Citrus Park. Without school buses, every child was left to walk to school. While children from the Walker, Allen, and Lewis families lived within three miles of the school, other children came from Brown’s Turpentine Still approximately six miles away. The remaining children’s homes were scattered across the country side.

The Lewis, the Allens, and the Cruses were among the first Black settlers in the Citrus Park area, arriving in the 19th Century. Other founding families include the Walkers, the Petersons, and the James, homesteading in the 1920s and 1930s. Between these families, they possessed over 150 acres of land, and controlled a significant part of three lakes. Thus, from its conception, several prominent members of Citrus Park’s African American community were involved in the Citrus Park Colored School.

Not only were these families dedicated to the success of the school, but also the church. Instead of building a new church after the first one burned down, Mt. Pleasant AME utilized the school building on weekends. Consequently, the school building served multiple purposes for the Black community. Members of the Walker, Lewis, Allen, Footman, and the Robinson families all worshiped under the roof of the school. But the congregation of the AME church was not alone. During a revival meeting, some members of the congregation expressed a desire to form a Baptist church. In September 1932, the First Baptist of Keystone organized and held services in the school. African American churches were more prevalent than schools in Northwest Hillsborough County during this period; consequently, the congregations consisted of more local residents than the school’s student population. Not large enough to accommodate two services at the same time,
Mt. Pleasant worshiped in the building during the first and third Sundays of the month, and the Baptists utilized the building on the second and fourth Sundays. Despite being two different denominations, many of the same people attended both services. When a fifth Sunday occurred during the month, both congregations worshiped together and held a picnic afterwards. This arrangement between the school and the two churches lasted through the 1940s when the Baptists built their own church on land donated by Rev. Walker. Mrs. Manning demonstrated the importance of the churches to the community when she stated:

"When we arrived there [in 1923] they had an AME church established . . . but we were Baptist, and daddy [Rev. Walker] wanted us there... We went to the AME church, and so AME had services on first and third Sundays, we used their ritual and then on the second and fourth Sundays the Baptist people. And then on the fifth Sunday we all got together and had something. Sometimes a cookout or a picnic on the ground, bring a covered dish and we’d all eat there together. But the relationship between the two churches was really excellent and the whole community because we all, everybody supported it. And it was somewhere for us to go. It was a way to learn about each other and all the children learned [about] each other. We got along just great." 

Religion also played an important role in the school. While the age-old adage of reading, writing, and arithmetic applies to Citrus Park Colored School, it only covers part of the students’ school day. Mr. Mordecai Walker, a former student who started Citrus Park Colored School in 1930, described an average day when he said, "I remember we had to line up by the flagpole every morning, and march in ...we would line up by the flagpole, say the pledge, come inside and have devotion." Later in the interview, Mr. Walker said:

"The typical day, in fact there was no typical day, it was every day. The only time we didn’t stop and say the pledge if it had been raining mighty hard. I would say if it wasn’t raining, we come there and play out there. And what ever time it was, I think it was maybe eight o’clock . . . she’d come to the door and ring the bell. We would line up at the flag pole. Girls in one line, boys in the other line. We would say the pledge, and we’d come in.

"Then the fifth or sixth grade sometime would be in charge of devotion, and you would sing a song . . . and then we would have prayer. And then the students had to learn a bible verse. Different ones would say a bible verse. Devotion last about fifteen minutes.

"After that, we had a primer, that in my first year we had . . . before first grade was primer. You call it kindergarten, but the first grade was primer . . . we had first grade arithmetic . . . second grade. Everybody had arithmetic until, through sixth grade. For a while we had seventh grade. And then we’d come back and you’d have spelling. You’d have so many words you’d spell. Okay, then reading. Same thing, starting back at primer, first grade read, second grade read, third grade read.

"Then we’d have a little recess. That was about ten o’clock in the morning. You’d go outside. If you’d have a little snack you’d eat it. We’d used to pull the bud out of palmetto. Those pine cones had kernels in there. You could eat them . . . We had about fifteen minutes of play."
"Then we’d come back and then we have geography. They called it geography. Then we go all the way through geography. Then science.

"Then we had big recess we called it. We’d have an hour off . . . Well I know it was half an hour at least. But we’d have what we call "big recess." And then, a few of the kids would go home for lunch. We had to bring ours. It was too far for us to go. We’d stay about a mile and a half or two miles from the school.

And then in the afternoon we had, we call it drawing or art."44

Mrs. Amanda James lauded the time she spent at the school as a student:

"It was beautiful. We had . . . a good teacher. She was nice to us. And we played ball all out there . . . And we had a pump. We didn’t have no electric pump you know . . and that’s the way we pumped our water. And we had plenty of games that we played and everything. All us went to school played that. We played ball and play hipscotch, or whatever you call it, and everything. But we enjoyed ourselves. There wasn’t no fighting. They didn’t fight and carry on. They were stricter on us than the people is now. And we had to behave ourselves and mind the teacher ‘cause the teacher would give us a good spanking and when we got home we got another good spanking. And so we behaved ourselves at school, and it was very nice. We enjoyed it. We enjoyed every bit of it."45

Beyond book work and play, the students completed chores around the school. During winter some of the older male students collected fire wood for the school’s wood burning potbelly stove. The State Agent of Negro Schools encouraged students performing chores as a way of instilling values of cleanliness, beauty, and self improvement.46 Throughout the year, before leaving at the end of the day, the children cleaned the school:

"So in the afternoon, about the last fifteen minutes, you could volunteer or she assign somebody to sweep the floor, go out and beat the erasers, you know clean them out, and wash the boards, and we’d clean up and go home."47

Once the school day was over, the students’ work were not done. Many children went home to accomplish chores and other tasks. Once completed, dinner was served and then homework was done. Variations existed on this scenario with some children playing a while before accomplishing their tasks or some working outside the home, but diligent work was asked of all, both at home and in the school. When asked about activities after school, Mr. Mordecai Walker commented:

"Well that kind of varied. We had a few kids that didn’t have to . . . they went home. I used to work for my family, we were kinda . . we had a big family. We were on the poor side . . . We worked out quite a bit after school. I used to pull down trees for five cent an hour, or five cent a tree, make 15 or 20 cent an afternoon. And my older brothers ...well all of us had little jobs we went too. My older brothers and sister, they started, after going to school they started working regular. . . My sister started cooking when she was thirteen and she would go to school and do all of it."48

Mrs. Amanda James remembered working on the family farm after school:

"We had time to play, but our parents had them big fields, and we had plenty corn, peas, and okra, and everything planted.
When we go home we could play a little bit, but we had to work. We had work, because they had plenty of chickens, hogs, and a cow, and they had to be tended. But we enjoyed it.  

Through the various activities the students participated in, the school embodied the values of the community. Having the children say prayer and reciting bible verses at the beginning of every day instilled a sense of the importance of religion, thus reaffirming the link between the school during the week and the churches on the weekend. Likewise, the concept of hard work was well established during the school day and activities afterwards. Having children accomplish chores around the school taught them the value of work, cleanliness, and respect for property. Once the students reached the end of the school day, most went to work either at home or at a job. Even after these tasks were accomplished their work was not completed. During the evening, the children finished their homework assignments. The value of hard work is most readily seen in the accomplishments of the schools graduates. Because the majority of students prospered in later life, Mrs. Thelma Allen was only able to comment on a few of the success stories when she stated:

"The children would have to study, they’d have to study. They have to get those lessons [done], don’t care what else they have to do. They did pretty well too. The parents that could help their children go off to college somewhere, really finished their education and pick up whatever profession they thought they could handle. They did it, and they did quite well, because quite a few of the Black children from this community did good. Quite a few... My son [Raleigh Allen, Jr. (III)] is a veterinarian, and he finished from Tallahassee Black school and he finished from Tuskegee Institute. Then the government sent him to another school too... The Allens and the Lewises and the Walkers, the Walker’s children did well. They went off to college. One of them [Herbert Walker] finished from Tampa College [i.e., University of Tampa]. The other one [Mordecai Walker] finished in agriculture... Curbs Walker Wilson finished [from F A.M.U.]. She took her home ec[economics]... Different ones did different things, and I think that speaks well for the parents and for them. They had a hard time at it. It wasn't made easy. None of it was easy."  

Not every day was all hard work and no play. The church and school put on plays, gospel quartets, cook outs, and parties for the children and parents of Citrus Park. So much activity occurred because of the two churches and school, Mr. Mordecai Walker stated "it was the most well utilized building... in the United States." He went on to comment about the various activities that took place at the school:

"The teachers, especially after we got Mrs. Davis, she would have... PTA meetings, but we would have little plays and box suppers -- you know where you bring your money and buy a box. Who ever owned that box would sit down and eat with them."  

Nearly everyone interviewed for this article discussed school plays, revealing their importance to the community. Mr. Mordecai Walker reflected, "We had some good plays out there on Friday evenings." Mrs. Mable Walker elaborated by saying:

"They would have plays and things like that at night... they invite the parents to come at the end of the school year, or something like that. Little entertainment things like that to let them... see what the children had been doing."
Rosemary Brown, in an interview with Mrs. Muriel Manning, wrote, "Mrs. Manning has fond memories of barbecues and fish fries celebrating the last day of the school." Mrs. Manning further revealed, "The whole community turned out for the school closings; they were beautiful."56

Beyond recreational activities, the building served as a community center for Citrus Park’s African American population: Home Demonstration agents held classes in the building, 4-H club had meetings there, and the entire community received immunization shots at the school in 1934. A few years later, as with her generous contribution of land for the school, Mrs. Barbara Allen donated property for the county to build a meeting place for the 4-H club and the Home Demonstration classes.57 Much of the public, educational, and spiritual life of the Black community centered around the school. Without it, many of the events would have been difficult, if not impossible, to conduct.

