THE SUNLAND TRIBUNE
Journal of the Tampa Historical Society

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Front cover: The last Sea Scouts crew. (See "Sea Scout Prisoner of War," by Charles Fuss, p. 21.)

Back cover: Tampa's Lafayette Street Bridges were both technological marvels and tourist attractions. The bridges were the subjects of countless picture postcards, like these dating from around 1900 to the 1930s. Photos from top to bottom: 1) This c.1900 postcard show's a "bird's eye view" of the Tampa Bay Hotel and grounds (west bank), from the perspective of the Second Lafayette Street Bridge. 2) An early view of the Second Lafayette Street Bridge toward the mouth of the Hillsborough River. The structure in the bridge's center span is the draw. The large buildings in the middle ground are the Armory (west bank) and Customs House (east bank). 3) The "new" or Third Lafayette Street Bridge, showing the Tampa Bay Hotel, river traffic, and the bridge tender's office. Note the streetcar lines, electric and telegraph poles, and arm-and-globe light fixtures. 4) The Third Lafayette Street Bridge - like its predecessors - was a prominent "sight" in Tampa for many decades. This postcard dates to the 1930s and shows improvements along the River front, including concrete sea walls and quays.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

This year has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging and rewarding of Tampa Historical Society’s thirty-five year history.

The c.1890 Peter O. Knight House, our Society headquarters, was awarded Historic Landmark status by the Tampa City Council (acting on a recommendation by the Historic Preservation Commission.) The House has attracted the attention of the media, preservation and restoration specialists, and (perhaps most exciting) individuals with connections to the House and the neighborhood as they were in Tampa’s Gaslight Era. Interviews with members of the Knight family, those who lived in nearby houses, and Mary Elizabeth Stuart Jones (who lived in the House as a child) are producing a view of the House not as a dusty artifact but as an eloquent “voice” that tells the story of Hyde Park and early Tampa.

Long-range plans for the House include detailed documentation of its past, then restoration to an acceptable simile of its original furnishings and décor, so that it may be used to “teach Tampa” to new generations of Tampans.

To facilitate this and other goals, the Society vigorously embarked, this year, on highly visible education programs, as well as membership and fundraising initiatives. Members and the public enjoyed our two annual Oaklawn Cemetery events (the April Ramble and the October Gothic Graveyard Walk), an Open House, and a fundraising gala: “Feast of the Dark” (October 27.) For those who like to share a love for local history in an atmosphere of friends and fun, the Society’s calendar is looking very attractive indeed.

Festivity is balanced with serious scholarship at TIBS. With the help of local curators and historians, the Society’s Collection is being re-catalogued and conserved, as are the furnishings of the Knight House. The Sunland Tribune, back on its traditional publishing schedule, is home to deeply researched articles by eminent historical writers, as well as illustrations of an extraordinary scope and interest.

The Board of Directors, source of energy, talent, resources, and drive for all these achievements, is honored to serve you, the Society’s members. New Board Members bring vastly expanded resources – personal, professional, social – to this, Hillsborough County’s oldest history organization. Join us (along with friends, colleagues, and neighbors) as we deliver Tampa’s past to Tampa’s future.

Best regards,

Maureen J. Patrick

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Founded in 1971
Building Tampa: The Lafayette Street Bridge

Lucy D. Jones

When Henry Bradley Plant first built his railroad to Tampa, he did not want to extend the tracks from east to west over the Hillsborough River. Every extra mile of track was money out of Plant’s pocket. When Plant heard that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would dredge a ship channel in Old Tampa Bay rather than Hillsborough Bay, he quickly arranged to lay track to Black Point (later Port Tampa), where he constructed a wharf out to deep water in order to accommodate maritime traffic. To get the railroad tracks across the Hillsborough River, Captain John McKay built a drawbridge for the trains at Cass Street. 1 McKay was invested in the railroad reaching both Old Tampa Bay and the shallow-water docks along the River, since he captained Plant Systems vessels running between Tampa and Havana.

Plant’s transportation system included both trains and steamships. Since passengers on both lines needed accommodations, hotels were a logical extension of the Plant System, but none of the hotels operating in Tampa in the late 1880s was up to the standard of Plant’s “prestige” clientele. The transportation magnate decided to build a lavish resort near the Tampa terminus of his railroad, but on the west side of the Hillsborough River. In July 1888, the Tampa Bay Hotel’s cornerstone was laid. Luxury winter resorts such as this often could not rely on existing infrastructure. The necessary rail access or utilities were built at the developer’s expense, or at the expense of the host city at the request of the developer. In the case of Tampa, the hotel was such a boon to the growing town that the City Council readily agreed to several development incentives, including low, fixed-rate taxes and a promise that the town would build a bridge over the Hillsborough River, leading to the hotel. 2 This last agreement began a tale of three bridges, each of which mirrored the conditions and people of Tampa in its formative decades. As the bridges were built, served their purposes, outlived their usefulness, and were replaced, they produced a history-in-miniature of the city that created them. This study examines that history to discover what it has to tell about the motivations, technology, and accomplishments of Tampa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The first Lafayette Street Bridge

In March 1885, the Tampa council chartered Jesse Hayden’s ferry at Jackson Street, stipulating that he keep one good flat boat and two good skiffs to carry people,
The Tampa Bay Hotel and swing bridge, both under construction in February, 1889, in a rare photo by James Cooley Field. (Courtesy of the Henry B. Plant Museum Photographic Archives.)

stock animals, and goods across the Hillsborough River. Until the trains came, Tampa residents had little use for a bridge over the Hillsborough River, but public and private interest in a bridge increased along with the railroad. Several conflicting proposals were made, but the city council’s final decision in the fall of 1887 was to build a free public foot and wagon bridge at Lafayette Street.

Although a severe yellow fever epidemic disrupted the town’s routine operations, plans for the bridge were in the works by December of 1887. In May 1888, the council received three proposals for the bridge over the Hillsborough River, accepting that of the King Iron Bridge Company, a prominent American bridge manufacturer in the late nineteenth century. Zenas King, founder of the King Iron Bridge Company, had a factory in Cleveland where stock parts and designs were produced, ensuring rapid fulfillment of customers’ orders. The company shipped bridge parts by rail to each construction site for assembly. King created a large web of agents and representatives who placed bids for the company all over the country, whenever and wherever a new bridge contract was advertised. The company’s 1888 catalogue claimed parentage of 10,000 bridges, with 350 new orders each year.

The King Iron Bridge Company began construction of the Lafayette Street Bridge soon after the contract was awarded. When yellow fever struck Tampa again in August 1888, the King Iron Bridge Company asked the city for a time extension on their contract, but the request was denied. Despite quarantines, engineering changes, and federal concerns about potential navigational obstructions, work on the bridge progressed, and by February 1889 the approaches were ready to be filled with shell. Signal lanterns were purchased, and the city advertised for a bridge keeper. Less than a year after work began, the King Bridge Company notified the city council that construction was finished, and the council formed a Committee of the Whole (that is, a committee comprised of all of the members of the council) to inspect the bridge. In early March 1889, the city opened the first Lafayette Street bridge to the public.

The fact that Tampa felt compelled to build the bridge in order to satisfy Henry Plant was undeniable, as Tampa was a young city desperate for investors. Money for the bridge and other civic improvements
came from municipal bond issues. Building public works was a widespread and monumental task in the nineteenth century. A relatively new country was being created, as it were, from scratch, and the United States did not have a large pool of old-money potential investors, as did some older nations. Public works also labored under the Jacksonian view of government, which held that it was impossible to use federal money to help one region without harming another. Public infrastructure construction was, therefore, a state and local issue. Because of a shortage of capital and a reluctance to raise taxes, state and local funding of public works was largely speculative, typically large-scale, unsecured public debt. Such speculative debt, however, was necessary to promote growth, and Tampa was no exception.

After the Lafayette Street Bridge was built, residential development on the west side of the Hillsborough River boomed. Where it had once been difficult to cross the river — the only means being a ferry with no regularly scheduled service — a modern iron bridge zipped man and beast alike from one bank to the other. Spotting an opportunity, O. H. Platt of Hyde Park, Illinois, subdivided twenty acres of Robert Jackson’s former homestead on the west side of the Hillsborough River. Lots sold quickly, and a middle-class residential community formed as the easy commute to the central business district attracted professionals, shoppers, and businessmen.

While it was in Plant’s interest to have Tampa thrive as a city, construction of single-family homes near his luxury resort hotel was not his intention, nor was it particularly to his benefit. Plant had asked for a bridge because it would benefit his Tampa Bay Hotel, and development of new residential neighborhoods across the river was merely a collateral effect. It was, nevertheless, an effect that proved more durable than Plant’s original project. After his death in 1899, Plant’s assets were sold off during vicious family fights over the terms of his will. In 1902, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad bought Plant’s system of railroads, and in 1905 the Tampa Bay Hotel became the property of the City of Tampa. The hotel’s importance faded over time, but the suburbs created as a sidebar to its construction prospered.

The Lafayette Street Bridge did not long remain the only general traffic bridge over the Hillsborough River. In 1892, Hugh Macfarlane, one of the original members of the Tampa Board of Trade as well as Tampa’s city attorney, marketed 200 acres of land on the west side of the river, north of downtown. A crucial first step towards success was to provide access to his new development, called West Tampa. In 1892, with the help of other investors, Macfarlane built an iron drawbridge at Fortune Street. Since a street railway between West Tampa and Ybor City would run over the bridge, developers anticipated that cigar factories would locate in West Tampa. The commercial-civic elite of Tampa viewed the bridge, paid for with private funds, as a good business strategy, and support of the city’s economy as equivalent to good citizenship. Their vision was rewarded as West Tampa quickly achieved stature as a “cigar town” to rival Ybor City.

The Second Lafayette Street Bridge

Bridges are designed to meet the conditions of the time when they are built. They are rarely designed for future conditions. When the first Lafayette Street Bridge was built, Tampa’s leaders did not consider things like electricity and streetcars, nor the probable extent of suburban development west of the river. The first bridge did not hold up well to the new demands placed on it. Among other problems, an electric cable at the bridge burned out, forcing the power company to use a switch connection for their wires. For a time, whenever the draw opened at night, the lights went out in Hyde Park until the bridge closed again.

The bridge and bonding issue became contentious topics in the mayoral campaign
of March 1895, a heated contest between F.A. Salomonson and M.B. Macfarlane. A native of Holland, Salomonson moved to Tampa in 1884 and went into the real estate business. By 1895, he had served three terms as a city councilman. Matthew Biggar Macfarlane (brother of Hugh MacFarlane) was a native of Scotland, educated in the northern United States, a lawyer, and later served as Collector of Customs for Tampa. (M.B. Macfarlane was also quite prominent in Florida's Republican Party, and would be an unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate in 1900 and 1904.) Salomonson won the mayoral race by a margin of 50 votes.15

Less than two weeks after the election, Salomonson spoke to the city council about the city’s financial condition. The mayor recommended that the city first draw up a new charter, then vote a bonds issue, and then install a sewer system, followed by construction of a new bridge at Lafayette Street. The council agreed and instructed the city attorney to draw up a new charter authorizing a Board of Public Works. (As well, the council voted to change mayoral elections from annual to biennial events.16)

The mayor’s recommendation for a new bridge was actually “old business.” In late February 1895, the city council had authorized a loan of $45,000 and hired the Florida Dredging Company to build a new bridge across the Hillsborough River at Lafayette Street.17 Although there were as many as twenty-five men at a time working on the bridge, Tampa residents urged the contractors to use more workers and finish the bridge more quickly. Construction became a public spectacle, until the builders finally asked rubbernecks to stay out of their way. There was a lot to see at the site. Workers cleared old bridge timbers out of the river. Crews drove pilings for retaining walls, and laid timbers on the pilings. Masons covered the tops of the timbers, while divers built cofferdams around pier placements. The Water Works Company re-laid mains on both sides of the river at the bridge. More workers built a footway 100 feet upstream from the old bridge as a temporary crossing.18

Money ran short, and work at the Lafayette Street Bridge halted in December 1895, awaiting a new bond election. The optimism felt in City Hall and Hyde Park after the voters’ resounding approval of the project quickly evaporated. A month later, the city had received no money and no explanation from W. N. Coler & Company, the New York bankers who agreed to sell Tampa’s bonds.19 The city council asked the Plant Investment Company for a $15,000 loan to finish the bridge, but Henry Plant turned them down. (Plant rarely contributed money towards utility construction or public works in cities served by his railroads or where he had hotels, avoiding political or close personal associations in those cities.20) Finally, in February 1896, Tampa received its first installment from the bonds, and the bridge builders resumed work. For months, the Tampa Weekly Tribune railed against Coler’s delay, accusing the company of hampering Tampa’s growth:
“Instead of muddy streets and gloomy countenances, the people would be buoyant with bright anticipation of great improvements.”

