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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

The frontier has figured prominently in the American imagination and the writing of history. Ever since Frederick Jackson Turner suggested "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in an 1893 address, historians have debated the meaning of "frontier" and its influence. Disagreements have also erupted over which characteristics the frontier most fostered - individualism and self-reliance or racism and violence. In any case, the point of Turner's argument was that the American frontier - and hence its influence - disappeared in 1890, as a result of dramatic population shifts.

Some pundits, including historians, have suggested that a variety of "new frontiers" sprang up. In fact, some have pointed to the city as an urban frontier that Americans had to conquer. Still later, the frontiers of space loomed as a challenge to a new generation of Americans. The continued mystique of the frontier phenomenon confirms its power in the American imagination.

This issue of *Tampa Bay History* features articles about Florida's evolving frontiers. In the opening article, "Odet Philippe at Tampa Bay," J. Allison DeFoor, II, examines the activities of the first settler of European descent to take up permanent residence in what became Pinellas County. Odet Philippe's earlier failures and the reasons for his ultimate success on the shores of Tampa Bay suggest that luck and well-placed friends, in addition to individual initiative, helped people succeed on the frontier.

The two articles that follow deal with urban life during the 1920s. In his article, "Mass Culture Meets Main Street: The Opening of Lakeland's Polk Theatre," Stephen E. Branch emphasizes the larger economic and social forces which first advanced and then retarded Lakeland's growth during the boom and bust years of the 1920s. Another legacy of that era, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, established a chapter in Tampa in 1915. Authors Walter T. Howard and Virginia M. Howard trace its origins in "The Early Years of the NAACP in Tampa, 1915-30."

As bad as conditions seemed at the end of the Roaring Twenties, we know they got worse. The Great Depression provided the opportunity for the New Deal to experiment with new forms of public assistance. "The WPA in Tampa: A Photographic Essay" demonstrates graphically why this work relief program enjoyed widespread support.

Finally, in "Four Days Before Dallas: JFK in Tampa," author Frank DeBenedictis looks at a brief moment in "the New Frontier" of President John F. Kennedy.

In its next issue *Tampa Bay History* will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The entire issue will be devoted to life on the homefront in the Tampa Bay area.