Just as the community rallied together to build the school in the 1920s, the local residents also joined together to transport children to Tampa once they graduated from Citrus Park Colored School. Because the school only went through the seventh grade and no junior or senior high schools existed for Black children in the area, older students had to attend Booker T. Washington Junior and Senior High School in Tampa. Children who went on with their education had to stay with relatives or friends of the family who lived in Tampa because the county did not provide busing. This prevented those students who had no family or friends in the city or transportation from attending high school. As the federal government organized the Securities and Exchange Commission to gain some control over the stock market in 1934, Hillsborough County began subsidizing local residents to use their private automobiles to transport the children.58 Rev. Walker was the first among many who took up the call to drive:

"Now my dad [Rev. Walker], see, for a while there was no transportation at all... See there were five of them old enough to go to school in Tampa. Well, Mrs. Walker and . . . she had an aunt living in Tampa, she stayed with them. So my dad had an old Model A Ford, and then the . . . the four of us started riding."59

Purchasing a bus with his own money from a White bus driver in the Citrus Park area, the school board subsidized Rev. Walker $5.00 a month to cover oil and gas expenses. Eventually, the old bus gave out and Rev. Walker bought yet another vehicle. Obtaining a Model A bread truck, Rev. Walker cut the Model A's top off and welded the back of the bus onto the truck. No one can remember why, but the bus was painted black. Henceforth, it became known as "The Black Mariah" to local African Americans. The community extensively utilized the bus much like they did the Citrus Park Colored School building. Because the bus was privately owned, it was used on weekends to transport shoppers back and forth to Tampa and Tarpon Springs, sometimes making several trips a day. During the Florida State Fair, the bus was packed to the gills, ferrying people to and from the fairgrounds.60

Other members of the community also drove their vehicles, ensuring that Citrus Park students continued their education. The school board, between 1937 and 1947, subsidized Edith Footman, Clyde Allen, Odell Allen, Mable Walker, and Dave Allen, Jr. to drive students to Tampa.61 This was not an easy task, for each one drove to Tampa five days a week at least once if not
twice a day. Consequently, residents of Citrus Park petitioned the school board to rectify the situation in August 1946. The board responded to the Trustees of Citrus Park (these were not the same people as the parents, but a group in charge of overseeing educational matters in different sections of the county) by saying "that it had no vehicle for [the] purpose," but it would pay $2.50 per student a month if another driver could be found.62

The community utilized Mr. Dave Allen, Jr.’s station wagon to transport eight or nine students to Tampa during the 1946/47 school year. However, the automobile was "worn out" after a year's toil, and the parents were forced, once again, in August 1947, to petition the school board for adequate transportation. A week later, the board informed Rev. Walker that they would provide transportation to twelve high school students from Citrus Park (an increase of four from the previous year). This bus only furnished service to Tampa. Children who attended Citrus Park Colored School during its last year of operation still walked to school.63

Despite the importance of the school to the local community, this was not enough to keep the school board from shutting it down. Occurring at the same time as the school bus petition and foreshadowing events to come, Citrus Park Colored School received a grim evaluation in a school building survey conducted in 1946 for the Hillsborough Board of Public Instruction. By September of 1946, the school housed grades one through seven, with a total of twelve students. The building was still heated by a "small wood stove," the children still used the outhouses, and the school never had electricity.64 In fact, not until 1942 did a resident in the Citrus Park area even receive electricity, and he was a military officer stationed at MacDill. Sadly, the school reflected conditions at other Black schools scattered across the county.65 The evaluator concluded the Citrus Park Colored School section by stating:

"There are only twelve children at this school and although the building is poor, it seems unwise to provide a new building for so small a number of children. This is an isolated school. Therefore, it is recommended that it be retained as a probable elementary center but that it be replaced or abandoned within ten years. If the school is abandoned, the children should be transported to Tampa."66

It would only take the school board two years to achieve the recommended closing.

In an attempt to improve the education of its citizens and in the process to attract businesses, southern states began passing legislation to improve their public school systems following World War II. Coupled with this, southern states implemented this legislation to delay integration of racially segregated schools. Through the improvement of African American schools, these states hoped that their compliance with Plessy v. Ferguson's "separate but equal" mandate would stave off court rulings for integration. Florida and Hillsborough County participated in this trend, consolidating rural schools by shutting down several schools in order to bus the children to one central location. In 1947, the state legislature passed the Minimum Foundation Program. The program established general standards for all schools to meet, attempting to provide a minimum level of education to all of Florida's children, whether they were rich, poor, rural, urban, Black or White. This program was a double-edged sword for rural communities, especially for African Americans. As funding became available to
construct new schools, older -- and in many instances inadequate -schools were closed. However, despite being inadequate in materials and funding, the schools that were closed were significant community institutions. Hillsborough County shut down Citrus Park Colored School as part of this process in 1949.67

As early as April 15, 1948, Mrs. Barbara Allen began requesting the return of the property she donated to the school board in 1921. At that time, the board was unsure if it would close down the school. However, on November 4, 1948, the board considered Mrs. Allen's appeal, and on June 9, 1949, the board stated that the Citrus Park Colored School had been abandoned. The students and Mrs. Davis were moved to a school in Sulphur Springs where Mrs. Leona Allen Houston and Mrs. Mable Walker taught in 1947. Yet, not all small schools suffered the same fate as Citrus Park Colored School. The Glover School in Bealsville, Florida, was one school that children were bussed too; consequently, it experienced a growth in student population and construction in the 1940s.68

Not to waste any time, the board appraised the Citrus Park Colored School property in July 1949, and agreed to sell it to the trustees of Mt. Pleasant AME church for $400. On October 13, 1949, Harry Lewis, James Walker, Barbara Robinson ' Mable Walker, and Florence Bruce signed the deed on behalf of the church. Members of Mt. Pleasant continued to worship in the building until a new church was erected on the same property in the 1950s (Figure 4). Since the school's closing the building functioned as a fellowship hall where dinners were served and other activities occurred. Desiring to preserve and celebrate the school, alumni made requests of Hillsborough County's Historic Resources Review Board in 1996 to designate the building as a historic landmark of Hillsborough County. Staff members investigated the history of the school house and recommended to the Board of County Commissioners that the building be nominated as a landmark. On August 27, 1996, the County Commissioners unanimously voted for the designation.69 Despite the closure of Citrus Park Colored School, the school still lives in the memories of the former students, "Good memories of 'The Schoolhouse' will linger in our hearts because we all loved and cherished it so much."

ENDNOTES

1 The research for this paper was conducted as part of the author's duties while employed at the Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board. The Historic Resources Review Board provided funding for the research which resulted in a Hillsborough County Landmark designation for the Citrus Park Colored School. I would like to give recognition and thanks to the graduates of Citrus Park Colored School and community members who opened up their homes and their memories to me. They include Thelma Allen, Colleen Gambrell, Shady Hunter, Amanda James, Beatrice Johnson, Muriel Manning, Janice Myers, Inez Richardson, Mable Walker, Mordecai Walker, Curtis Wilson. Special thanks also goes to Teresa Maio, Historic Preservation Planner for Hillsborough County's Planning & Growth Management Department, for all the work with research, edits, and help in learning the historic preservation process.

2 Rosemary Brown "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," The Tampa Times July 24, 1982, 113; Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court (1921), Deed Book 335, page 362; Amanda James, Interview by Teresa Maio and Geoffrey Mohlman, July 9, 1996:Tape 1, Side A, #278; Inez Richardson, "History of Citrus Park Colored Negro Elementary School," (manuscript on file Citrus Park Colored School file, Hillsborough
Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 1B, 3B; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #079,091.

Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School." 1B, 3B; Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court (1949), Deed Book 1542, page 599-600; Hillsborough County School Board Minutes, book 17, page 36,120,178,384; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side B, #229; Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, interview , by Teresa Maio and Geoffrey Mohlman, June 27, 1996, Tape 1, Side A, #403; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side B, #157.


Binder, History of Keystone, Odessa, and Citrus Park, 26-30; When History was in the Making: The Neighborhood Origins of Public Schools in Hillsborough County, 1871-1900 (Tampa, Fl: Hillsborough County Schools, 1975), 5,21.

Binder, History of Keystone, Odessa, and Citrus Park, 14-16.

23 Colleen Gambrell, telephone interview by Teresa Maio, August 16, 1996; Muriel Manning and Curtis Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #400; Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 1, Side B, #260.

24 Amanda James, Tape 1, Side B, #288.

25 Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court (1921), Deed Book 335, page 362; Hillsborough County Historic Resources Review Board, *The Glover School Designation Report* (Tampa, Fl: Hillsborough County Historic Resources Review Board, 1994), 4; Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 6, page 144; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #551, Tape 1, Side B, #266. Richardson, "History of Citrus Park Colored Negro Elementary School," 1; Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 1, Side A, #100; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #120.


27 Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #278.

28 Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 113; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #79, 97, 364; Richardson, 1; Muriel Manning and Curtis Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #117; Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 1, Side A, #116, 399; Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #289; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #500; D.E. Williams *A Brief Review of the Growth and Improvement of Education for Negroes in Florida, 1927-1962* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Education Foundation, Inc., 1963), 15. According to the Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 8, page 294, the school board permitted the establishment of the school and appointed Ernestine Ballard as its first teacher on January 14, 1926. This conflicts with the memories of former students who insisted the first teacher was Leona Allen. It could be that Miss Allen taught while the school was being constructed, or even prior to its construction, and was paid not by the school board, but by the parents.

29 Muriel Manning and Curtis Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #233.


31 Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 113; Richardson, "History of Citrus Park Colored Negro Elementary School," 1; Muriel Manning and Curbs Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #121; Muriel Manning, Janice Myers, Mordecai Walker, Curbs Wilson, personal communication, September 9, 1996.

32 Jones, "No Longer Denied," 253-255.


35 Notice that the total number of teachers that were college, normal, and high school graduates equaled 115, leaving five teachers unaccounted for in *Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1934* (Tallahassee, Fl, 1934), 164, 188-189.

36 Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 313; Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 8, 294, Book 9, page 236-237, Book 12, page 331; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #093; Muriel Manning and Curtis Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #160, 169; Richardson, "History of Citrus Park Colored Negro Elementary School," 1; Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 1, Side A, #226.

37 Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 3B.

38 Ibid., 113; Florida State Department of Education and Division of Field Studies, College of Education, University of Florida, "School Building Survey,
Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 1, Side A, #471; Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #495; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side B, #276.


Thelma Allen and Janice Myers, interview by Teresa Maio and Geoffrey Mohlman, June 27, 1996, Tape 1, Side A, #316,457; Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 313; Colleen Gambrell, telephone interview, August 16, 1996; Janice Myers, personal communication, September 8, 1996; Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 1, Side A, #267,535, Tape 1, Side B, #447,473; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #234.

Muriel Manning and Curtis Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #243.

Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #229.

Ibid., #369.

Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #294.

*Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Florida for the Two Years Ending June 30, 1936* (Tallahassee, Fl, 1936), 190-194; Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 313; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side B, #224.

Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side B, #249.

Ibid., Tape 1, Side A, #412.

Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #490.

Ibid., #427, #498.

Thelma Allen and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #380.

Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #246.

Ibid., Tape 1, Side B, #257.