On a Saturday morning in March 1896, with little ceremony, workers east aside the barriers at the Lafayette Street Bridge. Mr. Hathaway, Manager of the Tampa Bay Hotel, and F. de C. Sullivan, Henry Plant's private secretary, drove a carriage over the bridge to Mayor Solomonson's office, where they were joined by City Engineer Neff and several councilmen. These men then went to the Tampa Bay Hotel for an elegant lunch. Although few people were present at the bridge's opening, word spread quickly and that afternoon a stream of wagons, carriages, and pedestrians flowed across the river.

A few days later, city leaders formally dedicated the bridge, with grand flourishes. Crowds of spectators filled the approaches, while the Fifth Battalion Band played as eighteen mounted policemen and three carriages of dignitaries neared the bridge. Fire Station One's hose wagon, engine, and hook and ladder truck added to the festive atmosphere, as Fire Chief Harris' daughter waved to the crowds amid a mass of flowers. Precisely at the center of the bridge, the parade halted, as Reverend W. W. DeHart rose in his carriage, uncovered his head, and spoke: "In the name of the commonwealth of Tampa I now declare this bridge open on this the 24th day of March, 1896, and call on you one and all to join in giving three cheers and a tiger." After that, the parade continued to the grounds of the Tampa Bay Hotel where DeHart spoke further from a balcony, heralding the bridge as tangible evidence of Tampa's manifest destiny.

On March 28, 1896, the first streetcar crossed the bridge. Mrs. C. W. Chapin, owner of the Consumers Electric Light and Street Railway Company, gathered a party in her custom-made parlor coach, which traveled from Ballast Point to Hyde Park, then across the bridge, to Franklin Street and thence to Ybor City. By the time the ear turned to go back, dusk had fallen and the partygoers shot Roman candles from the trolley.

The streetcar line benefited greatly from the Lafayette Street Bridge and was of particular interest to the Chapins, who lived in a mansion on the Bayshore. The Consumers Electric Company's streetcar line encouraged development along the bay towards Ballast Point. Many of the new homes being built along and close to the route were elegant mansions for Tampa's elite, and the streetcar made it possible for the residents to escape the city.

Consumers had a contract with the city allowing the streetcar line to use the Lafayette Street bridge, and requiring the company to pay a portion of the cost for bridge repairs.

Peter Oliphant Knight, the Chapins' business partner, also helped organize the Exchange National Bank and the Tampa Gas Company, and served as county solici-
tor and state attorney. Knight, one of the business and civic leaders who guided the city's fortunes, was conservative and anti-labor, and his business interests often influenced local political decisions. By the end of the 1890s, Consumers faced rough economic waters and was sold.

Advertisement appearing in the *Tampa Daily Times*, September 7, 1912.

With the demise of their company, the Chapins left Tampa. Stone & Webster of Boston formed the Tampa Electric Company, which assumed operation of the streetcar lines, with Knight as the company's local attorney.26

The second Lafayette Street Bridge had not been open long before public opinion of the project turned from "crowning achievement" to something less favorable. The new bridge jolted so much under Consumers' heavy, double-deck streetcar that the company discontinued the car's use until new hardware was added to the bridge. The bridge draw failed repeatedly. At times, it froze in the open position, blocking automotive and streetcar traffic; other times it refused to open, disrupting river traffic. Either way, it was a constant and nagging source of irritation.27

Like other growing cities across the nation at the beginning of the new century, Tampa threw itself into progressive reforms, a response to increasing urbanization and industrial growth. In Tampa, successful reform efforts combined personal interests with the promise of greater wealth either for businesses or the community as a whole. City leaders were historically reluctant to raise taxes to provide civic improvements, including public works projects. Therefore, to be implemented, reforms had to appear likely to increase Tampa's prosperity, whether by enhancing markets or by increasing property values. Since Tampa had twice as many real estate agents per resident than other American cities, reforms that could be linked with rising property values won quick approval.28

Real estate investors tended to be upper middle-class merchants and lawyers who needed investment options for the capital accumulated through business acumen and hard work. Nineteenth-century frontier required vast sums of capital to build a modern infrastructure from scratch, and the demand for domestic capital often overwhelmed supply, leading American bankers to lend to short-term rather than long-term users. Smaller investors looked to the mortgage market, the stock exchange being too volatile for any but the extremely wealthy. Thus, businessmen and urban professionals invested in the suburban development of the cities they led. These investors were able to use their expert knowledge of their community's resources to reap a fairly certain capital reward for promoting the city's growth.29

D.B. McKay of the *Tampa Daily Times* and Wallace Stovall of the *Tampa Tribune* supported reforms intended to create business growth in Tampa. After all, they themselves were in the news business, and growth meant more readers and more advertisers.30 McKay was Old Tampa, the third generation of his family to live in the city. Stovall was a Kentuckian who moved to Tampa in 1893, a representative of the southern businessmen who came to Tampa at relatively young ages and found success. McKay's and Stovall's papers regularly rallied their readers to support various Progressivist reforms: street paving, sewer systems, and public hospitals.

As Tampa moved into the first decade of the twentieth century, factionalism characterized local politics. In 1900, the reformist Citizen's League took the upper hand. The League called for, among other things, making corporations pay their city taxes. Progress businessmen and politicians had been in the habit of bestowing generous tax breaks to corporations as an incentive to come to or stay in Tampa. A side effect was a shortage of revenue for the city. Francis L. Wing, the Citizen's League's successful mayoral candidate, campaigned to eliminate the poll tax and increase the number of lower-income voters. The Citizen's League also advocated public ownership of

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*Do You Live In Hyde Park?*

Lafayette street bridge is going to be closed on about October first.

It will be almost impossible after the bridge is closed to deliver your coal. Give us your order NOW, that we may deliver it before you are cut off.

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*Tampa Coal Company*

Phone 43.
the water works and the electric plant, and soon found itself in opposition to the Tampa Board of Trade, which had hitherto had the support of the local government. The Citizen’s League suggested changing the city charter, and eliminating the Commission of Public Works. The Tampa Board of Trade halted these changes, and an exasperated Peter O. Knight accused the Citizen’s League of being anarchists.31

Pro-growth and pro-public investment, F.A. Salomonson returned to the mayor’s office in 1904. Shortly after taking office, Mayor Salomonson called for extensive repairs to the failing Lafayette Street Bridge, saying that when the bridge did not work it was more than just an inconvenience for Hyde Park. If the bridge failed, it disrupted the streetcar lines and schedules and was an inconvenience for the whole city; therefore, the city council should find the money to fix it.32

The Third Lafayette Street Bridge

When the second Lafayette Street bridge proved inadequate and unreliable, Hyde Park and Bayshore residents, along with real estate agents, claimed that a new bridge would benefit the whole city. Despite their boosterism, a new bridge took years to accomplish. Tampa’s government was strongly conservatively when it came to fiscal matters, as were the voters, and bond issue after bond issue for public improvements was rejected or never even came to vote.33

In 1907, with a growing city and a growing economy, Mayor W. H. Frecker suggested a $600,000 bond issue for new civic buildings, paving projects, sewer installations, and a new bridge over the river at Lafayette Street. Mayor Frecker noted, “Tampa is in many respects one of the most progressive cities [of] the south, but in others has been sorely backward.”34 A bond election was set for January 1908, but in December 1907, the city council cancelled the election in reaction to a nationwide financial panic, concerned that Tampa would not be able to handle the bond issue financially and that a weak market would yield a low price.35

In May 1909, Tampa voters turned down another municipal bond issue that would have paid for a new Lafayette Street Bridge, a city hall, a city hospital, and other public improvements such as sewers and paved streets. Some voters were against the bonds because they disliked the city administration, but the main reason for the bond issue’s defeat was the bridge itself, which was perceived as being just too expensive.36 In estimating the price of replacing the bridge, the city council expected two streetcar lines – Tampa Electric Company and the Tampa & Sulphur Springs Traction Company – to pay for a considerable portion of the cost, as much as a third.37 With a preliminary estimate of $165,000, even minus an estimated $50,000 contribution from the streetcar companies, the price tag was too much for some people, including Mayor Wing, who called plans for the new bridge and a proposed city hall building “ridiculously exorbitant.” Continued arguments between those who wanted to replace the entire bridge and those who thought that the bridge just needed a few repairs led the city council to solicit the opinion of New York engineer J. S. Hildreth. Hildreth’s rather emphatic opinion was that the existing bridge was “out of date, too small, too close to the water, and totally inadequate,” and should be replaced entirely. Faced with this harsh reality, the council asked the engineer what type of bridge should be erected.38 Hildreth’s recommendations were the genesis of the form the third bridge ultimately took.

Tampa Electric Company offered the city
850,000 towards the cost of the bridge, rationalizing that the strength demands on the structure derived in part from the streetcars. The streetcars were certainly an issue, as cars occasionally jumped the tracks and stopped all traffic, a problem that led the company to impose a three mile per hour speed limit over the bridge. Also at issue was what right the electric company, a privately owned corporation, had to use the bridge, a publicly owned conveyance. Should the city charge rent? Should the electric company pay for bridge maintenance? If the city accepted the money from the company, would it be seen as a concession? The city refused to grant Tampa Electric an exclusive franchise to run streetcar tracks over the Lafayette Street Bridge, and vacillated over whether or not to accept money from the company.40

In 1910, D. B. McKay helped form the White Municipal Party that took him to the mayor's seat from 1910 to 1920, and again from 1927 to 1931. The White Municipal Party was a local-level Democratic party that systematically and purposefully excluded African Americans from participation in local elections. Many voting taxpayers were reluctant to support programs or projects that benefited only some citizens (usually the commercial-civic elite), even though all had to pay. Depending on the issue, minority voters could sway the results in a tight vote, unless there was a way to keep these from voting.40

Tampa annexed large areas of Tampa Heights and Hyde Park in 1911. The Tampa city council was stirred to action by Hyde Park's rapid growth, as well as the wealth, social prominence, and political power residing in the district. The council returned to the issue of the Lafayette Street Bridge with renewed vigor. The city advertised for bids for a new bridge and, in early September, the Board of Public Works met to select a builder. Four companies submitted bids with one company, the Owego Bridge Company of New York, submitting forty-two different plans and prices. The city councilmen, despite having known for years that the bridge should be replaced, and despite having nearly fifty different suggestions in hand as to how it might be accomplished, struggled to reach a consensus.41 However, on September 13, 1911, the city awarded a contract to the Owego Company for $205,000, to build an eighty-foot-wide bascule lift bridge over the river. After the announcement, the competing engineers dined at Garcia's restaurant and enjoyed late-night musical entertainment at the Tampa Yacht and Country Club.42

Such collegiality was short lived, and within just a few weeks, the city received three formal protests of the contract award to Owego. Confusion and concern grew to the point where Mayor McKay refused to sign the contract with the Owego Bridge Company.43 For months, the city wallowed in a contractual quagmire. The mayor, the Board of Public Works, and the prospective contractors could not agree on the legality of the contract, with the mayor refusing to sign, the bridge company wanting the courts to decide the issue, and the board members throwing up their hands claiming ignorance. Finally, Owego released the city

A circa 1905 photograph of the Hillsborough River waterfront, taken facing south from the Lafayette Street Bridge (Courtesy the State Archives of Florida).
A snapshot taken by a bystander at opening ceremonies for the 1913 Lafayette Street Bridge. It is not clear from the photo whether it was taken at the December 1913 opening of the Bridge or at the “formal” ceremonies held on February 13, 1914. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society.)

from the contract with the understanding that the Board of Public Works would use Owego’s previously accepted plans as the preferred design for the bridge, and new bids would be solicited only for the actual construction of the bridge, rather than design and construction. The Owego Bridge Company and other associated companies whose patents were used in the plan would be paid a royalty from whichever contractor was awarded the work. Tampa allowed Owego to bid on the construction contract, but the company was not to be given any special regard. In May 1912, bridge builders from around the country again traveled to Tampa for a bid opening. Four bidders responded, with the local Edwards Construction Company winning the contract.

