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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

Leisure and conspicuous consumption have long characterized modern society, which has featured an expanding middle class with time and money to spend. Outlets for spending have multiplied, encompassing everything from exclusive private clubs and opulent parties to elegant homes and luxury consumer goods. Sociologists point out that such buying serves a variety of purposes, including bestowing a certain status on those able to afford it. To give but one example, cars provide more than transportation, a point driven home by advertising which stresses lifestyles.

This issue of *Tampa Bay History* features articles that show some forms leisure activities have taken in Florida, which is itself largely a product of discretionary spending, as we are constantly reminded. In addition to middleclass families looking for two weeks of sun and fun, the Sunshine State has also long attracted the super rich who have engaged in ostentatious displays of wealth. The latter include "The Ringlings of Sarasota," whose spending in that city is detailed in the photo essay by Susan A. Duckett. Another photo essay by Vernon Peeples, entitled "Punta Gorda in 1890," depicts a place and a period in which wealthy northerners sought good hunting and fishing in Florida. Documenting the experience with one of the first Kodak cameras, a physician from Philadelphia preserved rare photographs of southwest Florida from the time it was first opened to tourists by the railroad.

Private clubs featuring everything from secret rituals to golf courses underwent an explosive expansion in late nineteenth-century America. As Ana Varela-Lago emphasizes in her article, "From Patriotism to Mutualism: The Early Years of the Centro Espanol de Tampa, 1891-1903," clubs performed a variety of social and political purposes, including providing a sense of belonging and pride for upwardly mobile immigrants. Despite their modest beginnings, ethnic societies in Tampa soon built palatial clubhouses that were designed in part to reflect the material success of their members.

Spectator sports are another pastime that defines leisure in modern America. In "Pitching for St. Petersburg: Spring Training in the Sunshine City, 1914-1918," Melissa L. Keller reminds us that the dream of baseball has preoccupied this area for decades.

Finally, in a very different vein, this issue includes an excerpt from a document, "The Civil War Diary of Samuel Pasco," that gives a glimpse of the life and times of the man for whom Pasco County is named.

With this issue, *Tampa Bay History* completes 15 years of publication. This success is due largely to faithful and generous subscribers, a number of whom have made special contributions and are listed in the Acknowledgements on pages 2 and 3.