Ibid., Tape 1, Side A, #320.

Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #527.

Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 3B.

Thelma Allen and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side B, #334; Muriel Manning and Curtis Wilson, Tape 1, Side A, #430; Inez Richardson and Shady Hunter, Tape 2, Side A, #340; Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #541, Tape 1, Side B, #038; Mordecai Walker, Tape 2, Side A, #175.

Thelma Allen and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #514; Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 313; Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 12, page 189; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #098; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #519. During the 1920s and early 1930s, Booker T. Washington Junior and Senior High School was the only school that the older students attended. By the 1930s Citrus Park students attended Middledon High School, and by the 1940s students from Citrus Park also enrolled in Don Thompson Vocational School.

Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side A, #520.

Brown, "Reunion Revives the Memories of Citrus Park Colored School," 313; Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 12, page 189; Muriel Manning, Janice Myers, Mordecai Walker, Curtis Wilson, personal communication, September 9, 1996.

Muriel Manning, Janice Myers, Mordecai Walker, Curtis Wilson, personal communication, September 9, 1996.

Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 16, page 28.

Ibid., 28,317,324; Mordecai Walker, Tape 1, Side B, #105; Mordecai Walker, personal communication, September 9, 1996.

Florida State Department of Education and Division of Field Studies, College of Education,


68 Thelma Allen and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side A, #170,491; Hillsborough County Historic Resources Review Board, *The Glover School Designation Report*, 4; Hillsborough County School Board Minute Book 16, page 237, Minute Book 17, page 15,178,279; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #113; "Negro Schools to be Cut in Consolidation," *Tampa Tribune* August 9, 1946; Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side B, #052,131. Mrs. Leona Allen Houston was the first teacher at Citrus Park Colored School. By 1947, she had married, thus the addition of Houston to her name, and was teaching at Sulphur Springs.

69 Tom Brennan, "Colored School named county landmark," *Tampa Tribune* August 28, 1996, 1-Northwest; Hillsborough County School Board, Minute Book 17, page 303, 309, 316, 341; Hillsborough County Clerk of the Circuit Court (1949), Deed Book 1542, page 599-600; Amanda James, Tape 1, Side A, #131,162; Mable Walker, Beatrice Johnson, and Janice Myers, Tape 1, Side B, #149.

David Paul Davis’ Unfulfilled Dream: Davis Islands from October 1926 Until The Crash of 1929

Rodney Kite-Powell II

"D. P. DAVIS LOST FROM SHIP IN MID-ATLANTIC ON VOYAGE TO EUROPE Radio Message Brings News But Details Are Lacking"

--Tampa Morning Tribune, October 14, 1926

This headline sent a shockwave through the city of Tampa. Millionaire developer David Paul Davis was dead. By October 1926, though, his dream of an island paradise in Hillsborough Bay had assumed a life of its own. Neither his life, nor that of the island, unfolded in the manner Davis planned.

D. P. DAVIS: THE MAN WITH A DREAM

Few undisputed details exist concerning Davis’ life. David Paul Davis was born in Green Cove Springs, Florida, a small town on the St. John’s River south of Jacksonville, in November 1885 to George Riley and Gertrude M. Davis. He had two younger brothers, Charles and Milton, and a sister, Elizabeth.1 By 1900, the Davis family moved to Tampa where, according to the 1900 Federal Census, they rented a home at 208 Pierce Street. The three Davis boys were listed as students and their father served as an engineer on a steamboat, probably the Manatee.2

In 1901, sixteen-year-old Davis worked as a clerk at the law firm of Macfarlane & Raney and paid rent in his parent’s Pierce Street home. Two years later he served as a mate, probably aboard his father’s steamship. He, along with his father and brother Charles, lived at his sister’s home at 606 Jackson Street. It is around this time that Davis’ mother disappears from the historical record.

In 1907, Davis formed a partnership with Robertson T. Arnold and formed the real estate firm of Davis & Arnold, located in the American National Bank Building at 616 Franklin Street in downtown Tampa. This early venture into Tampa real estate was short lived, however, because by 1908 Davis worked as a bookkeeper at the Sanchez & Hermanos cigar factory in West Tampa.3 It is safe to say that he was only biding his time, waiting for his next opportunity.

It is possible, though improbable, that even at this early date Davis had his mind set on developing Big and Little Grassy Islands, the small deserted keys in Hillsborough Bay. The bay’s other mud islands became Seddon Island in 1905. Now known as Harbour Island, Seddon Island was developed by the Seaboard Air Line as a part of the city’s wharf expansion and channel dredging projects.4 What affect that had on Davis is unknown. Certainly, however, he was aware of the geographical area and rising value of property on the west side of the Hillsborough River and the shoreline of Hillsborough Bay.

DAMS IN JACKSONVILLE

Davis’ biographical trail fades until his marriage to Marjorie H. Merritt in Jacksonville, Florida on November 11, 1915.5 Davis worked as an independent real estate agent in Jacksonville during that year,
but by 1916 he was an officer in the ambiguously titled All Star Features Company. The company’s president, James W. Edmondson, also headed two investment companies headquartered in Jacksonville. Given Edmondson and Davis’ backgrounds, it is fair to assume that the All Star Features Company was at least nominally concerned with Jacksonville real estate.\(^6\)

Davis remained with All Star Features until the end of World War I. The exact date of his departure from Jacksonville is unknown, but it can be assumed he left in late 1918 or early 1919. He apparently headed south with the money he made during the war. Davis arrived in Miami and by 1920 had turned his attention to South Florida’s emerging real estate market.\(^7\)

THE MIAMI YEARS

Miami, and most of southeast Florida, found itself in the midst of a real estate boom at the close of World War I. An increase in the state’s population, and the improvements made to the automobile and heavy machinery, made living in south Florida much easier than in the years preceding the war. New roads were built, connecting not only the state with its neighbors, but also the cities within the state. This, coupled with low land prices, introduced an excellent opportunity for people willing to suffer through the heat and mosquitoes, two facets of tropical Florida that had not yet been conquered.

Davis was not in the first group of land speculators, but he did watch them and learn from them. Before pioneer developer Carl Fisher arrived in 1912, Miami Beach was just a row of uninhabited barrier islands. He built them into isles of unequaled beauty, at least in the eyes of people eager to invest their money in them.

When Davis finally tried his hand at land sales, he proved to be quite adept. He took one unsuccessful developer’s property, which had languished on the market, and sold it in a few days. He accomplished this through superior marketing and creativity. Soon, he was developing land on his own, and making a good amount of money doing it. By 1921 he was the sales manager for United Realty Company. Within the next two years, Davis had made an estimated $5
David Paul Davis is shown standing in a small skiff directing the placement of pilings for the first wooden bridge built to the islands. Homes along the Bayshore and curious bystanders can be seen behind Davis. This photograph and the one on the facing page appear to have been taken during the same Burgert shooting session.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)
million. Stories of fast fortunes spread quickly, though, and soon South Florida was filled with land speculators. Davis sought out a new location for real estate to boom. He believed Tampa, where he got his start in real estate, would be the scene of the next explosion.

DAMS FAMILY REMAINS IN TAMPA

While Davis traveled around the state, and possibly out of the country, his family remained in Tampa. His parents either divorced or his mother died, because by 1908 George Davis was married to a woman named Kathryn. By 1913 George and Kathryn Davis owned a home, located at 207 South Boulevard. David’s brothers, as well as other families, would occasionally rent rooms in the Davis house. If anyone cared to look, the mud flats that would become Davis Islands could be seen from the roof of the South Boulevard home. Davis made his return to Tampa in January 1924. He arrived older, wiser and bolder, and he brought with him a plan to forever change the look of the city.

THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNS

When Davis announced his plan to build "Florida’s Supreme $30,000,000 Development," the response from prospective buyers was overwhelming. Davis used the experience he gained in Miami and applied it well to the new Tampa venture. He opened a sales office in a very prominent downtown location, 502 Franklin Street. He knew his plans for building up the mud flats in Hillsborough Bay, adding exponentially to their size, would be challenged in a court of law because of the land use and riparian rights issues, and planned accordingly. Most importantly, he knew he would need to launch a sales campaign unparalleled in the area’s history.

Davis also networked with the city’s business and political leadership, knowing he would need their support for the development. Evidence of this lies in the deal Davis made with the city to acquire Little Grassy Island, the smaller of the two bay islands, and the riparian rights around it. He was required to post a $200,000 surety bond. He did not use his own money, but instead allowed investors, including two sitting Tampa City Commissioners, to purchase bonds of varying amounts, totaling $225,281.25. The bond money would be returned by the city when Davis completed the permanent bridge and deeded 55 acres to the city for park space. The park would be dedicated to the memory of Davis’ wife, Marjorie, who died in 1922 after just seven years of marriage.

His next task centered around the new islands’ infrastructure. Davis signed a $2 million contract with Northern Dredge and Dock Company to pump 9 million cubic yards of sand from the bottom of Hillsborough Bay onto Big and Little Grassy Islands, creating Davis Islands. He promised the city that he would build a permanent bridge to the development which would cost at least $100,000. First he needed a temporary bridge just to get workers, machines and materials to the site. Within days after the temporary bridge was built, photographers and sightseers joined the construction crews on the ever-growing property.

DAVIS ISLANDS BECOMES A REALITY

The first sale of lots came on October 4, 1924, less than four weeks after the Florida Supreme Court ruled in Davis’ favor on his right to build up the land in Hillsborough Bay for commercial purposes. The results of
Workers lay and position what appear to be dredging pipes on the island using mules and wooden wagons filled with dirt. The scene, taken on the northern tip of the island, provides an excellent view of Tampa’s skyline. City hall, the Hillsborough County courthouse, hotels, and Sacred Heart Catholic Church are visible. The riggings of sailing ships can also be scene in the channel.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)
Another view of the dredging operation shows a crowd of smartly dressed visitors who arrived by car. Motorcycles can be seen at the center. Moms and Dads in suits and hats -- and even children running in the sand -- appear to be scouting locations for their new dream homes. This view was taken looking southwest.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)

Cranes were employed along with the dredging to reposition the fill and raise the height to levels suitable for building. This scene may show the creation of connections from island to island.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)
that first day's land sales are well documented -- all available lots, a total of 300, sold within three hours at an average cost of $5,610 per lot. Hardly any of those lots were above sea level, let alone graded and ready to build on.11

Total sales for that day reached a staggering $1,683,000. More interesting was the staggering resale of those same lots, some reportedly made inside the Franklin Street sales office between the first owners and eager prospects waiting in line. The feat repeated itself each time lots came on the open market. Realizing the need to not flood that lucrative market, Davis spaced the sales months apart, allowing the property values to increase each time.12

Davis encouraged everyone to view his emerging paradise. Like many other real estate developers of the time, Davis owned a fleet of buses on which prospective buyers could tour Davis Islands. The buses, specially painted with the D. P. Davis Properties logo, brought people from as far away as Sarasota, Orlando and even Miami.