This time, the city delayed the contract award for the simple reason that it did not have the money to pay for the project. The anticipated bridge cost, even with the low bid, was about $240,000. The bond issue was for $190,000. Ironically, the electric company’s rejected offer to pay $50,000 toward the cost of construction was now precisely the difference between the bond issue and the projected cost.

Did the city have the right to spend more than the $190,000 bonds approved by the state legislature? On May 16, 1912, Judge Robles issued an opinion that the legislative act allowing the $190,000 bond issue did not prohibit the city from accepting money from Tampa Electric and that none of the plans to finance the bridge was illegal. The case went to the state Supreme Court, which in early July 1912, found that the $190,000 bond issue limit applied to the power to issue bonds, not to the cost of the bridge. Tampa and Edwards Construction could sign the contract, get the materials, secure the bonds, and go to work.

Henry C. Edwards, general manager and owner of the Edwards Construction Company, worked in Tampa for fourteen years before getting the Lafayette Street bridge contract. A native of Wetumpka, Alabama, he fit in well with Tampa’s strongly southern leaders. The Edwards Company built many of Tampa’s deep-water terminals, and practically all of the docks from the railroad bridge over the river to its mouth. Edwards started work on the new Lafayette Street Bridge even while the old bridge stayed opened to all traffic. Workers poured concrete walls, moved telephone cables and electrical wires out of the way, and began driving pilings. By early August 1912, forty men were working on the bridge, and twice that number later. At some point, however, the Lafayette Street Bridge would have to be completely closed before it could reopen. The city’s original plan for traffic crossing the river was to send vehicles over the Fortune Street Bridge, and to use a cable ferry for foot traffic and bicycles at Jackson Street.

Near the end of October, the U.S. Engineers approved a temporary bridge connecting Jackson and Eagle streets, and immediately the city council awarded Edwards the contract for its construction. The lighter Anni B. acted as the actual move-

Photograph from the Lafayette Street Bridge of the February 1914 Gasparilla flotilla passing under the bridge. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society.)
able draw, with temporary aprons connecting the boat to the stationary parts of the bridge. Since the Annis B. was afloat, it rose and fell with the tides. The temporary bridge was undoubtedly an inconvenience to motorists and pedestrians, and it also disrupted local business. The streetcar company was arguably the business most inconvenience by bridge construction, losing a major river crossing.\(^{50}\)

The last day that the old Lafayette Street Bridge was open to vehicle traffic was the day the circus came to town. On October 14, 1912, the Ringling Brothers circus performed on the west bank of the river at the Fairgrounds, and arrangements were made to keep the bridge open to traffic past the contractually specified date so that people could see the show. On its final day of full service, the bridge carried heavy loads of cars, bicycles, motorcycles, horse teams, and pedestrians.\(^{51}\)

When construction began on the bridge in August 1912, the contract had called for work to be completed by May 9, 1913. Courting hubris, the engineers boasted that they could finish weeks before schedule, barring unforeseen difficulties. Indeed, as a newspaper reporter commented, "They have foreseen the difficulties, they believe, and allowed for them." The engineers' plans required concrete piers to be placed directly on bedrock under the river. To do this, the construction company built cofferdams to hold water away from where construction crews would pour concrete into wooden forms. Once the water was out, African American laborers stood on the riverbed, scooping muck into dredges by the shovelful. A hundred-foot tower lifted the cement, and dropped it in "a white, slimy stream" down chutes into the frame for the pier.\(^{52}\) Each of the four concrete piers required a cofferdam, and in February, workers began the second cofferdam. By April, engineers were still struggling to get rid of water seeping up through fissures in the limestone riverbed. Divers tried, unsuccessfully, to seal the bottom of the dam with concrete. Eventually, the frustrated engineers ran large pumps nonstop to remove the intrusive water. Finally, the Tribune was able to report progress:

Two weeks ago there was no sound on the new Lafayette street bridge construction but occasional cussing. The engineers were figuring out some knotty engineering problems. Yesterday the construction work growled with the noise of rotary pumps, the song of dusty negroes wheeling cement up plank tracks, and the low whistling of satisfied engineers.\(^{53}\)

The unforeseen delays cost $10,000. By August, a labor force of one hundred men working twelve-hour days and an average of three night shifts a week had completed most of the underwater work. The builders were now "almost certain" that the bridge would be finished by November 15, 1912.\(^{54}\)

All that summer, Tampa buzzed with activity. New houses, new stores, and new public buildings reflected the city's prosperity. New electric streetlights lit the city's preeminent shopping district along Franklin Street from Jackson to Harrison. These lights were the first part of the electric company's plan to give Tampa a "White Way" nearly a mile long, with the next step being to install electric lights on Lafayette Street from Florida Avenue across the bridge.\(^{55}\) Tampa Electric Company had installed arc lights on the old Lafayette Street Bridge in January 1912, lighting the roadway and under the draw to keep boats from hitting the bridge at night; however, those lights were for safety and convenience rather than part of a White Way.\(^{56}\) For early twentieth century Progressives, the electric White Way stood for cleanliness, safer streets, and better policing. The darkness of night stood for illicit activity and dirtiness. The increase in business revenues and increased property values along White Ways were enough to convince businessmen in cities even without strong Progressive movements that street lighting was worth the investment.\(^{57}\)

As autumn arrived, the bridge came together. The electric company laid wires and tracks for the streetcars. The electrical lift mechanisms were connected, the gates were installed in front of the draw, and the balustrades were painted.\(^{58}\) Hugh Macfarlane, never one to hold back an opinion, raised an alarm when he noticed that the south wall of the east approach was nine inches lower than the north wall. The bridge engineer admitted this was true, but added that it was intentional, to leave space for L.J. Jones to build a sidewalk between the bridge and his new building on the east shore of the river. Jones' fish business had been demolished to make way for the new bridge, and he was now planning to build a three-story brick building, with steamboat docks on the river, a railroad platform, and
a row of retail stores with plate glass windows shaded by copper marquees suspended by ornamental chains.\textsuperscript{59}

W. H. Hodge, of Boller, Hodge, & Baird of New York, arrived in Tampa in mid-December to test the bridge. The engineer loaded two streetcars with 50,000 pounds each; these and two ten-ton steamrollers were sent across the draw at the same time. Hodge proclaimed, "She's sound as a rock," and the city opened the bridge.\textsuperscript{60} A trolley car, packed with city officials, engineers, newspapermen, and "other favored persons" (including Peter O. Knight, who twenty years earlier had been a passenger in the first streetcar over the second Lafayette Street Bridge) passed over the river to Hyde Park. The bridge opening became a private affair, with the general public held back until the elites had finished claiming all of the "firsts." After trying out the trolley car, the dignitaries scrambled to ride the U.S. Government's launch DeSoto, the first ship to pass under the new bridge. Hugh Macfarlane was the first to drive an automobile over the bridge, and Everett Snow rode the first motorcycle. The Montgomery Amusement Company, which filmed weekly events in cities where the company owned theaters, recorded portions of the celebration, including the first car to cross and the raising of the bascule lifts.\textsuperscript{61}

The same day the new bridge opened to traffic, Tampa Electric Company opened its new office building, on the west side of the river, to the public. The building gave people an excuse to stroll over the bridge, or to ride the streetcars that were again crossing the river after a seventeen-month interruption. Tampa Electric’s new office displayed the latest wonders of electricity: cooking equipment and Christmas trees decorated with tiny colorful lights. While the masses promenaded, city officials, prominent citizens, and the bridge’s contractors and engineers feasted at García’s restaurant. Amid a cloud of cigar smoke, the diners gave short speeches of satisfaction. The engineers and other out-of-town workers were doubly happy. After nearly a year and a half in Tampa, they could be home for the holidays.\textsuperscript{62}

No one in Tampa had thought about a formal celebration for the bridge’s dedication before September 1913, when the subject was brought up at a Tampa Merchants Association meeting.\textsuperscript{63} The original plans for the celebration included speeches, parades, and brass bands. The Association began negotiations with the Pain Fire Works Display Company to provide illuminations along the river near the bridge and elaborate displays, with a pyrotechnic portrait of Mayor McKay and another of the destruction of Pompeii. The merchants’ motivation was clear and freely admitted: to attract people to Tampa, people who would buy things from their stores.\textsuperscript{64}

A short time later, the boosters announced that the formal bridge opening would be held in conjunction with the Gasparilla Festival to be held in February of the following year.\textsuperscript{65} The Tampa Merchants Association, a coalition of capital and labor, did not have the support of men such as Peter O. Knight or D.B. McKay. The purpose of the bridge celebration was still to attract attention and visitors, but by shifting the formal opening to coincide with Gasparilla, control was more strongly in the hands of the civic elite, rather than the city’s merchants.

When it finally arrived, the Gasparilla festival of 1914 was a celebration of Tampa’s place in the Industrial Age. The official program included a massive release of homing pigeons, a children’s floral parade, a human chess game, an historic pageant depicting “The Landing of DeSoto,” fireworks, a Sun-

Detail from an October 1913 photograph taken facing west from the Mugge Building in downtown Tampa. The temporary Jackson Street Bridge is to the left, and the Lafayette Street Bridge is to the right. The concrete for the east approach and the east arch has been poured, and concrete work is progressing on the west side of the river (Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints and Photography Division [reproduction number LC-USZ62-135759]).
day sermon, a major league baseball game, and a nighttime carnival under Franklin Street’s electric lights. Tampa Electric Company’s float garnered the most attention from parade goers, featuring a working model of the new drawbridge.66

On February 23, 1914, the mayor led the formal dedication of the new bridge. At three o’clock in the afternoon, all traffic over the bridge stopped, the crowds edged closer to the grandstand, and soldiers stood at attention. Hailing the bridge as “the chief accomplishment of this administration” and “a monument to the administration under which it was constructed,” McKay worked the crowd for political gain. Judge Parkhill continued the platitudes, proclaiming that the work of the mayor and the city officials “would be remembered for generations to come as the feet of the Tampans of the future trod the great cement way.”67

The years surrounding the new bridge’s opening defined a time of prosperity. Other city improvement projects started or completed at about the same time were the seawall along Bayshore Boulevard, a new city hall building, a new sewer system, and Tampa Union Station. Tampa’s first skyscraper, the eight-story Hillsboro Hotel, was built in 1912, followed in 1913 by a new Elks Lodge and the Knights of Pythias Building, each ten stories tall. The local phone company, Peninsular Telephone, replaced their old “common battery” system with new, automatic telephones in 1915. In 1914, the first direct railroad connection opened between Tampa and St. Petersburg, and work began to transform the Ybor Estuary into the Ybor Channel.68 Perhaps most spectacularly, on January 1, 1914, Tampans crowded onto the Lafayette Street Bridge and along the Hillsborough River to watch as Tony Jannus landed his airplane at the foot of Lee Street. The first regularly scheduled airline service
The Lafayette Street Bridge today

Tampa continued to grow throughout the twentieth century, and eventually the passage of time and thousands of vehicles each day left their marks on the Lafayette Street Bridge. TECO stopped operating streetcars in 1947, with the last streetcar tracks in Tampa removed from the Lafayette Street Bridge in 1969. Lafayette Street was renamed Kennedy Boulevard in December 1963, honoring President John F. Kennedy, who had visited Tampa just a week before his death; accordingly, the Lafayette Street Bridge became the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge. In the late 1970s, overwhelming public opposition squelched a plan to replace the bridge’s decorative urn-shaped balusters with modern steel rails. Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) plans to widen the bridge in 1988 were scrapped when nearby business owners objected to land takings. Budget cuts and rising construction costs added further delays, but engineers warned that the bridge would fall down if not replaced.

