

1999

President's Report

Frank R. North

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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