Visitors received colorful brochures, booklets and photographs showing how all of their dreams could come true, just by buying property on Davis Islands. Davis’ marketing skills led to the production of sales materials showing the Islands as his dream realized. Venetian style canals, luxurious homes, boating and waterfront grandeur all were depicted in leather-bound booklets distributed to potential buyers.

Davis created a carnival-like atmosphere around his sales promotions, hosting boat races around the Islands and along Bayshore Boulevard, airplane exhibitions with stunt flyers, sports exhibitions such as Olympic swimmer Helen Wainwright’s lap around Davis Islands, plus tennis tournaments and golf lessons from tour professionals Bobby Cruickshank and Johnny Farrell.13

Many of the promises made by Davis and his company were realized, such as a golf course, apartments, hotels, canals and parks. One key aspect of the Islands plan, a shopping district, was also completed. Billed by Davis as "congruous with the plan of establishing on Davis Islands an ideal residential city complete in itself," the business section centered around the Bay Isle Building, located at 238 East Davis Boulevard and designed by Tampa architect M. Leo Elliot. Elliot followed Davis’ requirement that the building "harmonize architecturally with the surrounding Island beauty.” Completed in 1925, the Bay Isle Building is still the anchor of the Islands’ business community.

The Islands featured a number of hotel and apartment projects. The most recognized are the Mirasol, Palazzo Firenze (Palace of Florence), Palmarin Hotel (now known as Hudson Manor) and the Spanish Apartments. Some early commercial buildings, notably the Biscayne Hotel and Venetian Apartments, have since been demolished. Others, such as the Augustine and Columbia Apartments on Columbia Drive, Flora Dora Apartments and Boulevard Apartments (now the Ritz Apartments, completed shortly after Davis’ death) on Davis Boulevard are still occupied. The Merry Makers Club, situated on land given to the club by Davis on the corner of Danube and Barbados, represents the only social club originally planned for the Islands.

The Davis Islands Coliseum, completed in 1925, embodied the largest project originally planned for the community. Funded through the sale of stock certificates, the Coliseum housed concerts, auto shows, conventions
Even as the islands’ powerlines, streetlights and mediterranean-style buildings began to appear, work continued on the miles of curbing, roads, and other infrastructure. Trucks joined the mule wagons in hauling dirt and fill.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)

The Burgerts posed a full crew of carpenters and supervisors in the midst of construction of one the islands’ distinctive homes.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)
and many other events within its large auditorium. The Coliseum was among the largest of its kind in the southeastern United States. Located on Danube, the Davis Islands Coliseum was destroyed by fire in the mid 1970s.

Davis became bolder with each success. The Hillsborough Bay project was simply the next logical step for him to make from his Miami experiences. Davis Islands, in turn, served as a stepping stone to an even more ambitious project. That project, Davis Shores in St. Augustine, arguably led to his untimely death.

DAMS SHORES, ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA

Davis embarked on the new project just one year after opening land sales on Davis Islands. As in Tampa, St. Augustine's newspapers heralded the news of a new Davis development as a magical elixir. The Evening Record's banner front page headline stated simply "Davis to Develop Here."

If his plan for Davis Islands was ambitious, those he held for Davis Shores seemed close to impossible. Davis asserted he would spend $60,000,000 on the Shores project, twice his pledge for Davis Islands. The layout featured a $1,500,000 hotel, $250,000 country club, a yacht club and a Roman pool with casino, each costing $200,000 and two 18-hole golf courses, all crisscrossed by 50 miles of streets and 100 miles of sidewalks. Each lot was designed to border a golf course or the water. Unfortunately for Davis, few of these plans would actually materialize.

"THE BUBBLE BURSTS"

Economic signposts pointed toward a drop in real estate activity. The year 1926 began with news of slow real estate sales, a condition which did not worry the developer. But as the temperature rose from winter to spring, so did the problems. Instead of receiving an expected $4 million in second payments on Davis Islands property, only $30,000 in mortgages were paid.

Also by this time, con men had infested the Florida real estate market, stealing millions of dollars from hapless investors located throughout the United States by selling worthless lots, or property they did not even own. Northern banks grew skiddish of Florida investments. The state of Ohio passed "blue sky" laws that, according to James Covington, Ph. D., "...forbade certain firms to sell Florida real estate in Ohio. Walter J. Greenbaum, Chicago investment banker, said that other states should follow Ohio's lead for 'this Southern land boom is a fertile field for pirates of promotion.'"

Though not a "pirate of promotion," Davis' luck changed as well, with more and more investors defaulting on their loans, starving him of much needed cash. Davis Shores continued to draw away all available resources, resulting in slower construction on Davis Islands. An overall shortage of building materials made matters worse. Davis had little choice but to sell his Tampa investment.

DAVIS SELLS HIS ISLANDS

Tampa lawyer and civic leader Peter O. Knight, who at the time was Tampa Electric Company's president, knew the importance of completing the Island project. Knight convinced the Boston engineering firm of Stone & Webster, who at the time owned Tampa Electric, to purchase Davis Islands.
Stone & Webster formed a new subsidiary, Davis Islands Investment Company, which in turn purchased Davis Islands on August 2, 1926. Davis received 49% of the stock in the new company, which he immediately used as collateral on a $250,000 loan so work could continue on Davis Shores.

**TAMPA GENERAL HOSPITAL**

One of Davis Islands' most enduring buildings spanned the Davis/Stone & Webster eras -- Tampa Municipal Hospital, now known as Tampa General Hospital. A hospital never appeared in the original plans for Davis Islands, nor did it appear, it is safe to say, in the wildest imagination of David Davis.

The city initially wanted to expand the existing Cordon Keller Hospital on North Boulevard, and citizens approved a $215,000 bond issue for that purpose. The idea proved impractical and the search for a new hospital site began. A site committee suggested building on Davis Islands, using a portion of the land deeded to the city by Davis. Voters, in 1925, again approved a bond issue, this time for a new hospital, in the amount of $1,000,000.17

One hurdle still existed -- the proposed location in Marjorie Park still sat under water. Davis promised to have the land available, and in March 1926 construction began on the modern 250-bed facility. The Cordon Keller Nursing School also moved to the Islands, with both opening their doors in 1927. The original hospital building is almost completely obscured by the prominent additions made to it in 1958, 1963, 1973, 1978 and 1985.18

It seems no one gave too great a consideration to the piece of land the new hospital occupied, aside from the fact that the city already owned it. The location on an island accessible by only one bridge (two at present) would prove to be vulnerable during hurricane season, with evacuations not uncommon. Finally, after Tampa's close encounter with Hurricane Elena in August 1985, the hospital's main generator was moved from the basement to a higher and safer location. At present, the hospital can withstand the strongest of storms. Yet the risk of the Islands’ bridges washing out, thereby isolating the hospital from the rest of the city, remains.

**STONE & WEBSTER CONTINUE DAVIS’ VISION**

Stone & Webster continued construction on Davis Islands in late 1926, with attention focused primarily on infrastructure. The company placed an advertisement in the *Tampa Morning Tribune* which trumpeted "Dredging Hits Record Speed." The piece continues, explaining about a "new million dollar contract" it signed with Northern Dredge & Dock Co., the same company Davis originally hired for the project. The new owners of the Islands were eager to get the project back on its feet. "In an endeavor to expedite and complete the dredging at an early date, a provision of the new dredging contract allows a bonus to the dredge company any month that more than 600,000 cubic yards of fill are placed." Northern Dredge operated six dredges at the site and planned on adding a seventh as soon as possible. The newspaper ad ended with the announcement that "600 workmen have been added, 2,157 ft. of sanitary sewers installed, 2,900 feet of water mains laid, 3,000 feet of gas mains placed and 250 lots graded."19

Stone & Webster moved their Tampa offices from 101 Tampa Street in downtown to Davis Islands, possibly as a show of support
D. P. Davis made certain his prospective buyers would see his dream islands in style. Suits and straw hats seem to be the proper garb to wear while touring the new development. A fleet of modern and luxurious D. P. Davis Properties’ buses are shown lined up in front of the Administration Building. This office building would become the Seaborn Academy in 1930.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)

POST BOOM ISLANDS REAL ESTATE

The major hotel projects were finished by the time Stone & Webster purchased the Islands. All but one of the hotels originally planned for the Islands were actually built. That one, projected to sit between Blanca Avenue and the waterfront, did not have the financial backing necessary to insure its completion. The hotel market on the Islands did not live up to the high expectations placed on it by the D. P. Davis Properties promotional brochures. By 1929 many operated well below total occupancy and one, the Palace of Florence, functioned as an apartment/hotel. The Biscayne Hotel represented the only closure, in late 1929 - early 1930, only to re-open in 1931.

The financial picture was not totally bleak. One area of marked growth on the Islands occurred in the rental market. Davis Islands featured six apartment buildings in 1927: the Venetian Apartments, Spanish Apartments, Royal Poinciana Apartments, an apartment building at 48 Davis Boulevard, Boulevard Apartments and the Flora Dora Apartments. Combined, they sustained a 60% occupancy rate, which is somewhat skewed by Boulevard Apartments lying entirely vacant. By mid-1928, 23 apartments were added when the Augustine/Columbia...
Davis spared no expense in marketing Davis Islands as the place to live and entertain in a grand style. Olympic swimmer Helen Wainwright, seen above with a biplane stunt pilot, swam laps around Davis Islands in just one of several marketing promotions designed to bring attention to the development.

(Burgers Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)

Davis’ administration building is an example of the architecture that best typifies the Mediterranean-style influence of the hotels, apartments, offices and homes. The building houses Seaborn Academy today.

(Burgers Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)
Apartments opened on Columbia Drive. In total, there were seven buildings with a combined 92 apartments. Of those, 37 remained unoccupied, maintaining the 60% occupancy rate from the previous year.  