After considering several designs, and with the input of engineers and historic preservationists, FDOT implemented a plan to renovate the bridge while retaining its original appearance. By the time the bridge closed for repairs in February 1994, an estimated 26,000 cars and trucks used the Kennedy Boulevard Bridge each day, so FDOT rerouted traffic over other downtown bridges. The local transit authority (HART-line) ran free shuttle buses at ten-minute intervals for the 2,000 pedestrians who normally used the bridge each day. As in 1913, local store and restaurant owners worried that they would lose money while the bridge was closed.

On March 3, 1995, a small crowd of one hundred people looked on as a busload of dignitaries drove through a paper banner to mark the bridge’s re-opening. At a dedication ceremony the next day in Curtis Hixon Park (the former location of Henry Plant’s railroad depot), Mayor Sandy Freedman called the bridge a “door to downtown.” The ceremonies coincided with the Gasparilla Festival of the Arts, which took place that weekend along the riverfront. The refurbished bridge was but one of several major construction projects taking place in downtown Tampa, including a new hockey arena and the Florida Aquarium. Collectively, these projects were intended to attract people to downtown Tampa outside of business hours.

The issues and attitudes surrounding the bridge replacement project of the 1990s were remarkably similar to those of a century earlier. A new (or substantially renovated) bridge was desired to replace an old bridge that could not be repaired in any practical sense. A new bridge was intended to help bring more visitors and business to downtown Tampa. People worried how they would cross the river during construction, and businessmen worried that they would lose customers while the bridge was closed. The most striking difference was financial, an astronomical leap in cost from the $13,000 the original bridge cost in 1889, to the $240,000 cost for the 1913 bridge, to the $6.2 million cost of renovation in 1993. There was also a fundamental difference in the approach to financing the construction. Each of the previous bridge projects had been paid for in part or all by municipal bonds, with contributions from outside agencies such as county government or private utility companies. In 1993, everyone in the state shared the cost of the renovation, not just the residents of a particular ward, or Tampa, or Hillsborough County.

The physical shape of a city is both a result and an expression of the people who live there. Some choices that form a city are not made intentionally, although where and how a house, factory, or bridge is built does shape both the city and how the city is valued. The Lafayette Street Bridge brings to mind few superlatives. It is not the first, largest, oldest, most beautiful, or most unusual bridge in Tampa Bay or Florida or the United States. It is, however, a strong and surviving physical manifestation of the people, beliefs, and events that shaped the city of Tampa, and as such has lasting value and significance.

ENDNOTES

3. Tampa Council Minutes, March 4, 1885. There may have been a ferry operating in Tampa as early as 1846 (Covington, 59.)
4. Tampa Council Minutes, September 1887 and October 4, 1887.
5. Tampa Council Minutes, January 24, May 22, 1888, and June 5, 1888.
7. Tampa Council Minutes, September 5, October 3, and December 19, 1888; February 6, 20, and 27, 1889.
8. Tampa Council Minutes, February 27 and March 4, 1889.
12. Reynolds, Henry Plant.
17. The Florida Dredging Company, based in Jacksonville, specialized in river and harbor improvements. Milo S. Cartter (also of M.S. Cartter & Co., which supplied the iron work for the bridge) was President of Florida Dredging Company; James E. and Alexander R. Merrill and Arthur Stevens of the Merrill-Stevens Engineering Company were the directors. “City Dads; They Meet for their Last Time This Evening,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 26 February 1895; S. Paul Brown, Book of Jacksonville, A History (Poughkeepsie, New York: A.V. Knight, 1895), 147, 173; George E. Baker, Jacksonville: Riverport-Scaport (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1992), 137; William Hyde and Howard L. Conard, Encyclopedia of the History of St. Louis, A Compendium of History and Biography for Ready Reference, Volume One (New York: The Southern History Company, 1899), 316-317.
24. “Chapin’s Car Crosses,” Tampa Weekly Tribune, 2 April 1896; “Ialm Bay Breezes,” Tampa Weekly Tribune, 13 August 1896. Tampa’s first streetcar line opened in 1885 as the Tampa Street Railway Company. The cars ran from Franklin Street in the downtown business district to Ybor City, facilitating rapid geographical expansion of the city along the way. However, the streetcars did not cross the river at that time. In 1892, the Tampa Street Railway Company (TSC) merged with the Florida Electric Company to form the Tampa Street Railway and Power Company. In that same year, several Tampa businessmen, including Peter O. Knight, formed the competing Tampa Suburban Company (TSC). When the TSC sued to keep TSC from operating, the TSC backed another company, the Consumers Electric Light and Street Railway Company (Robert Lehman, “Streetcars in Tampa and St. Petersburg: A Photographic Essay,” Tampa Bay History 19, no. 1 [1997]: 37-51).
27. “New Schedule,” Tampa Weekly Tribune, 16 April 1896; “Dog Duties Discussed,” Tampa Weekly Tribune, 3 November 1898; Tampa Weekly Tribune,
15 December 1898; “Bridge Goes on Another Tantrum,” Tampa Weekly Tribune, 25 June 1908.
30. Frossell, “Booster Altruism.”
34. “Mayor Advises Bonding of City for $500,000,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 19 October 1907; “Greatest Step Yet in Greater Tampa Plan,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 1 November 1907.
37. “Estimate for $550,000 Bond Issue for City, Tampa Morning Tribune, 3 March 1909; “Election for Bonding City to be Held May 18; $480,000 Issue,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 7 April 1909.
42. L.B. Jones of the Owego Bridge Company was the Designing Engineer, and Daniel Luten of the National Bridge Company designed the concrete arches for the bridge approaches. Luten, the pre-eminent designer of reinforced concrete arch bridges in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century, was in Tampa for the award. (Bridge Contract to the Owego Company,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 13 September 1911.) “Engineering Party to Northern Office,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 14 September 1911.
46. “Held Bridge Contract Until This Afternoon,” Tampa Daily Times, 8 May 1912.
52. “Bridge Really in Sight Now,” Tampa Daily Times, 17 August 1912; “First Steel Gage Dam is Now in Place,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 2 January 1913; “To Fill Big Hole in the River This Week,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 2 July 1913; “Will Pour Concrete for Bridge Next Week,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 4 April 1913.
53. “Board Allows Edwards the Sum of $10,000 Extra,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 6 April 1913.
54. “E.W. Parker is Given Storm Sewer Contract,” Tampa Daily Times, 21 February 1913; “Second Pier for New Bridge to be Started,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 24 February 1913; “Board Allows Edwards the Sum of $10,000 Extra,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 6 April 1913; “Bridge Cofferdam is Filled Up Once More,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 7 April 1913; “Diver is Sealing the Bottom of Cofferdam,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 9 April 1913; “Pumps Stop Pumping Water for Cofferdam,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 9 April 1913;
pa Morning Tribune, 4 May 1913; “Submarine Parts of Bridge Nearly Done,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 3 August 1913.


59. “Contract is Let for the Jones Building,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 15 August 1913; “$72,700 New Building Permits are Granted,” Tampa Morning Tribune 21 August 1913; “Wall is Made in New Bridge Construction,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 16 October 1913.

60. “Engineer Will Test New Bridge Saturday,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 17 December 1913; “Great Rejoicing When New Bridge is Opened,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 21 December 1913.

61. “Lafayette Street Bridge to Be Opened to All Traffic Today,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 20 December 1913; “Great Rejoicing When New Bridge is Opened,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 21 December 1913.


64. “Celebration Set for December 17 and 18,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 23 October 1913; “No Celebration Will Be Held in December,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 27 October 1913.


68. Grismer, Tampa, 236.

69. Jannus landed on a special stage built for the purpose by the Edwards Construction Company (“First Voyage of the Airboat Line between St. Petersburg and Tampa was Great Success,” Tampa Daily Times, 1 January 1914.)

70. TECO, “70 Years Strong,” 6, 9.


75. Adjusting prices for inflation, the 1889 bridge would have cost $820,938.33 in 1993, and the 1913 bridge would have cost $83,488,234.09 (Inflation Calculator, http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl cgi, December 2005.)

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Sea Scout Prisoner of War

Charles M. Fuss, Jr.

PREFACE

The Sea Scouts, one of the senior branches of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA), was a popular organization with young men, especially during World War II when most fellows wanted to be in uniform. The Navy-style uniform of the Sea Scouts was a big plus in recruiting fifteen year-olds for this seagoing segment of the BSA. The organization was a national endeavor, organized under BSA regions and councils into Sea Scout “ships,” (equivalent to Boy Scout troops.) Local ships were directed and coordinated by a commodore and commanded by adult skippers and mates. Activities included instruction in nautical topics such as sea history, water safety, boat handling, knots and splicing, anchoring, piloting, navigating, signaling, rules of the road and many other maritime subjects. Local governments, civic organizations, the military and interested citizens usually donated boats and small craft, as well as equipment and shore facilities. It all made a grand and lasting impression on young men.

Tampa Sea Scouting in the 1940s was particularly special. Commodore Paul R. Young, a realtor by profession, was a dynamic leader. The local ships were combined into a “fleet” and a Sea Scout base was established at Ballast Point. The resulting unit was designated the SSS (Sea Scout Ship) Gasparilla. The City of Tampa donated about 300 feet of Ballast Point Park on Tampa Bay, next to the Tampa Yacht Club, for the base. The Tampa Optimist Club sponsored the venture with fund-raisers. A semi-retired building contractor helped the boys build a forty by forty-foot concrete block building for meetings, ceremonies, training, and overnight stays. Unaware of their later value, the boys broke geodes (hollow stones with cavities lined with inward growing crystals) that littered the beach; these were used for the foundation of the building. The Coast Guard donated two lifeboats from the torpedoed merchantman Exeter along with an old lighthouse tender from Egmont Key that the Sea Scouts called the “tugboat.” The U.S. Navy contributed an almost new twenty-six foot rowing whaleboat that was later equipped with a small engine. A yachtsman who planned to sail for the South Seas was stranded in Tampa by the war. He provided his 50-foot ketch the Blue Dawn for use as a training vessel. With Army permission, memorable cruises were made to the Mullet Key (now Ft. DeSoto Park) bombing range. These resources and the experiences the Sea Scouts had at the time marked all of us for life.

My own adventure began in the summer of 1945 when Richard Spencer showed up
Sea Scouts aboard the ketch *Blue Dawn* in Tampa Bay, April of 1944.
at the Tampa Yacht Club with a queer-looking sailboat. He said it was a Zephyr. I was fifteen, rated Able (ranks were Apprentice, Ordinary, Able and Quartermaster), and held the office of Bos'n/Crew Leader in the local Sea Scouts. For a year or so, Spencer and I had knocked around with small boats in Old Tampa Bay. He was right proud of his 20-foot, plywood, sloop-rigged (two sails; jib and mainsail) racing boat, a new type for these parts. She had a very narrow width and a hefty sail area, and looked downright dangerous. He'd flipped the boat in the yacht basin just trying to install the mast. Us Sea Scouts immediately dubbed Spencer's new rig a "suicide class boat."

During World War II, when some of our local yachtsmen went off to the various armed services, they left their boats with the Sea Scouts for the duration, a few of them forever. One gem was an a new 15 1/2 foot Snipe with gold Egyptian canvas sails. The members of the SSS Gasparilla ship's company competed for "Snipe time" by passing rigorous safety and sailing tests and accumulating hours of boat, building and grounds maintenance that converted to approved sailing hours. By the summer of 45, I was Snipe qualified and had an abundance of work hours under my belt.

Richard Spencer was a serious young man from a relatively affluent family. Girls thought he was handsome. He wasn't a member of our crew but he was polite and friendly and not the least snobbish, like some of the yacht club kids. Spencer didn't have a regular sailing partner and the suicide boat was not the greatest for single-handed sailing. We had watched him tacking (sailing back and forth towards the wind) in the yacht basin. It was noted that he "luffed-up" (steered into the wind, causing the sails to flap) a lot when the wind gusted. However, he never came to us for a crew of live ballast (weight to make the boat stable). We figured he was just a loner.

