President's Message

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Time does indeed fly. My two years as President of the Society seem more like months. The traditional programs of the Society continue to be the Oaklawn Cemetery Ramble, the publication of The Sunland Tribune, and the presentation of the prestigious D.B. McKay award. For Tampa Historical Society members new and interesting educational opportunities abound. For example, one of those opportunities was the Society’s highly successful trip to Cuba. Collaborating with the University of South Florida’s Department of Latin American and Caribbean Studies simplified preparations for the trip. Their contacts on the island from Santiago in the east, to Havana in the west provided us with access to locales that few tourists see. The trip was especially meaningful as we are currently experiencing many changes in the relationship between our country and our neighbor to the south. Hopefully there will be similar trips in the future.

An event, conceived and spearheaded by Board member Judge E.J. Salcines, was the commemoration of Cuba’s 100th Anniversary celebrating its independence from Spain. Fittingly, the function was held at the Cuban Club in Ybor City. Joining the Society in sponsoring this event were the Tampa Bay History Center, the Henry B. Plant Museum, the Ybor City State Museum, and both the University of South Florida’s Florida Studies Center and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

While much has been done to preserve and protect Oaklawn Cemetery, primarily through the efforts of Julius “Jeff” Gordon, work remains to be done. Oaklawn reminds us that Tampa has grown from a small military outpost into one of the nation's leading cities. Other cities such as Paris, Buenos Aires, New Orleans and Key West have developed historic cemeteries into popular tourist attractions. Hopefully, with the Society's support, Oaklawn will one day be a must see on the list of every visitor interested in our City's history.

If you have ideas for events and projects that you think the Society should undertake, please submit them for consideration.

Our membership is getting younger. This is important, as we are all aware of the deplorable decline of Americans’ knowledge of our country's history. Hopefully, through the vitality of organizations like the Tampa Historical Society, that situation will change. As Americans we can assure our future by gaining a better understanding of our past.

Finally, I want to recognize two people who work especially hard for the Tampa Historical Society. Frank North is single-handedly responsible for the wonderful publication in which this message appears. I have a great appreciation for the time and effort that makes The Sunland Tribune possible. Thanks also to Liz Dunham, our Treasurer, for her tireless efforts on behalf of the Society. Her help has made my job much easier. Finally, I would like to recognize you, our members. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

Paul R. Pizzo