The occupancy rate dropped in 1929, to 53%, but the figure is misleading. Fifty apartments were added, two entirely new buildings plus the transition of the Palace of Florence from exclusively offering hotel rooms to also providing rooms for rent. The total number of leased apartments increased by 20. The rental market enjoyed a surge by 1930, when both the number of available apartments and the number of rented apartments both increased. The Kornell, the first departure from Mediterranean architecture in a Davis Islands commercial building, offered just three apartments, which were all leased, and the Venetian Apartments added two units to the 15 already available. 

"Though he did not survive to see it, Davis’ dream of a model community became reality. The award was as much for Davis’ visionary planning as it was for Stone & Webster’s continued execution, referred to in the last sentence of the commendation. "The development of these features has continued throughout the property with provision of all utilities enjoyed by the most exclusive residential communities.”  

CHANGES IN THE DREAM

With the transfer of ownership from Davis’ D. P. Davis Properties to Stone & Webster’s Davis Islands Incorporated came increased flexibility in the deed restrictions. The Kornell Apartments, completed in 1928 and located at 25 Davis Boulevard, was a radical departure from the Mediterranean style required by Davis. Several residences also deviated from the prescribed style, examples of which still exist at 26 and 116 Adalia.

Davis Islands Inc. continued construction on the Islands for the benefit of both private and business residents. The firm also pursued the internal improvements on Davis’ original road plans, which were necessary for the smooth flow of the growing automobile traffic. The permanent bridge leading to Davis Islands was dedicated in a ceremony featuring Tampa mayor D. B. McKay and Howard G. Philbrook, president of Davis Islands Inc., on May 16, 1928. It took nearly a year and a half to complete the bridge, with a portion of the time spent fighting an injunction by Patrick and Euphemia Kelliher, who claimed the bridge infringed on the riparian rights of their property at 105 Bay Street. The Florida Supreme Court dissolved the injunction allowing construction to continue.

Davis Islands Inc. kept another of Davis’ promises, in 1929, when they completed
The Venetian Apartments, part of Davis’s master plan for a complete community of lifestyles, incomes and interests, were built on the island side of the bridge taking full advantage of the water and walking proximity to downtown. The sign in the photo reads, ‘COMPLETELY AND LUXURIOUSLY FURNISHED. ALL APPLIANCES ELECTRIC. REASONABLE YEAR ROUND RATES. APPLY WITHIN.” The building is no longer standing.

(Burgert Brothers photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)

An aerial view of St. Augustine and the Atlantic Ocean in the distance was marked by Davis to show his new development, Davis Shores. Again, proximately to the town’s main business district, "2000 FEET," was a big selling point. Davis would not live to see his dreams -- here or in Tampa -- fulfilled.

(Photograph courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center.)
construction of the Davis Islands Pool. Located on the corner of Columbia Drive and Bosphorous Avenue, the $75,000 swimming pool represented one of the last large-scale projects funded by Davis Islands Inc.28

Davis Islands Inc. continued to advertise the virtues of visiting and living on the Islands, but a reduced marketing budget directed the message to a different target audience. The prospective buyer was not the same one who originally rushed to buy lots on the first day in 1924. In 1928 a Davis Islands brochure titled Florida's Wonder Spot still touted the location, convenience, fun and luxury of the property, but the printed piece was produced on a smaller budget. Paper quality, artwork and design were all affected by the low cost approach. Another big difference was the greatly expanded use of photography rather than the fanciful artwork of previous sales brochures. That was probably due as much to the fact there were more finished buildings to photograph in 1928 as with the cost of creating and printing original drawings.

Flowery language was another casualty of the new times. One of the captions for a photograph of the Mirasol Hotel gives an example of these changes. "The Mirasol -- one of the Davis Islands Hotels - where the visitor finds real resort luxury at moderate cost."29 As a comparison, the hotels in Life on Davis Islands, Tampa In The Bay, produced by D. P. Davis Properties in 1925, were "robbed in quiet refinement where everyone . . . free from care, may enjoy the vitalizing Island life that beckons near at hand." Life on Davis Islands, printed by the Courier - Journal Lithography Company (complete with embossed leather cover), was issued to prospective buyers and visitors at the D. P. Davis Properties Administration Building at 32 Davis Boulevard. When placed next to each other, the post-Davis version is somewhat lacking.30 The silvery prose is still present, but it is definitely tarnished.

In a final blow to the old Davis marketing machine, the administration offices moved from 32 Davis Boulevard into space on the second floor of the Bay Isle Building -- space recently vacated by Stone & Webster. The old Davis Boulevard quarters became the Seaborn Day School in 1930.

CAUSALITIES OF THE BOOM

David Davis was among the most notable casualties of the boom. He would not live to see either of his monumental projects, Davis Islands or Davis Shores, see completion. Stories of Davis’ death always include some measure of mystery. The only undisputed facts are that he fell overboard and drowned while en route to Europe aboard an ocean liner. What is in question is how he ended up in the water; by accidentally falling out of a port hole, being pushed out or jumping out to end his own life. Victory National Life Insurance Company, founded by Sumter Lowry, sold Davis a $300,000 policy a few months before his death. Davis held policies with other insurance companies, and, since the body was not recovered, there was some doubt that Davis was really dead. Lowry, "anxious to make a reputation for paying claims promptly," hired an investigator;

"who went to England and talked to the Cunard Line offices. They established the fact that a reliable steward had been standing outside Mr. Davis’ cabin and he heard voices in the cabin. In a few minutes one of the parties in the cabin rushed out and said that Mr. Davis had gone overboard.

"The steward had seen Mr. Davis go in the cabin and he had never left his position at
the door until the announcement was made that Mr. Davis was lost. He rushed in the cabin which was small and it would have been impossible for a man to hide himself in. The cabin was empty. D. P Davis was gone.31

Lowry paid out the claim based on the investigator’s conclusion that Davis was indeed dead. How he fell overboard is still a mystery. Until new evidence is found, any theory regarding Davis’ death is just that, theory.

Davis was not alone in his fall from realty grace. The entire Florida real estate market began a steady decline in 1926. "By October 1925 the . . . boom peaked. By February 1926 the New York Times reported a ‘lull’. By July the Nation reported a ‘collapse’: The world’s greatest poker game, played with building lots instead of chips, is over. And the players are now . . . paying up.”32 Tampa realtors felt the sting, which is reflected in the city directories of the time. In 1926, there were over 850 companies and individuals listed in the Tampa City Directory under its various real estate listings. The realtors covered Hillsborough County and west Central Florida, with a few touting investments in South Florida. Eighty-two of these companies placed real estate ads in the directory’s special advertising section, up from 74 in 1925. One year later, in 1927, only 29 realty companies decided to buy space in the advertising section. The total number of realtors that year plunged by half to 416. Only 292 showed up in the 1928 city directory, with 21 of those taking out special ads.33

Some growth in other areas of the industry did develop, as reflected by the directories. The most evident increase occurred in rent collection. Two agencies, Harris Realty Company and Jacob Highsmith, listed themselves under rent collectors in 1926. The number increased to 5 in 1927, when Walter J. Burnside, C. V. Dickins and Hendry & Knight Company joined Harris and Highsmith. Thrower Brothers Incorporated offered their services in 1928, in addition to the five other concerns. By 1929, however, it became obvious that not even rent collection could prove profitable. Just Burnside and Dickins survived in the listings at the end of the 1920s.

Real estate continued its decline, and by 1930 only 5 real estate companies placed ads in the directory, a 94% decrease from 1926.34 The final blow, of course, was the stock market crash on October 29, 1929. The rest of the country was simply joining Florida in economic depression.

With that, all hope of a recovery in Florida real estate was lost. Davis possibly felt the inevitable approaching and did not want to be around to see it. His islands would again become desirable property, but it would take another world war and another Florida real estate boom, caused by the booming economy and population in the 1950s, for it to happen.

ENDNOTES

The author wishes to thank Elizabeth Dunham, Robert Kerstein, Frank North and Curtis Welch for their assistance in the research and preparation of this article.

George Riley Davis, *Tampa Morning Tribune*, February 14, 1930.

David Davis’ sister, Elizabeth, is referred to in the obituary of George Davis. It is likely that she is the oldest of the four Davis children because she is not listed with the Davis household in the 1900 Federal Census. Presumably she had already moved out of the house by that time.

2 Twelfth Census of the United States. Sholes’ Directory of the city of Tampa, 1899, A. E. Sholes, Publisher, Savannah, Georgia, 1899. In the 1899 Sholes’ Tampa Directory, George Davis is listed as an engineer on the steamer *Manatee*.


5 Previous biographers have placed him across the country, and the hemisphere, including a stint as a land speculator in the Panama Canal Zone.


8 The Davis home at 207 South Boulevard has since been demolished. The Lee Roy Selmon Expressway presently passes through the property.

9 Davis made every effort to mention the cost of the Davis Islands investment. He placed the $30,000,000 price tag in almost every brochure, advertisement and news story produced between 1924 and 1926.

10 Among the City of Tampa’s materials relating to Davis Islands is a copy of a list of investors who held contracts with David Davis for surety bonds on Davis Islands. The list includes W. A. Adams and William J. Barrio, both sitting City Commissioners at the time. City of Tampa Archives and Records Service.


12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.


15 Covington, pp. 27

16 Ibid., pp. 26


18 TGH, pp. 242.

19 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 10, 1926.

20 Bigwigs of Stone and Webster

21 PTD. Year 1927.

22 PTD. Years 1927 -1928.

23 PTD. Years 1929 -1930.

24 *Davis Islands Plan: Tampa Urban Case Study* (Hillsborough County Planning Commission, Tampa, no date) pp. 20.

25 Ibid.

26 The name of the holding company for Davis Islands changed from Davis Islands Investment Company to Davis Islands Incorporated between 1926 and 1928.

27 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 16, 1928.

28 Ibid., August 25, 1929.

29 *Florida’s Wonder Spot* Produced for the Mirasol and Palmerin Hotels, Davis Islands Incorporated, (Florida Grower Press, Tampa, Florida, 1928)

30 *Life on Davis Islands, Tampa In The Bay* D. P. Davis Properties, Inc. (Printed by Courier - Journal Lithography, Louisville, Kentucky, 1925) Both *Florida’s Water Spot and Life on Davis Islands* are in
the collections of the Tampa Bay History Center, Tampa, Florida.


33 PTD. Years consulted were 1926 through 1929. In the 1926 directory, there were seven real estate related categories. These remained roughly the same through 1929, with a few exceptions.