One summer day, I had scheduled a sailing trip on the Snipe, to instruct two of the younger kids in my crew. We happened to meet Spencer in the basin where the Snipe and Spencer's boat were both moored. He was rigging his sails, ready to get underway. I told him we planned to head directly east across Hillsborough Bay to the unpopulated mangrove-fringed shore, and asked if he'd like to go along, although I suspected his boat was a good bit faster than ours. He thought it was a fine idea and admitted that he was a little unsure of sailing alone in the new boat. We got underway about noon, un-
der a blue sky, with a nice southerly breeze. Away we went on a starboard tack (wind over the right side of the boat.) Our Snipe kept up with the Zephyr because Spencer had to spill a lot of wind. An ominous blackness to the southeast failed to dampen our spirits. Squalls came up most summer afternoons and I was confident we could run home downwind, ahead of whatever the old weatherman dealt. We passed the ship channel and got as close as possible to the wild east bank. Our two boats worked south along the shore down to the mouth of the Alafia River. Later, we anchored fairly close to shore and ate our meager lunches. An osprey hunted for fish over the shallows. It was a fine way to spend a lazy summer afternoon. We were in the lee of some pretty thick mangroves, so our view of the southeast horizon was blocked. That was a big mistake.

A clap of thunder interrupted our peaceful interlude. We quickly hauled in the anchors and got clear of the shore. The heavens were boiling and rolling toward us like a line of the black steam engines that hauled phosphate gondolas to Port Tampa. Spencer decided that he would run northwest, in front of the wind, for Ballast Point and the yacht club. I told him I didn’t think he’d get there in time to avoid the worst of the storm. He thanked us for keeping him company and said he was sure he could run safely before the wind if he didn’t use the big jib. I wished him luck and we headed west for Catfish Point on the MacDill Army Air Corps Base. I planned to keep the wind on our port quarter with less chance of a violent jibe (wind that comes across the stern, causing the wooden boom holding down the bottom of the mainsail to swing violently across the deck.) Then, we might let the heavy part of the squall pass astern of us. We could have stayed on the hook (anchored), but the lightning was fierce and my young crew was frightened. We knew that our geographic area was the “lightning capital of the world.” I felt the burden of responsibility and cursed myself for not keeping a better weather watch.

We did not escape the storm’s march and were soon hard pressed to keep the Snipe upright. We turned into the wind and doused the mainsail. She rode pretty well downwind with the jib but the short, steep waves kept breaking over our square stern. The narrow cockpit kept most of the water out, but we were soon very wet and chilled. The rain came down in sheets, and in no time visibility was nil. We had no compass, so we kept the wind on our left quarter and hoped we could make the limited lee of Catfish Point. It didn’t quite work out that way. Suddenly, out of the gloom a fairway (mid-channel) buoy appeared that was part of the channel leading to MacDill Field. The wind was slacking, but we decided to anchor until visibility improved.

As the squall passed, we saw that we were due east of the Army pier. Spencer was
nowhere in sight. His white sail should have been clearly visible to the north with the disappearing black squall as a backdrop, but we didn’t see him. I asked my shivering crew, huddled in their Navy kapok life jackets, to keep scanning the horizon to the north. We hoped to sight Spencer’s boat.

By now I was seriously concerned about Richard Spencer. We got the hook up and sailed west for the Army pier, where there was a duty crash boat. Until recently the local saying was “one-a-day in Tampa Bay,” because of the frequent crashes of Army planes from the training squadrons. The always-readyed Army boat was the closest and best chance for help. We anchored again about 30 yards off the pier and took down the sails. I told the crew to stand fast. Over the side I went, wearing my Navy life jacket, and swam right into the embrace of the U.S. Army.

A soldier helped me onto a float moored to the pier. I asked for the crash boat duty officer and was directed to a young first lieutenant in a small office on the pier. He was very friendly. I explained how worried I was about Spencer, and gave a description of his boat. At the end of the pier, the lieutenant scanned the north and east horizon with binoculars. No Spencer! The duty officer said, “Let’s go have a look.” I followed him aboard the crash boat and listened with great interest as he gave orders for getting underway. This was as close as I would get to my dream of serving on a PT boat. The great engines came to life and we idled away from the pier.

The officer opened the throttle and we came up smoothly onto the step. (The boat levels off with less resistance to the water.) The big craft seemed to fly. The wind made my eyes water. We got to the ship channel in about five minutes and slowed to idle speed. The lieutenant said there was shallow water east of the channel and he didn’t intend to put his expensive craft on the hill (run it aground.) He reached for his binoculars again and scanned the mangrove coast to the east. Nothing! I was getting obsessed about finding Spencer, but ashamed of my motivations. It wasn’t just that he might have drowned, but mostly that the officer might think I had cried wolf. Could Spencer have made it alone, I wondered, through that mini-hurricane all the way to the yacht club?

The crash boat skipper was about to call
Spencer’s mooring. How he’d managed to get a line around those pilings and stay put through the ravages of the storm was beyond me. He had a swollen finger that later proved to be broken, but he was generally in good shape. He was glad to see us but, as usual for him, he didn’t show much emotion. We towed him to a point off the yacht club. He assured us that he could coast home on the late afternoon breeze. Spencer solemnly thanked the Army lieutenant and gave me a wistful smile.

In about thirty minutes, we were back at the MacDill pier. I waved to my bedraggled crew as we motored by the Snipe. After the crash boat was secured, I thanked the officer for his kindness. He headed up the pier to a parking lot and disappeared. Apparently his shift was finished. By then, I was fairly dry and I dreaded going for another swim to rejoin my crew. I went down on the float and retied my lifejacket straps. Just as I was about to leap into the water, a gravelly voice shouted, “Where do you think you’re going?”

I looked into the red face of a short muscular man who was not happy. The roughhewn fellow was a warrant officer who had relieved the young lieutenant. He barked his next order: “Come up here now!” In a few seconds, I stood before this paragon of military discipline who had razor-sharp creases in his suntans. He said again, “Where do you think you’re going?” I found myself standing at attention and stammered, “Out to that sailboat, sir. It’s my responsibility.” In response, the officer informed me that I had trespassed on an Army reservation in time of war and that he was holding me until he could confer with higher authority. The angry man ordered me to sit in an open shed on the dock until
he could decide what to do with me. I started to argue my case and mention the prolonged discomfort of my crew, but the old air soldier’s icy stare made me hold my peace. This guy was no wartime volunteer. He was a regular. I was a prisoner of the U.S. Army.

About an hour passed. I could see the duty officer through a window in the dock office. He spoke on the phone and frowned. In due course, he came out and confronted me in the shed. “We have decided to turn you over to the U.S. Coast Guard,” he growled. “They should be here shortly. I hope you’ve learned a lesson.” I just nodded, but I really wanted to remind him that I had come to his turf for one reason: to seek help in rescuing a friend.

My jailor did not say how the Coast Guard was coming. I half expected to see a gray paddy wagon pull up in the parking lot. Eventually, I noticed the MacDill ferry, that made regular runs from downtown Tampa, coming up the Army channel. Behind the ferry was a little low-slung 38-foot Coast Guard picket boat, with its miniature pilot-house in the bow. The Coast Guard ensign was flapping in the breeze. They tied up at the Army pier. Two very young coastguardsmen came with the boat: a coxswain and a motor machinist mate. The coxswain went into the office and I could see him signing some kind of paper. He came out with the warrant officer who told me in no uncertain terms, “Go with this man.”

The coxswain didn’t say anything until we were in the open cockpit of the picket boat. Then he smiled and said, “You seem to have caused some trouble for the Army. Where do you want to go?” I told him I needed to get the Snipe and head for the Tampa Yacht Club. He said that he and the
motormac had just come off Atlantic convoy duty. They didn’t know much about Tampa Bay and had followed the ferry to find MacDill. After we collected the Snipe and brought my thoroughly dejected crew on board, the petty officer invited me to take the wheel and head for home. In no time, we were at the yacht basin. We were very grateful to our saviors. It was almost dark when the coasties plotted a course to their station in the Marjorie Park yacht basin.

Who would ever believe that a young, skinny kid trying to rescue a friend lost at sea would be taken as a threat to our national security? But it was true, and so ends the tale of Charlie Fuss, Sea Scout Bos’n/Crew Leader and U.S. Army Air Corps prisoner of war.

AFTERWORD

The Ballast Point Sea Scout Program was disbanded in 1949. Karl Rossa, who had come up through the ranks to Quartermaster and Mate, was the last adult leader. With war’s end, uniforms and Navy-style training and discipline were no longer in vogue with teenagers. The world was changing. Part of the base property was absorbed by the yacht club and the remainder was returned to the city. The building we had used for our base was eventually demolished.

Most of the Ballast Point crew went on to serve – in war or peace – in the Merchant Marine, the Navy and the Coast Guard, where their early nautical training was a great advantage. Some did not return from the sea.

The Ballast Point Sea Scout veterans held a reunion in 2000 at the home of Jack and Shirley Burkley in Gulf Hammock. In 2003 the group of about thirty met again aboard the SS American Victory Mariners Memorial and Museum ship, next to the Florida Aquarium at Channelside in Tampa. (A number of the Sea Scout vets volunteer aboard the ship.)


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Seeking David Fagen: The Search for a Black Rebel’s Florida Roots

Frank Schubert

David Fagen was by far the best known of the twenty or so black soldiers who deserted the U.S. Army in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century and went the next step and defected to the enemy. His story filled newspapers great and small, from the New York Times to the Crawford, Nebraska Tribune. The Times called him “the celebrated Fagen,” assuming that all who read about him would know why. It was he that the even more celebrated Frederick Funston wanted desperately to kill and then, when he failed to do so, made public excuses to cover his failure. In the period press, the literature, and the official records of the war, one name kept popping up: David Fagen, the teenager from Tampa who had enlisted in the 24th Infantry in 1898 for the war against Spain, “celebrated” in the New York Times, leading insurrec­to soldiers against the Americans, and frustrating the great Frederick Funston. Who was this soldier, and what was his story?

For many years, historical studies of Florida at the turn of the twentieth century that talked about the war with Spain tended to focus on local volunteer regiments, on civilian patriots trying to make soldiers comfortable in camp, and on businesses and communities experiencing strong economic surges as a result of Florida becoming the springboard to operations in Cuba. Indeed, Florida during the 1898 war included all that. All of V Corps, the 17,000 men who went to Cuba, along with those left behind, were bivouacked in Tampa, Lakeland, Miami, Fernandina, and Jacksonville. Among them were all four regiments of black regulars: three (the 9th Cavalry, and the 24th and 25th Infantry regiments) in Tampa, and a fourth, the 10th Cavalry, in Lakeland. Recently the experience of these soldiers in Florida has been the subject of a growing number of books, articles, and dissertations.2

Some Floridians joined regular units, and David Fagen was one of those. He enlisted on June 4, 1898, for a term of three years, and began an extraordinary military journey, starting as a private in the 24th Infantry and ending as a captain in Emilio Aguinaldo’s Filipino revolutionary army, fighting against his former comrades and the United States. The conflict that started as part of the war with Spain in 1898 ended by throttling the Filipino independence movement in 1902.

How does one discover the background of such a young man? He does not appear in what might be called “uplift histories,” such as the late Rowena Brady’s Things Remembered,3 a book that traces the emergence of a black professional and entrepre­neurial middle class in Tampa. He is not in Maxine Jones and Kevin McCarthy’s African Americans in Florida,4 with its biographies black Tampa’s social pillars, such as educator Blanche Armwood and nurse Clara Frye.