34 PTD. The following is the total page count, advertising page count and percentage of pages devoted to advertising, 1926 - 1930: 1926 - 108, 233, 21%; 1927 - 71, 9, 12%; 1928 - 59, 62, 11%; 1929 - 44, 33, 7%; 1930 - 34, 1 3/4, 5%
TAMPA AT 1948

Dr. Gary R. Mormino

It was a year to remember, a period when the highs were higher and the lows were lower than anyone could recall. In Washington, a feisty Democratic president cursed the Republican-dominated Congress and negotiated a delicate foreign policy in the troubled Middle East. Articulating a vision of an activist state with the dream of national healthcare, the President openly clashed with conservatives’ demands for tax cuts and a return to limited government. In the White House, the First Lady fiercely attempted to protect her daughter’s privacy from an annoying press. The GOP, confident of a landslide victory, suffered instead a humiliating defeat.

Florida in January served as a welcome refuge from the world’s problems. Not even record rains dampened tourists’ spirits, especially elated University of Michigan fans. The Wolverines won the national championship in football, while the University of Florida, alas, fell short again of an SEC championship.

A surging economy and a cornucopia of consumer goods promised new comforts, but Americans expressed old anxieties. Amidst the new cars, homes, and electronic gadgets, old demons haunted Tampa: race, poverty, and government. Problems aplenty confronted Tampans: the municipal hospital teetered on bankruptcy, while leaders demanded a new stadium to enhance the city’s image. African Americans, organized and frustrated over dreams deferred, demanded change. It was 1948.

Like Banquo’s ghost, the spirits of WWII lingered well past their appointed hour. Floridians, once optimistic that V-J Day would usher in a Pax Americana, witnessed a world spinning out of control. Large parts of Europe and Asia, devastated and disoriented by the war, confronted the spectre of revolution, famine, and homelessness. Displaced persons entered the lexicon, along with the "Iron Curtain" and "Free World."

The United States, by virtue of the atomic bomb, prosperity, and attrition, seemed the only "Free World" power capable of halting the Communist juggernaut. In Czechoslovakia, the Reds toppled the democratic Benes government; Communist forces battled for power in China, Greece, Italy, and Berlin.

The region’s Greek, Italian, and Czech communities nervously followed events in their homeland. A bloody civil war enveloped Greece as Communist guerrillas battled monarchists and republicans. In Italy, the Communists seemed poised for victory at the ballot box. Alarmed, the State Department asked local Italian Americans to write Sicilian relatives, urging them to renounce the Communists. The Christian Democrats triumphed after a bitter contest. In Masaryktown, Czech chicken farmers openly wept at the news of a Communist seizure of power. In 1948, foreign crises in the Middle East, Europe, and the Caribbean drew intense interest from Tampa Bay area residents. On May 14, Israel proclaimed itself a state. Local Jews, exhilarated by U.S. recognition of Israel, recoiled in horror at the violence and war which followed the partition of Palestine. Jewish groups gave generously to Hadassah, the national Jewish relief organization.
In May 1948 the *Tampa Tribune* printed a headline eerily familiar to present-day Floridians: "Cuban Politicians In Exile Campaign From Miami Beach." Since he lost the presidency in 1944, Cuban strongman Fulgencio Batista had lived in splendid exile at Daytona Beach, plotting a counter revolution. *Time* nicknamed Batista, the "Senator from Daytona." ¹

In December 1948, Tampans gathered at MacDill Army Air Field to dedicate "Miss Tampa," a new B-29 bomber. The only question seemed where "Miss Tampa" would drop her bombs--Berlin, Peking, or Moscow. While cargo-carrying C-54's and C-47's relieved Berlin during the decisive airlift, new weapons, such as P-80 and F-86 fighter jets, and B-36 heavy bombers criss-crossed the skies of Tampa Bay, headed toward the Avon Park bombing range. In September, a crowd of 200,000 gathered at MacDill Field to gasp at American airpower.² Air power fascinated Americans, who incorporated such terms as jet lag and jet set into their language and culture. The 1948 Cadillac drew its inspiration from the P-38 Lightning, a WWII twintailed fighter. By the summer of '48, the DC-6 Buccaneer whisked Tampans to New York in four hours. Tampa International Airport, only recently Drew Army Air Field, adjusted to civilian flight patterns.

Technology held out a dazzling future while it was reshaping the lives of Tampa Bay residents. By 1948, penicillin, and blood plasma had saved thousands of lives while

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¹ Time nicknamed Batista, the "Senator from Daytona." ² Air power fascinated Americans, who incorporated such terms as jet lag and jet set into their language and culture.
DDT was being hailed a miracle pesticide. Consumers eagerly accepted the transistor and FM radio. In May 1948, the region's first FM station opened, WFLA-FM. The Tribune-owned company forecast television in the near future. Time predicted television would "zoom like a V-2 rocket." In Ybor City, an aging Latin workforce-- the personification of hand-crafted tradition-- welcomed the first radio broadcast of a World Series in Spanish.3

Entertainment would never be the same. Soon, transistor-powered radios wafted across Gulf beaches while TV antennae sprouted along rooftops. Entertainment was becoming increasingly personalized. The serenity of Florida beaches projected a vital image in the selling of the Sunshine State. In a state obsessed with image, television would later redefine the selling of sunshine and leisure. But on this dawn of TV, newspapers, magazines, and personalities still dominated the image industry. St. Petersburg and Tampa supported two English-language dailies and two afternoon newspapers, and several Spanish-language papers. Magazines, such as Life, Look, and Saturday Evening Post enjoyed enormous circulations.

Tampa's image took a beating in 1948. A series of print articles lampooned the city, prompting the Tribune to ask: "Is Tampa Progressing or Slipping" In the winter, the influential Holiday magazine suggested that Tampa smelled, that its Gasparilla Festival smacked of a "slapstick comedy," and that its slums "begged a Mexican peon village." In the spring, the iconoclastic journalist H.L. Mencken vacationed in the area. The aging satirist mocked the region's manners and morals, ridiculing in particular octogenarian softball players in St. Petersburg. The Baltimore native, when asked about Tampa, responded, "As long as there is any section where a Methodist preacher is treated respectfully by the community and its newspapers, it cannot be considered civilized." Mencken conceded he enjoyed arroz con polo at Las Novedades.4

Insults turned injurious when Fortune magazine profiled Florida. The Sunshine State "is booming and bustling, whooping and worrying," observed the respected journal. "It is the U.S. 1948 in a distorted mirror." Tampans were aghast when Fortune's Lawrence Lessing depicted Tampa as "a gently decaying town with a distinctive flavor."5

Tampans dismissed the naysayers, pointing at the crowded parking lots as proof of the city's health. Yet in hindsight, "gently decaying" aptly described Tampa's postwar plight. The seeds of the crises of the 1990s-- inadequate municipal facilities, traffic gridlock, a declining downtown, and political distrust-- were sown in the 1940s.

In 1946 Tampa had ended its fifty year love affair with the street car. St. Petersburg mothballed its fleet two years later. The region paid dearly for its abandonment of a mass transit system already in place. Hundreds of abandoned yellow street cars rusted in a vacant lot at Columbus Drive and Lincoln Avenue. Others had been sold, used as converted homes or trolley cars in Colombia. Ironically, Tennessee Williams' brilliant play, "A Streetcar Named Desire," premiered in 1948. The eccentric Williams resided in Key West. Americans adored the individual freedom allowed by the automobile. A resurgent Detroit seduced consumers with power and style. Whether one purchased a Crosley or Studebaker, traffic jams and potholes awaited commuters. Since automobiles required individual parking spaces, increasing amounts of downtown Tampa surrendered to
In 1948, downtown Tampa was a mecca for movie Boers. The State Theater, 1008 Franklin Street, was one of many such motion picture houses.

(Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, USF Library.)
parking lots. Cheap gasoline—in September one could find petrol for 18¢ a gallon—encouraged even more drivers. By the end of 1948, downtown Tampa needed at least 4,500 more parking spaces.5

Leaders brushed aside such problems, smug knowing that complaints about congestion reflected health, not decline. Shoppers from Arcadia to Zephyrhills continued to drive to Tampa and patronize upscale stores, such as Maas Brothers, the region's finest department store. But in January 1948, St. Petersburg opened its own "million dollar" Maas Brothers store. Downtown Tampa would not see a significant new building, the Marine Bank, erected until 1960.

In Tampa, old economies and new realities collided in 1948. "The Cigar City" struggled to redefine itself. Thousands of cigarmakers, many of them pioneers from the hand-rolled heyday of Ybor City as the capital of premium cigars, remained unemployed. The Great Depression and the popularity of cheap cigarettes during the war—a tonic for "war nerves"—had seriously eroded the market for Tampa's finest. Most notably, fashionable men no longer smoked cigars.

Still, the moniker "Cigar City" lingered. While cigars held powerful memories for Tampa, the city's economy was far more dependent upon phosphate and shipping, construction and services, military defense and organized crime. Old firms and first families held power and controlled civic affairs, but a new generation of businessmen and leaders emerged after the war, typified by Jim Walter, Sam Gibbons, Chester Ferguson, Tony Pizzo, John Germany, and Julian Lane.

One resident who had witnessed economic prosperity and great depressions, the Third Seminole War and two world wars, died October 22, 1948. Born in Mississippi in 1855, Isaac Milner Brandon had come to Hillsborough County with his family in 1857. The Brandons first settled in Seffner but later moved to the place which bore their name. Brandon was still a rural hamlet notable for its serenity and unhurried pace.7

In 1948, commentators noted increasing traffic and housing starts in Brandon, but Tampa's most serious threat loomed across Tampa Bay. St. Petersburg, and its booming Pinellas neighbors, now posed a daunting challenge to Tampa's hegemony. When statisticians released figures documenting the amount of new construction, Tampans were stunned. In 1947, Tampa's building permits amounted to $9.4 million. St. Petersburg, however, nearly doubled Tampa's total, while Miami experienced a growth five times Tampa's. In the 1960s, to the horror of Hillsborough County officials, Pinellas County overtook Hillsborough in population.8

Clearly, much of the unplanned growth in Hillsborough County was occurring outside Tampa's constricted boundaries. But more importantly, Tampa and Hillsborough County were not experiencing the quantity or quality of growth unfolding in Pinellas. Moreover, Hillsborough County was not attracting new industries with high-paying jobs.

If any single Tampan personified 1948, it was Jim Walter. Returning from the navy—his wife, a WAVE, outranked him—the young veteran earned $50 a week driving a truck for his father, a fruit packer. He became intrigued with the idea of filling a need in the frantic housing market by building inexpensive "shell houses." An empire was born. By 1948, Walter and partner Lou Davenport sold semi-finished frame homes from their company site at
Sulphur Springs. For less than a thousand dollars, aspiring homeowners could purchase a "shell house," provided one owned a lot and possessed some carpentry skills.9

Jim Walter was to Hillsborough County what the Levitt brothers were to postwar America. By 1962, the Jim Walter Corporation, with branches in 187 cities and 28 states, was the world's largest builder of shell homes. Walter's success, however, came with a price. His early homes left Hillsborough County in dire straits, since many of the inexpensive homes generated little or no tax revenue but still required county services.

Spurred by new freedoms and cheap gasoline, the automobile became a symbol and presence in postwar Tampa. Emblematic of postwar culture, the drive-in flourished. Tampans expressed a love affair with Goody-Goody, Falor's, the Spar, and Colonnade. Anticipating new tastes, Charles Olson finally perfected a machine touted as "revolutionary." The Sulphur Springs machinist had built a stainless steel contraption that allowed short-order cooks to broil rather than fry hamburgers.

The broiled vs. fried burger debate notwithstanding, more serious problems threatened the social welfare of Tampa Bay. Since 1947 had been declared the year of education in Florida, citizens despaired that the state's hopelessly inadequate tax revenues could solve problems of growth. Officials earmarked massive new expenditures for education, but parents discovered the same problems of overcrowding and dilapidation. Defiantly, Hillsborough County voters defeated a 1948 school referendum. Tampa's municipal hospital also languished. "Little is found in the long record of Tampa Hospital, with its climbing costs and outbreaks of discord," concluded the Tribune, "to support belief that cities can manage hospitals on a sound basis."10

If 1947 was the year of education, 1948 was the year of political tumult. Everywhere, political institutions crumbled and angry voters searched for new leaders. Two intertwining issues seemed paramount: the question of states' rights and the vexing question of racial equality.

The 1948 presidential race occupies a special place in American political history. A moment of high political melodrama, the 1948 election offered genuine heroes, an improbable script, and compelling issues. For President Harry Truman, the prospects of reelection seemed hopeless. Truman was simply no FDR. In what seemed a harbinger, the Republicans had triumphed respondingly in the 1946 elections. "To error is Truman," quipped a cynic. The issue of civil rights imploded the Democratic Party. Truman had appointed a controversial Committee on Civil Rights, which challenged the sacrosanct doctrine of white supremacy. The published report, To Secure These Rights, condemned segregation, recommended the integration of the armed services, and criticized police brutality. The South reacted predictably. A Baptist minister from Florida wrote Truman, warning, "If that report is carried out, you won't be elected dogcatcher in 1948."

The civil rights plank, written by young Minnesotan Hubert Humphrey, ruptured the Democratic convention. E. D. Lambright, the Tribune editorial director and a newspaperman in Tampa since 1899, expressed his sentiment bluntly: "Lambright Declares South Is Kicked Out of Democratic Party." Florida's 20 delegates voted twenty to zero against the party's civil rights platform. The chairman of Florida's
Democratic Party stated, "No sensible citizen can honestly support the president's plan to abolish racial segregation." 11

Truman’s worst nightmare occurred during the summer of ‘48. In rapid succession, two vital wings of the Democratic Party—the Deep South and liberals—bolted. Southern whites rallied under the banner of the States’ Rights Party, popularly called the Dixiecrats. A young South Carolina Governor and war hero, Strom Thurmond, burst on the national scene. Ironically, Thurmond had earned a reputation as a southern moderate.

The enigmatic Henry Wallace led the Progressive Party ticket in 1948. An Iowan who served as secretary of agriculture and vice president, Wallace veered to the left of mainstream Democrats by 1948. In particular, Wallace championed a rapprochement with the Soviet Union, offering an olive branch to Stalin and a thorn to Truman. Wallace’s brother John lived in St. Petersburg.

The Republicans nominated a safe candidate, Governor Thomas Dewey of New York. "Only a political miracle or extraordinary stupidity on the part of the Republicans can save the Democratic party in November," predicted Time. The Tribune asked strollers to comment on Truman’s prospects. Wade Hoffmann, a clerk, said bluntly, "Truman is out of luck."

Sunshine Motors at 200 South Tampa Street, displays a 1949 model Willys Jeep.  

(Robertson-Fresh photograph courtesy of Special Collections, USF Library.)
When Henry Wallace stumped for votes in the Deep South, hecklers frequently hurled rotten eggs at the candidate, but not in Tampa. Wallace tapped into the liberal reservoir that had once challenged cigar manufacturers and embraced radical doctrines. Elderly Latins expressed a genuine fondness for the Progressive Party candidate, shouting "Viva Wallace" at a large rally at Plant Field. A Tribune reporter noted, "perhaps the strangest sight of all was the mingling of white and negro people in the grandstands." In October, the majestical Paul Robeson arrived in Tampa to rally support for Wallace. Robeson, an all-American football player at Rutgers, a celebrated baritone and movie star, was also a lightning rod for controversy. Robeson had actively supported the loyalists during the Spanish Civil War and flirted with Communism. According to the Tampa Times, Robeson spoke and sang to a "non-segregated" audience of 600 at Plant Field. Within a month of one another, Robeson sang "Old Man River" in Tampa and testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee in Washington. Major General Sumter Lowry, Jr. warned Tampans that Henry Wallace and Paul Robeson posed a Communist threat to America.

Never had so many prominent celebrities campaigned in Tampa as in 1948. Correctly sensing opportunities in Florida, Ohio Senator Robert Taft -- "Mr. Republican"-- campaigned in Pinellas County. A pollster asked elderly Republicans lounging on St. Petersburg’s green benches what they
thought of the Republican ticket of Tom Dewey and Earl Warren. To a person, they all wished Dwight Eisenhower had run for president. The long-abused Republican Party of Hillsborough County detected a hint of optimism, organizing a Young Republican Club.\textsuperscript{13}

The November election served as Harry Truman’s defining moment. Giving Republicans hell, he adroitly concentrated his criticism at a "do nothing" Republican Congress. Truman managed to rally in the waning moments of the campaign to defeat Dewey in the greatest upset in American political history. Hortense K. Wells, a Tampa Democrat who once ran for governor, seemed to summarize local sentiment. "I held my nose and voted for Truman," she acknowledged. Ultimately, Florida’s leading politicians refused to sacrifice the Democratic Party for the Dixiecrat windmill. U.S. Senator Spessard Holland told members of Florida’s United Daughters for the Confederacy that "we, in the South, will solve this in a decent, Christian way in the best interests of both races involved."\textsuperscript{14}

Truman carried Florida and Hillsborough County, but the biggest surprise was Henry Wallace’s showing. The Progressive candidate won seven precincts—all in Ybor City and West Tampa—representing Wallace’s most effective support anywhere outside Manhattan. The Dixiecrat Thurmond fizzled in Florida, as most Democrats reckoned that a protest vote was a wasted vote. Thurmond’s greatest support came in Duval County. Wallace’s “triumph” represented a last gasp of Latin radicalism in Tampa. Quickly, Communist-baiting and McCarthyism created a hostile climate for progressives.\textsuperscript{15}

In Pinellas County, the election electrified Florida’s moribund Republican Party. Dewey took the county and Republicans seized City Hall, a signal moment in St. Petersburg history. William Cramer urged the leaders of the Republican Party take note. In 1954 Cramer became Florida’s first Republican Congressman in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16}

In Tampa, 1948 marked a political watershed, a moment when one can observe a changing of the guard. R.E.L. Chancey, three-time mayor of Tampa in the 1930s and ‘40s, died. J. Tom Watson, Florida’s enigmatic and briary attorney general, abandoned the Democratic party and never held office again. Watson had arrived in Tampa in 1906 serving as judge, legislator, and gadfly.

The year 1948 also undermined Hugh Culbreath. Elected Hillsborough County Sheriff in 1940, Culbreath had established a powerful political base. Critics, including the \textit{Tribune}’s "Jock" Murray, accused Culbreath of blatant corruption. In 1948, W.B. "Bill" Myers challenged Gulbreath, charging him with malfeasance of duty, forcing the incumbent into a runoff. Culbreath adamantly denied that organized crime and gambling existed, let alone flourished. In a "last hurrah" performance, Culbreath rallied to win the election, but he never ran for sheriff again. The \textit{Tribune}, which once tolerated such corruption, attacked Culbreath and others with a new ferocity. In 1950 he was implicated by the Kefauver investigation into organized crime.

A new era dawned. Randolph McLaughlin, the School Superintendent was vulnerable; voters seethed over the condition of local schools. The challenger came from the gridiron. J. Crockett Farnell—he of the square jaw—had compiled a legendary career
as a football star at the University of Tampa and as coach with a 61-8 record at Hillsborough High. The resolute Farnell destroyed the hapless McLaughlin at the polls and remained a powerbroker until scandal forced him out of office in the 1960s.17

The 1948 elections also brought new faces to Tallahassee. Floridians elected Fuller Warren to the governorship. A flamboyant character, Warren seemed to be running for governor since he enrolled at the University of Florida. While participating on the boxing team and cheerleading, he also represented Calhoun County in the State Legislature. Days after Pearl Harbor, Warren wrote the Secretary of War a letter which the political-minded volunteer sent to scores of state newspapers. "I want to take an active part in slaughtering the Japs and Germans," the thirty-six year old Blountstown native wrote, adding, "I have no inclination to kill Italians--whom I consider craven cowards."

Fuller Warren defeated challenger Dan McCarty, a war hero, Ft. Pierce farmer, and former speaker of the Florida House of Representatives. The candidates fiercely debated Florida's antiquated tax structure. Warren vowed to veto any sales tax, which of course he signed in 1949. Angry voters never forgave Warren, whose administration became mired in scandal. Merchants placed jars on the counter with labels reading "Pennies for Fuller."