In fact, in an earlier version of a local history, D. B. McKay’s Pioneer Florida, published in 1959 during the waning days of segregation, there is some indication of how far David Fagen and his family were from being among the pillars of black Tampa. In a chapter called “The Good Colored People
of Tampa,” Sam Fagen, David’s father, made a cameo appearance, illustrating what did not, in McKay’s judgment, constitute the “good colored people” of Tampa. McKay wrote:

Sam Fagin [sic] was a shiftless old Negro who was never known to work, but had about 20 children. I mention him because I recall a funny story about him. When the late Clarke Knight had just graduated from law school he walked into the police station one morning looking for business. He saw old Sam in a cell and asked why. Sam said he was accused of stealing chickens. Clarke volunteered to represent him. The next morning when Sam was arraigned before Judge Harry Peeples the judge glared at him and evidently unnerved him. Told to plead to the charge, Sam whispered, ‘Judge, when you looks at me lak dat it seems lak you looks right through me. I ain’t gwine lie to you, Judge – I’s guilty.’ Clarke was on his feet instantly to protest: ‘Judge Peeples. You frightened this poor old man so badly with your fierce expression that he doesn’t know what he is saying. I am his lawyer, and I tell you he is not guilty.’ Whereupon the honorable court delivered himself of this gem: ‘Sam Fagin, stand up! I’ll have you know that I came from South Ca’lina, and I was taught to always take the word of a white in preference to the word of a Negro. You say you are guilty – your lawyer says you are not guilty. I prefer to believe your lawyer. Case dismissed.”

The tale shows in stark relief the racism of the day, when a black man’s word was not even good enough to establish his own guilt. The story may also show a black man so shrewd that he knew that all he had to do was admit guilt to be exonerated.

What about Sam’s son David? What can one find out about this young African American man from the mean dirt streets of the Scrub, Tampa’s black urban enclave? What and who might have shaped his life, and – perhaps most important – what might have been the sources of his extraordinary rebellion?

The search begins with Fagen’s family and relies on standard sources: census records, insurance maps, and vital statistics. Sam Fagen (c.1840-1899) did not have twenty children. He and his wife Sylvia (c.1853-1883) had seven offspring and David was the seventh, following four brothers and two sisters. The family also included Sylvia’s son George Douglas, the oldest child in the family in 1880, eleven years of age when David was aged one.

Sam Fagen, head of the family, was a laborer and, if not a local legend, he should have been. In addition to his acquittal as the perpetrator of the great chicken robbery, one 1878 story in the Sunland Tri-
A portion of Fagen’s first enlistment paper, showing his “X.” (National Archives)

bun[e] had him catching an alligator, and another in 1881 reported that he had stolen oats for his horse. Sylvia “kept house,” as the census report put it. George was sixteen in 1885 and did “general job work,” so he may have contributed a bit to the household, but the family was big, depended mainly on Sam’s earnings as a laborer, and probably had trouble making ends meet.

In the context of the hard-pressed Fagen family, one must understand Sylvia’s role during her short life and why it was important that she “kept house.” Kathleen Howe, in her article, “Stepping into Freedom: African Americans in Hillsborough County, Florida, During the Reconstruction Era,” notes that whites didn’t understand that “social circumstances and the legacy of slavery gave labor different meanings for African Americans. For black women, the meaning was deeply influenced by their desires to nurture their families and maintain their own households.” During the 1870s the percentage of black adult women keeping house or with no outside employment went from 50 to 64 percent. Sometimes, the circumstances and opportunities of Reconstruction led freedwomen to earn wages, but they “created economic niches that added earnings without sacrificing care of their families or submitting to the supervision of whites.” (Thus, the 1880 census notes “laundress” as the occupation of some freedwomen, since such work could be carried out largely at home while also caring for children, husbands, and housework.)

This view of the importance of women retaining their status as homemakers was confirmed by Leon Litwack, in his study of African Americans in the post-Reconstruction South. “In removing themselves from the fields and the white family’s house,” Litwack wrote, “black women evinced a desire to spend more time tending to the needs of the family and to escape the abuse that often accompanied close proximity to white men. In removing their wives, daugh-
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATE OF New York

City or town of Binghamton

I, David Fagen, born in Johnsonville, 23 years and 4 months, and by occupation a laborer, DO HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE to have voluntarily enlisted this 9th day of July, 1899 as a SOLDIER in the ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, for the period of THREE YEARS unless sooner discharged by proper authority: And do also agree to accept from the United States such bounty, pay, rations, and clothing as are or may be established by law. And I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, and that I will serve them honestly and faithfully against all their enemies whatsoever; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the Rules and Articles of War.

[Seal]

Subscribed and duly sworn to before me this 9th day of July, A.D. 1899

[Signature]

Recruiting Officer.

I certify that I have carefully examined the above-named man agreeably to the General Regulations of the Army, and that, in my opinion, he is free from all bodily defects and mental infirmity which would, in any way, disqualify him from performing the duties of a soldier.

[Signature]

I certify that I have minutely inspected the above-named man, previous to his enlistment, and that he was entirely sober when enlisted; that, to the best of my judgment and belief, he fulfills all legal requirements; and that I have accepted and enlisted him into the service of the United States under this contract of enlistment as duly qualified to perform the duties of an able-bodied soldier, and, in doing so, have strictly observed the regulations which govern the Recruiting Service. This soldier has brown eyes, black hair, black complexion, is 5 feet 1 inches high.

[Seal]

Recruiting Officer.

*Note.—The obligation must not be abrogated, but if it consists of more than one page, only the first page will be written and signed in full. 30-35

Fagen's second enlistment document shows his signature. (National Archives)
ters, and mothers from domestic and field work, many black men sought to assert their position at the head of the family and provide family members with a protection denied them as slaves."

Sylvia Fagen died in 1883. The Fagen family’s address before her death is not known, but the 1886 Tampa city directory locates Sam Fagen and his family at the corner of Nebraska Avenue and Constant Street, in the Scrub.10 Tampa’s Scrub district was typical of most black neighborhoods in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century South. Litwack has observed that “To find the black neighborhood in almost any town or city, one needed no map or signs,” since streets were rarely paved and inevitably turned to muck in rainstorms, and housing was usually the least desirable in town. For example, Litwack cites “the Bottoms” in Knoxville, Tennessee, a cluster of rickety shacks on stilts along a creek, in a neighborhood surrounded by industry – tobacco warehouses, a foundry, a slaughterhouse, and the locally volatile creek, sometimes running within its banks and some times at flood. Residents in “the Bottoms” had no political power, received few or no municipal services, and found it almost impossible to escape their surroundings.

Litwack could just as easily have been describing the Fagen’s neighborhood, Tampa’s Scrub.11 As Tony Pizzo said in a 1980 article for Tampa Bay History, the Scrub was Tampa’s first black community. Pizzo’s quotes a 1927 study of the conditions of life in the Scrub: “The rent[all] quarters are small and close together. They are situated on unpaved streets and narrow alleys. Bathing facilities are scarce; garbage is often uncollected.”12 Pizzo considered the district “a world of its own.” Outsiders did not venture there, and “only those who lived there frequented the place.” When Ybor City was established in 1886 just two miles east of Tampa, the black community found itself wedged between “the Cracker village of Tampa” and a new immigrant town, with both expanding in all directions. In Pizzo’s words, the Scrub became “a lost and forgotten world.”13

The scant history of his family and the retrospective studies of his neighborhood and era give some social and economic context to David Fagen, but little personal information. However, the moment that David Fagen walked into the recruiting office, he started leaving clues about himself. The young recruit had to provide two character references, people who knew his family and lived nearby. He chose carpenter Samuel Bryant and laborer William Hicks, both of whom were also residents of the Scrub. William Hicks remains obscure, but Samuel Bryant was well-known and respected in the black community. His mother Dorcas Bryant was a prominent early entrepreneur who she made her money the hard way, as a laundress, and, later, a landowner. Samuel Bryant owned the Nebraska Avenue Carpenter Shop, was active in the Republican Party during Reconstruction, and built Mt. Sinai African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on land donated by his mother.14 That Fagen would have sought out such a prominent member of the community as a character witness demonstrates how important he considered this step in his own life. That his family knew Samuel Bryant well enough to make such a request suggests that Sam Fagen, David’s father, was something more than just a chicken thief.

Fagen’s enlistment papers also contained information about David’s civilian occupation. His application said only that he worked as a laborer for Hull’s Phosphate Company,15 but that in itself said a lot. This industry, which had its start in the waters near Tampa in 1883 during the dredging of the Hillsborough River channel, followed a standard pattern, with mines using blacks for common labor and whites as foremen and mechanics. Black laborers earned $1 per day, usually for 10 hours of work. The work was arduous: breaking off phosphate rock with crow bars, picks, and oyster tongs, while standing in rivers swarming with mosquitoes, and tossing the rock into small boats, to be dried and crushed for use in fertilizer, baking powder, matches, and cleaning and water-softening compounds. Blacks provided as much as ninety-five percent of the work force. When there were not enough black laborers, mines used convict gangs on a contract basis at forty cents per man per day. Ninety percent or more of these working prisoners were black as well. Overall, phosphate mining in the 1880s and 1890s was a brutal, demanding grind of long hours, hard work, and low pay, “requiring strong men with the stamina to perform back-breaking work under Florida’s burning
sun." It takes little imagination to understand why a young man might leave that for the Army.

It takes no additional imagination to understand why the phosphate industry was a locus of labor radicalism. Like the turpentine and timber camps, phosphate mines were violent places. Black laborers' efforts to increase wages and improve conditions met concerted resistance from the operators. In 1899 black phosphate workers in Dunnellon formed an "Anti-Lynch and Mob Club," in an effort to stop escalating racial violence. In October of that year members of the club fought a pitched battle with local law enforcement officers; two club members were killed in the fracas and the organization was effectively broken. In 1903, a white phosphate employer in the Bartow vicinity killed a black worker after the worker got into an argument with the owner's bookkeeper. "At times," Paul Ortiz has written, "the state's phosphate and turpentine regions resembled armed camps as workers battled woods riders (turpentine foremen) and bosses over wages and company store debts." Ortiz's work supports Litvack's general observation that "the economies of repression produced a black workforce mostly dependent on whites for their daily sustenance. But it did not necessarily produce the docile, contented, easily controlled workforce whites had envisioned." Apart from wishing to evade labor violence or the back-breaking conditions of the phosphate industry, there may have been other reasons for the Army to appeal to a young African American man from Tampa. After all, it was the United States Army that had brought the end of slavery to the Confederate states and made it stick. In the years after the Civil War, the presence of the Army at Fort Brooke, in the words of Katherine Howe, "proved critical for African Americans seeking to exercise their freedom....Federal troops in Tampa mediated disagreements and prevented widespread racial violence against blacks." The black citizens of Tampa appreciated the importance of the military and in 1870 they successfully petitioned the Governor for an African American militia company. It never did much beyond train, march in parades, and protect the polls during Reconstruction. However, the very existence of the unit showed an awareness of the role of the military in uplifting and protecting the black community. This understanding fed on what Paul Ortiz called "traditions of black self defense" in Florida. The white-owned Florida Times-Union, of Jacksonville, in fact, warned on 13 July 1890 of a new breed of black Floridian that it called the "Winchester Negro," who feared no white man.

The newspaper put its journalistic finger on a growing regional phenomenon, the emergence of the black outlaw, the "bad nigger," to use the term contemporaneously and - by African Americans - positively applied. In the 1890s, black folklore increasingly emphasized "the black outlaw and desperado, usually a loner who chose to violate all of the moral and legal precepts of society, who wielded his own brand of justice." This outlaw, the "bad nigger," was celebrated for "cunning, boldness, coolness, and wit, often in the face of overwhelming odds, and for his uncanny ability and imaginative powers he displayed in outwitting his enemies." One such man, Alabama turpentine worker Morris Slater, known as "Railroad Bill," shot and killed a police officer, escaped, and roamed southwestern Alabama, robbing trains, and stealing from all, black, white, rich, and poor. In March 1896 bounty hunters in Atmore, Alabama, blew his head off, but legend had it that he had transformed himself and still watched his pursuers with amusement. Florida's equivalent was Harmon Murray, a young man whose life of crime as leader of the North Florida Gang centered on Alachua County and who "achieved Statewide notoriety" before seventeen-year-old Elbert Hardy, another black Floridian, killed him in Gainesville in September 1891.

On top of that mythic history and tradition, there was the formidable presence in May 1898 of the black regulars who could be seen all over Tampa. They were proud, tough, confident men, and the very sight of them in and near the Tampa Heights camp that was close to Central Avenue and the Scrub could easily have impressed a young black man like David Fagen. The Tampa Morning Tribune wrote on 5 May 1898 that "The colored infantrymen stationed in Tampa and vicinity have made themselves very offensive to the people of the city. The men insist upon being treated the same as white men are treated, and the citizens will not make any distinction between the colored
troops and the colored civilians.” This may have been offensive to whites, but it was surely a revelation to some blacks to see such black men, refusing to be denied service in bars, carrying weapons in broad daylight, upright and powerful in their bearing.

In any case, David Fagen did not have many viable alternatives to army service. As his enlistment paper shows, he could not sign his name. There were schools in The Scrub, of course. Harlem Academy was first mentioned by name in the minutes of the Hillsborough County School Board in 1889; there are indications of a colored school in Tampa in the minutes of the Board as early as 1876. Rowena Brady found evidence of a freedmen’s school on Harrison between Morgan and Marion, permanently established by 1870, “one room without partitions and few windows,” that served the community until Harlem Academy was established. But for Fagen, if he went to school at all, he did not stay very long and whatever schooling he had was negligible.26 Fagen’s lack of investment in schooling was characteristic of the era and of the Jim Crow conditions under which he lived. As a disillusioned black schoolteacher from Mississippi said: “You educate your children – then whatcha gonna do? You got any jobs for ‘em? You got any business for ‘em to go into?”27

Statements in an enlistment document were not necessarily accurate. When he signed up, Fagen said he was over twenty-two years old, although the census report of 1880 put him at the age of one, so he would have been nineteen in 1898. Moreover, the Army assumed he was single. It did not enlist married men, and Fagen claimed that he had no dependents. However, according to Hillsborough County records as examined by Julius Gordon, he had married Maggie Washington on 23 October 1897.28 If he was still married in June 1898, Fagen kept that information to himself. (Prevarications on enlistment documents were prevalent among enlistees, white or black.) Lieutenant Charles Tayman, the white recruiting officer, indicated that Fagen spoke, read, and wrote the English language “satisfactorily.” Fagen verified this by signing the document with an “X.” He could not write his name.

Fagen had little education, but still wanted to learn. Six months after the war in Cuba ended, the Army offered opportunities for discharges, and he accepted one.

Anthony Marrow (seated center) witnessed Fagen’s first enlistment. He is shown with Sergeant William Chambers (to Marrow’s right) and Commissary Sergeant Dabbert Green, in the Philippines, 1899. (From John H. Nankivell, History of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, 1926.)

Fagen got out, came home to Tampa, and took a look around. He learned that his father had died, perhaps discovered that his wife had found someone else (in 1899 she lived under the same name she had used when she married him, at 813 Harrison Street in the Scrub) and re-enlisted. This time, instead of using an “X,” he signed his own name. The signature was wobbly and crooked, but it was his. That is not all the young soldier learned in eight months of service. In 1898, he had stated that he did not drink “intoxicating liquors.” The next year, he reported “moderate” use of spirits.

The enlistment papers also tell us about where Fagen was bound, both geographically and ideologically. The first time the young black man enlisted, Anthony Marrow and John Calloway witnessed his “X.” Marrow was a schoolteacher from North Carolina. He was just nearing the end of his first enlistment in H Company of the 24th, the same company to which Fagen was as-
signed, and rose to be regimental sergeant major of the 25th Infantry, the top enlisted grade. Calloway was a printer from Richmond who rose quickly to the rank of battalion sergeant major. He was articulate, sensitive, and deeply conflicted about his role in suppressing the Filipino revolution. We do not know what Fagen learned from these two professional soldiers, whether he saw either one as a role model, whether they communicated their world views or the importance of learning, but in the Scrub he probably saw few men who combined an impressive physical presence with worldly awareness.

Fagen went to Cuba, a veteran of less than one month when he boarded ship with a group of replacements headed for the island. He did not serve with his regiment - the 24th Infantry - in the battle at San Juan Hill, where the black regulars shared star billing with Theodore Roosevelt and the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry (Rough Riders) - but he did work among the yellow fever patients at the hospital near Siboney, Cuba, and came down with the fever himself. He was still ill when he reached Montauk Point, New York, with the 24th.

He came back and shared the 24th's hero's welcome, went west to serve at Fort Douglas, outside Salt Lake City, Utah, and at Fort D.A. Russell, near Cheyenne, Wyoming. Fagen got out, came home, and then went back in the Army. He spent part of 1899 with detachments assigned to patrol the redwood forests just west of Sequoia National Park, and sailed from California to the Philippines in the summer. By then he had seen far more of the world than likely seemed possible during his provincial Tampa childhood.

In the Philippine Islands, Fagen's story diverged from that of most of his comrades. As with most aspects of his apparently short life, there is more circumstantial evidence than hard data about his later, controversial, actions. The young soldier disputed with his superiors and had seven court martial convictions for minor transgressions. Late in November, 1899, while his company was in San Isidro (the chief town of Nueva Ecija province in Central Luzon), Fagen deserted and went over to the enemy. He apparently had help. A report from his regiment said that an insurrecto officer was waiting for him with a horse. Without any evidence to indicate why, Fagen took the biggest risk a soldier could, turning his back on his country and his comrades, his family, and his home.

He became an officer in the revolutionary army and led troops against the Ameri-
cans in the Philippine insurrection. Fagen displayed talent at his newfound vocation. In the eight months following July 1900, there are records of nine skirmishes that included Fagen between U.S. troops and guerilla forces. All of them took place in the sparsely populated and densely overgrown regions of Nueva Ecija. Generally, Fagen did not seem to move far from San Isidro, on the Rio Grande de la Pampagna near Mount Arayat, the dominant terrain feature in the province.

In July, Fagen ambushed troops of his old regiment, leading to a fierce firefight with General Funston’s scouts. It was the rainy season in Luzon, and American operations had slowed because of the difficulty in moving troops and supplies. According to Jack Ganzhorn, an Arizona gunslinger who was in the 34th Volunteer Infantry and served as one of the scouts, Fagen and his men surprised a two-wagon convoy of the 24th near Manacling, killed one man and wounded two others, burned the wagons, and waited. Then, when the scouts came up, Fagen struck again, repeating the ambush and pinning the scouts with their backs to the river, this running high and wild from the rains. According to Ganzhorn, as Fagen crept closer, he taunted the Americans. “Captain Fagan’s done got yuh white boys now. Less’n you all surrender, my little gugs is gonna chop on yuh with their meatcutters.” An American lieutenant found the heckling unnerving and leaped to his feet, but was pulled back by his men before he could get hurt. He shouted in response, “Go to hell, you black scum! A million of you yellow-bellied rats couldn’t whip Funston’s Scouts!” It was a near thing for the Scouts. By the time reinforcements arrived, the pinned-down men were out of rifle ammunition and had their pistol cartridges in their hats next to them, waiting for the end. One American lay dead, and Fagen had vanished, leaving his own dead where they fell.

In December, Fagen clashed with the great Funston himself, east of San Isidro. “In this fight,” the red-headed volunteer brigadier general later lamented, “I got a fairly good look at the notorious Fagan at a distance of a hundred yards, but unfortunately had already emptied my carbine.” Bad luck for Funston; good luck for Fagen, who slipped away again.

Funston, who masterminded the audacious capture of revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo, came out of the war as a popular hero. His failure to add Fagen to his trophies must have rankled. At the Funston family Christmas dinner in Kansas, just three weeks after the lack of ammunition deprived him of his intended kill, Funston’s sister-in-law Magdalena Blankart chided him in absentia with a little versification:

By Jiminy Christmas Fred
What’s this I see?
Poor old Fagen
Hanged to a tree?

How did it happen
This is queer
Tell us about it
We’re dying to hear.

In 1901, the Filipino revolution collapsed around Fagen, with one leader after another surrendering in the spring and summer. Fagen’s immediate superiors, Generals José Alejandro and Urbano Lacuna, surrendered and tried to cut a deal for Fagen. Funston’s response was predictable. “This man,” Funston said, “could not be received as a prisoner of war, and if he surrendered it would be with the understanding that he would be tried by a court-martial – in which event his execution would be a practical certainty.” Soon, posters offering a $600 reward for “Fagen, dead or alive” in both Spanish and Tagalog, went up in towns all over Nueva Ecija.

The apparent end to the queer drama came in December 1901. A native hunter named Anastacio Bartolomé walked into an American outpost with a cloth sack, pulled out the “slightly decomposed head of a Negro,” and said it was Fagen’s. He also produced weapons and clothing, field glasses, Fagen’s commission in the Filipino army, and the West Point class ring of Lieutenant Frederick Alstaetter, one of Fagen’s former captives. Bartolomé said he and five companions had been fishing on the east coast of Luzon when Fagen arrived with his wife and two armed Negrito companions. After spending a night together and cooking breakfast, Bartolomé and his friends attacked the newcomers with bolos and killed Fagen, whose wife leaped into and ocean and drowned while the Negritos fled. Bartolomé severed the head, tossed it into his sack, and returned with the trophy.
Bartolomé’s story and evidence were persuasive, but not conclusive. The Army announced Fagen’s death, but officers on the scene had doubts about whose head had been delivered and started asking for precise descriptions of Fagen from members of his former company. No definitive evidence was ever amassed. The official file on the incident is titled “the supposed killing of David Fagen,” and there is no record of the reward being paid. Additionally, an uncorroborated document, published in a study of the Filipino constabulary, purports to deal with the pursuit of Fagen ten months after his alleged death.

At least two other scenarios are consistent with the existing evidence. First, Bartolomé could have come upon Fagen’s camp while he was gone, taken the documents, clothing, and other objects, and later obtained a head with which to “prove” his kill. Admittedly, that would not have been hard but not impossible to accomplish. One U.S. officer had earlier remarked on Fagen’s small head. Fagen’s Negrito companions were of a racial group known for their small stature, and a small head would have been available.

Collusion between Bartolomé, an admitted former insurrecto, and Fagen is also possible. Fagen may have turned over his personal effects to the hunter to gain relief from pursuit. He could then have hidden among the natives of northern Luzon, while Bartolomé turned in a head and claimed the reward.

At this point, it is unlikely that the gaps in the record can be definitively filled, and the conflicting accounts reconciled. However, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Fagen might have survived in some fashion and spent the remainder of his life among the Negritos. He might have lived to a ripe old age in the dense, overgrown backcountry of Nueva Ecija, where his past could not find him.

What happened to David Fagen the man is not the question of first importance now. What can and should be asked is: Why is Fagen’s rebellion important? Where do we find his significance, and how can he be placed in historical context? Fagen’s revolutionary act came at the time of the formalizing of racial segregation into an institutional system, a system that defied the hope that the results of the Civil War might include equality for black citizens. Fagen was a rebel in the ultimate sense, not only a deserter but a successful defector, who became a preoccupation and an embarrassment to U.S. military officials. Black troopers Edmond DuBose and Lewis Russell of the 9th Cavalry were the only U.S. defectors of the era hanged for their crime, while all of the white soldiers who did the same thing (and were later caught) received prison terms. Black defection troubled military officials for widespread social reasons, and added to Frederick Funston’s preoccupation with Fagen as well as adding generalized significance to Fagen’s defection.

The war in the Philippines represented a peculiar moral challenge for black American soldiers. This conflict pitted them against a nonwhite population for which some of them felt a genuine sympathy. The historical conflicts with Native Americans, fought against semi-nomadic hunter-warriors whose cultures, religions, and languages were beyond comprehension for most troops, evoked only the rarest expressions of sympathy from black soldiers. But the Philippine war was different. The Indian wars took place before the solidification of segregationist practice, but the Philippine conflict started at the time that Jim Crow was hardening. Black soldiers may have seen substantial similarities with the Filipino underclass, many of whom were literate Christian city-dwellers and farmers. Also, white soldiers brought to Manila the same racial epithets and the same Jim Crow segregation that had been at work on mainland America, and this must have given many troopers pause.

When Sergeant John Calloway wrote to his hometown paper that he and his comrades were “between the devil and the deep sea” on the war, this was the issue that troubled him: he was an American soldier who owed his loyalty to his country imposing a social system that oppressed him on a population with which he empathized. As indicated by their letters home, many published in newspapers and reprinted in Willard Gatewood’s Smoked Yankees, most black soldiers understood this dilemma and lived with it as long as they were in the islands. David Fagen was among the very few who resolved it in dramatic fashion: by severing all of his ties with home, family, comrades, and country.