Claude Pepper faced a very gloomy future in 1948. For the forty-eight year-old U. S. Senator, once featured on the cover of Time as "Roosevelt's weather cock," 1948 was a disaster. When Pepper came to Tampa's Plant Field for an October campaign rally, State Senator Sheldon apologized to the senator for the sparse crowd. He encouraged Henry Wallace and opposed Harry Truman, a snub which the President never forgot or forgave. Senator Pepper's shifting stands on issues irritated voters. In 1944, candidate Pepper opposed an anti-lynching bill, announcing, "The South will allow nothing to impair White supremacy." By December 1948, he promised to support Truman' civil rights program, "even if it beats me in the next election." It would.18

Pepper's actions baffled Floridians. In a visit to the Soviet Union, the Senator praised Stalin's willingness to work with the West. Pepper attended a Madison Square Garden rally and shared the stage with Paul Robeson. The Tribune asked Tampans, "What do you think of Claude Pepper now" William Segars, an advertising agent, opined, "I believe he is too pink." Ellsworth Rue, a clerk, remarked, "I don't believe Senator Pepper has used his education for the progress of Florida."19

As Claude Pepper, Strom Thurmond, and Harry Truman realized, the battle for civil rights ignited a firestorm of controversy. In Hillsborough County, 1948 marked the first time in a half century that African Americans registered and voted as Democrats. For three years, local leaders such as John Dekle, Supervisor of Registration, and J. Tom Watson, Attorney General, had resisted the implementation of the Supreme Court's 1944 Smith ruling, which banned the White Primary. By 1948, the legal challenges had been exhausted. Black preachers and leaders led a crusade to register thousands of African- Americans as Democrats.

Voting was only a small part of a larger civil rights revolution. Led by C. Blythe Andrews, Perry Harvey, Sr., and James Hargrett, Sr., Tampa's African-American community agitated for decent schools, better municipal services, and humane
treatment from the police. In 1948, black leaders sought respect and equality within a segregated Tampa. What is remarkable is that Tampa’s white leaders regarded such change as radical.

In 1948, Tampa was a city of sunshine and shadows, a city brightened by its ethnic vitality and sense of pride, but darkened by the lengthening shadows of poverty and inequality. An unyielding Jim Crow line divided the city into separate neighborhoods, schools, and public and private accommodations. A casual reader of 1948 newspapers might draw the conclusion that Tampa was a city populated chiefly by whites, aside from an occasional race crime. The all-county football and basketball teams were all white, as they had been for decades.

An examination of Tampa’s surviving African-American newspaper, the Florida Sentinel Bulletin, reveals a hidden world, a society which cherished its segregated schools, patronized black-owned shopkeepers on Central Avenue, and nurtured powerful dreams for its children. It would be the children of Perry Harvey, James Hargrett, and others who would advance the civil rights revolution.

Change was on the land.

ENDNOTES

Gary R. Mormino holds the Frank E. Duckwell Professorship in Florida History at the University of South Florida.

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Mr. J. Thomas Touchton, President of the Board of Trustees of the Tampa Bay History Center, Inc., is a native of Dade City, Florida, and is Managing Partner of the Witt-Touchton Company, a private investment partnership in Tampa. Mr. Touchton is a current or past member of the Boards of Directors of several universities and organizations including TECO Energy, Inc., and its subsidiary, Tampa Electric Company. Mr. Touchton is being honored with the D. B. McKay Award for over ten years of unselfish dedication and commitment to Tampa and Florida history and his leadership of the drive to bring a regional history museum to greater Tampa and Hillsborough County. Growing out of the Historical Museum Task Force created in July of 1986 by the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners, the History Center effort came to life when first incorporated as the History Museum of Tampa/Hillsborough county in 1989. Tommy Touchton, the group's first president, has lead a distinguished board of trustees and advisors on the long road to acceptance, visibility and financial viability. The current success enjoyed by the Tampa Bay History Center in realizing its goal of seeing a museum built can be largely credited to the tireless devotion and perseverance of Mr. Touchton. For his significant contribution to Florida's history, Tommy Touchton is awarded the 1999 D. B. McKay Award.

**Past Recipients of the D B. McKay Award**

- 1972 Frank Laumer
- 1973 Sate Senator David McClain
- 1974 Circuit Court Judge Lames R. Knott
- 1975 Gloria Jahoda
- 1976 Harris H. Mullen
- 1977 Dr. James Covington
- 1978 Hampton Dunn
- 1979 William M. Goza
- 1980 Tony Pizzo
- 1981 Allen and Joan Morris
- 1982 Mel Fisher
- 1983 Marjory Stoneman Douglas
- 1984 Frank Garcia
- 1985 Former Governor Leroy Collins
- 1086 Dr. Samuel Proctor
- 1987 Doyle E. Carlton, Jr.
- 1988 Leland M. Hawes, Jr.
- 1989 U. S. Representative Charles E. Bennett
- 1990 Joan W. Jennewein
- 1991 Dr. Gary R. Mormino
- 1992 Julius J. Cordon
1993 Jack Moore and Robert Snyder
1994 Ferdie Pacheco
1995 Stephanie E. Ferrell
1996 Michael Cannon
1997 Rowena Ferrell Brady
1998 Dr. Canter Brown, Jr.
About the Authors:

Dr. Canter Brown, Jr. is a native of Fort Meade, Florida. He received his B. A., J.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Florida Sate University. His 1991 book, Florida’s Peace River Frontier, received the Rembert W. Patrick award from the Florida Historical Society. Currently living in Tallahassee, Brown is completing a history of the Florida Supreme Court. He is the author of a number of articles and books such as African Americans on the Tampa Bay Frontier, and, most recently, Tampa before the Civil War, published this year. A frequent lecturer on Tampa and Florida history, Dr. Brown was the Historian-in-Residence at the Tampa Bay History Center and the 1998 recipient of the Tampa Historical Society’s D. B. McKay Award.

Marion Reed Rawls Gray, a native of Tampa, is a retired educator from the Hillsborough County school system. An graduate of the University of Alabama with a degree in economics and the Cordon Kelley School of Nursing, Ms. Gray served an a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Nurse Corp during the second world war, attached to the U.S. Army Air Corp at Tampa’s Drew Field, and taught health aide nursing at both H. B. Plant and Robinson High School. Married to Robert Gray, she is a freelance writer and has contributed to local and national publications including The Tampa Tribune and Southern Baptist Magazine.

Leland M. Hawes, Jr. is a Tampa native who grew up in Thonotosassa, where he published a weekly newspaper at age 11. A graduate of the University of Florida, he worked as a reporter for The Tampa Daily Times for two years before joining the staff of The Tampa Tribune where he worked in a variety of positions before his current assignment, writer and editor of the History and Heritage page. A respected, long-time guardian of Tampa’s history, Hawes was the 1988 D. B. McKay Award recipient.

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. The Curator of Collections at Heritage Village at the Pinellas County Historical Museum in Largo, Ivey has written a wide variety of articles on Florida history and is a frequent and welcome contributor to The Sunland Tribune.

Dr. Joe Knetsch is a Senior Analyst with the Bureau of Survey and Mapping, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and is a regular contributor to The Sunland Tribune and other journals of Florida history. Knetsch has been published in each of the last eight issues of The Sunland Tribune and this volume contains two of his articles. He received his B.S. from Western Michigan University, his M.A. from Florida Atlantic University and his Ph.D. from Florida State University.

Geoffrey Mohlman, historian and writer, was employed by the Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board to conduct research with funds provided by the Historic Resources review board. The result was the Hillsborough County Landmark designation for the Citrus Park Colored School, subject of his article in this issue, "The Most Well Utilized Building . . . In The United States:" Citrus Park Colored School.

Dr. Gary R. Mormino is the Frank E. Duckwall Professor of History at the University of South Florida and the author
of numerous books and articles on history including *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian-Americans in St. Louis, 1882-1982* and *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* with George E. Pozzetta. A graduate of Millikin University, he holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Mormino was the 1991 recipient of the D. B. McKay Award.

**Rodney Kite-Powell II,** a Tampa native, was born at Tampa General Hospital on Tampa's Davis Islands, subject of his article in this issue. He received his B.A. degree in history from the University of Florida and has completed courses toward his Masters Degree in history at the University of South Florida. He is the Associate Curator at the Tampa Bay History Center where he devotes his time to researching and writing about Tampa and Hillsborough County history. He wrote *The Escape of Judah P. Benjamin* for the 1996 issue of *The Sunland Tribune.* He is an appointed member of the Historic Tampa / Hillsborough County Preservation Board.

**Larry Omar Rivers** is the youngest author to have his writing published in *The Sunland Tribune.* A native of Tallahassee, Rivers is currently in the 12th grade - with grades which place him on the High Honor Roll at Leon High School in that city and is completing courses at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University as a summer dual enrollment student. Very active in his school and community, he is president of his high school senior class, member of the National Honor Society, and one of the main coordinators of Leon High School's annual student/faculty Black History program. Rivers has been the recipient of a number of awards and honors including the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Thurgood Marshall Scholarship (a full tuition scholarship to FAMU,) the 1998 Florida Historical Society Frederick Cubberly Award for Best High School Essay in Florida History, 1997 Florida Secretary of State Award for Best Overall Entry in the Senior Division of the Florida History Fair, and the 1999 National History Day Grand Prize (a full tuition scholarship to Case Western Reserve University.) Rivers enjoys reading and writing, and like a typical teenager, exploring the internet. After graduation in the spring of 2000, he plans to major in history at the college level - his choices and options for higher education appear to be numerous.
freely available to anyone in the world with access to the world Wide Web. Margaret Doherty, USF’s Digital Resources Librarian, will be happy to respond to questions about the digitization project. Contact her at (813) 974-4591 or at mdoherty@lib.usf.edu. The "Floridiana" proposal is available online at: http://www.lib.usf.edu/specoll/dpg/gte.html

**Front cover:** The aerial view of Tampa and Davis Islands is reproduced from a page in *Florida’s Wonder Spot*, a promotional pamphlet published in 1928 by Davis Islands Incorporated. The booklet features photography by Burgert Brothers and Carl T. Thoner, art work by Arnold J. Meyer, engravings by Tampa Photo Engraving Company, and was printed by Florida Grower Press. *Courtesy of Rodney Kite-Powell II, Associate Curator of Tampa Bay History Center.*

**Back cover:** Reproduction of the cover of *Life ON DAMS ISLANDS, TAMPA IN THE BAY*, a promotional booklet published in 1925 by D.P. Davis Properties. Artwork was by Harold K. Bement, Tampa, Florida, and printing by Courler-Journal Litho., Louisville, Kentucky. *Courtesy of Frank R. North.*
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In Memory

Herbert G. McKay
1930 - 1999

A Founding Member of the Tampa Historical Society, past member of our Advisory Board and an officer of the Board of Directors.

The Officers and Board of Directors mourn the passing of a true friend of our Society and the entire history community. Member of one of Tampa’s true pioneer families, Herb was a proud supporter of our mission throughout his lifetime.

He will be missed by all.