David Fagen’s experience in the Army would have represented an important but imperfect avenue of escape. Historian Le-
rone Bennett, noting just how imperfect this option was, called military service one of the more subtle dead-ends in a period overwhelmingly marked by dead-ends for African-Americans. Military service carried the traditional hope that it would lead to better treatment for blacks in civilian life. Pulled by this theory and pushed by the fact that it was difficult to find employment elsewhere, thousands of blacks found themselves involved in the dirty work of subjugating and policing the American Indians and brown people in the Philippines and the Caribbean.  

Keeping this in mind as well as George Rawick's injunction that men do not make revolution "for light and transient reasons," history still offers little concrete evidence of Fagen's motives. We can guess that life in Tampa before the turn of the twentieth century – the Scrub, the death of Fagen's mother and father, limited education, the failure of his marriage, the brutal environment of the phosphate industry, the memory of the military's role in ending slavery, the entrenchment of Jim Crow and the desire to resist it – all contributed in some way to David Fagen's makeup and to the decisions that led him to reject home, country, and comrades, on the battlefield.

Editor George Knox's comment in the pages of the Indianapolis Freeman, with which Mike Robinson and this author ended our 1975 article on Fagen, still serves as a fittingly ambivalent obituary to a black rebel about whom we do not know enough.

Fagen was a traitor, and died a traitor's death, but he was a man, no doubt, prompted by honest motives to help a weaker side, and one to which he felt allied by ties that bind. Fagen, perhaps, did not appreciate the magnitude of the crime of aiding the enemy to shoot down his flag. He saw, it may be, the weak, the strong; he chose, and the world knows the rest.

ENDNOTES

1. Over the years, numerous people helped with the research for this paper and provided useful comments on various drafts. I would like to thank David A. Armstrong, Paul E. Camp, James M. Denham, Julius J. Gordon, Joe Hipp, Perry D. Jamieson, Gordon L. Olson, Irene Schubert, James Taylor, and Brent R. Weisman.


6. Sylvia Fagen died on 2 May 1883 and was buried in Oaklawn Cemetery (Tampa), Section 4. http://www.tampagov.net/dept_parks/cemetery/Engine.asp (Apr 2002).


11. Litwack, 336-337.


18. Litwack, 165.
20. Ortiz, 118-119.
21. See Al-Tony Gilmore, Bad Nigger! the National Impact of Jack Johnson (Associated Faculty Press, 1975), for the use of this phrase to describe the ultimate defiant African American, the first black heavyweight boxing champion, who scandalized white America with his white lovers and his heavyweight crown.
22. Litwack, 437, 438.
25. For a detailed description of the camp and its location, see Brent R. Weisman, ed., Soldiers and Patriots: Buffalo Soldiers and Afro-Cubans in Tampa, 1898 (USF Anthropology Studies in Historical Archaeology No. 2, 1995).
27. Litwack, 60.
30. Fagen enlisted on June 4. Four days later, the 24th Infantry boarded ship for Cuba, although the regiment did not actually sail until June 14. New recruits and other replacements followed as part of a six-ship convoy that left Tampa on June 30 and arrived in Cuba on July 10. There is no clear evidence tying Fagen either to the replacement convoy or to the original departure. Lacking that, it is reasonable to assume that a recruit with four days of service would not be sent into combat with his regiment. Adjutant General’s Office, U.S. Army, Correspondence: Relating to the War with Spain, including the Insurrection in the Philippines and the China Relief Expedition, April 15, 1898, to July 30, 1902, Volume 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1993), pp. 65, 69, 122.
33. Funston, 386.
34. On the capture of Aguinaldo see David Haward Bain: Sitting in Darkness: Americans in the Philippines (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), and Funston’s Memories of Two Wars.
35. Magdalena Blankart to “My Angel Mother,” December 26, 1900, Funston papers, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
36. Funston, 431, 434.
38. Richmond Planet, September 30, 1899.
42. Indianapolis Freeman, December 14, 1901.
Limits of power: the 1890 Ocala Convention of the National Farmers’ Alliance

Dan Bertwell

Editor’s Note: The following article, dealing with events in Ocala, Florida, extends somewhat beyond the submission guidelines for The Sunland Tribune. However, these events had far-reaching consequences for politics and agriculture throughout Central Florida, especially in the agrarian areas of Hillsborough County, and it is felt that readers will gain valuable insight about subsequent local affairs from Bertwell’s analysis.

In Ocala, Florida on December 2, 1890, members of the National Farmers’ Alliance and Industrial Union held their second annual meeting. In his introductory remarks, Alliance President L.L. Polk articulated the fundamental purpose of the movement and the meeting. Polk underscored the need to overcome divisions between people and groups from different sections of the nation. He hoped the National Alliance would demonstrate, through “harmonious action and thoroughly fraternal cooperation,” that they could overcome the rift and “meet the demands of patriotic duty in the spirit of equity and justice.”

Polk’s appeal did not fall on deaf ears. The Ocala Convention successfully united separate Farmers’ Alliances from around the United States. Unfortunately, the unification of this national movement did not bring all its members together. Although the Alliance merged along sectional lines; reuniting North and South, this encouraged the exclusion of African-American members of separate “Colored Alliances.” Women’s marginal role further encouraged the formation of a movement that allowed non-white, non-male members to participate within separate spheres, but excluded them to mostly peripheral roles. Despite their excluded status, women and African-Americans negotiated social and political roles inside the convention, asserting power in subtle ways. Overall, the Ocala Convention manifested racial and gendered limits that nineteenth-century reform movements placed on participation, and the distribution of power, as well as the intrinsic paternalism of reform. The convention experience also indicated ways disempowered groups subverted these restrictions.

Members of the Florida Farmers’ Alliance hoped the convention would induce more farmers to join their cause while “selling” the state of Florida in the national press as a destination for travel or permanent settlement. According to historian Robert McMath, “The Florida Alliance had developed an aggressive cooperative marketing network (complete with a New York office) in an effort to direct the state’s agricultural growth toward the interest of family farmers.” Along with the Ocala Convention, Florida Alliance members held a concurrent “Semi-Tropical Exposition,” specifically created to portray positive aspects of Florida culture. Divided into four sections, the exposition showcased cultural and agricultural products from central, south, and west Florida; it also included a “Ladies’ Department” display. Spectators strolled through gardens, rode children’s rides, watched horse races, and viewed livestock exhibitions.

Originally slated to meet in Jacksonville,
directors of the Florida Farmers’ Alliance learned that the small, central Florida city of Ocala could provide more financial incentives. The people of Ocala, like the Florida Farmers’ Alliance, viewed the event as a welcome opportunity to bring attention to their area, an influx of tourists, money and prestige. An Ocala Banner article addressed the event’s importance, stating “All eyes are turned to Ocala. Ocala’s supreme moment has come and we must be equal to the occasion.”

With delegates representing as many as “thirty states and well over a million farmers,” the convention brought together a heterogeneous body of people. But the different alliances represented were not as united as they seemed. Schisms existed between Western Alliances (whose members wished to unite into a distinct and powerful third party), and the Southern Alliances (whose members sought to work with the Democratic Party). The Ocala Convention occurred at an organizationally charged moment for the National Alliance. Not only were the various alliances striving to work within a national framework, but more radical members needed to restrain themselves, fearing openness might antagonize conservative elements within the movement.

In the end, delegates settled their respective differences and drew up a list of demands. The “Ocala Demands” formed the foundation of the Populist Party in the United States and helped establish the movement’s direction. According to historian Gene Clanton, the Ocala Demands, in part, caused virulent white supremacists and “economically conservative” members to abandon the movement. In spite of the event’s importance, most historiography of the Ocala Convention has focused on the resulting list of grievances rather than the convention itself. As a closer look at the convention reveals, the debate over the demands was not the only potentially divisive issue at the convention. In order to foster unity between those who sought the creation of a third party and those who wished to work within the existing political system, the delegates reached a compromise. At Ocala, the Farmers’ Alliances suspended any consideration of third party formation until February of 1892, both sowing the seeds of unity for what would become the Populist Party and setting the tone for their movement’s future. Historian John B. Clark stated in 1927 that the Ocala delegates drew up a platform “around which the political history” of the entire United States “revolved for several succeeding years.”

Despite the importance of the demands, Clark described the convention experience in just one paragraph.

The historiography of populism generally is of two types: regional history or national overview. Regional historians center on a particular area, generally a state. Because of this limited focus they treat the Ocala convention as a point of reference. For example, Barton Shaw’s The Wool Hat Boys: Georgia’s Populist Party, dedicated three sentences to the Ocala convention:

Thus when the national leaders of the order gathered in Ocala, Florida, in 1890, Livingston lobbied for a new platform. By the end of the meeting, the Alliance had dropped its demand for government ownership of the railroads in favor of government regulation. Having changed the philosophy of the national organization, Livingston returned to Georgia and tightened his hold over his own Alliance.

This depiction of the Ocala Convention is indicative of most historical literature. The convention is rarely discussed in detail. Historians interpret the Ocala Demands’ impact on a specific section of the Populist movement and relegate the convention to little more than a peripheral event. The experience itself is rarely mentioned, despite frequent references to the resultant demands.

Scholarship which has focused specifically on populism in Florida is limited and contemporary historical concerns have not been incorporated. Authors dealing with the issue have discussed the events surrounding the convention, but not the convention’s implications. These works provide a narrative of the day-to-day happenings in Ocala and the political platform adopted, but do not incorporate any analysis of gender, race or class.

Whether scholarly monographs mull over regional divides in the national movement, racial inclusion (or exclusion) in populism, or class consciousness among farmers, their common thread is a lack of consideration for the Ocala Convention’s depth or breadth. None of the histories consider the convention itself or the distribution of power along gendered and racial lines in the populist movement. In Beyond
"Digging Potatoes, Federal Point, Fla." This 1912 postcard shows farm workers harvesting the crop in rural Hillsborough County. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society.)

Labor’s Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor, historian Robert Weir has argued that while national histories should consider the Knights of Labor “as a totality,” they fail to adequately incorporate subtle differences from region to region. Weir also believes that the “gilded age working class was not monolithic” and historians must consider the presence of “multiple working class cultures.” Although Weir analysis focused on the Knights of Labor and not the Populist Party or Farmers’ Alliances, his discussion of multiple working class cultures – with divergent interests, goals, and plans – can be applied to the various Farmers’ Alliances around the nation. While regional histories fail to understand the populist movement on a national scale, national histories do not adequately incorporate sectional difference. Regional and national histories of populism are limited by their focus; one sacrifices national unity, another provincial specificity.

The contemporary historiography of the event represents African American men and white women in different ways. Little historical work has considered the implications of women’s presence at the convention; while most contemplation of the African-American males’ roles revolves around their impact on the white men of the Alliance. Because of conflicting views between Alliances concerning racial inclusion, historians represent black men as a divisive force that could have created a rift between the white members on either side of the Mason-Dixon Line. In fact, most reconciliation during the Ocala Convention occurred between former Union and Confederate soldiers who promised to set aside the sectional strife of their collective past, rather than associate along racial or gendered lines. The figurative bridge-building between these former foes failed to encourage either a greater black presence at the convention or women’s involvement outside of traditional roles.

Bridging former Union and former Confederate sympathizers was a main goal established from the outset of the convention. The opening speaker, Florida Governor Francis P. Fleming, described his experience as a wounded Confederate veteran just after the Civil War journeying north to New York City. Governor Fleming noted that the Yankees treated him well, with no enmity. He intended to remember this courtesy, he said, extending it to those who came to Florida. Governor Fleming believed the “bloody chasm” between North and South “largely existed in the minds of professional politicians and sensational newspaper men,” and it had been spanned by all the people present at the convention.

The perception that re-unification was necessary appeared in both national and
local newspapers. The New York Times referred to the destruction of sectional divisions as "perhaps the most important service" that the Alliance and the convention could perform.21 The Ocala Banner reported a reunion of veterans that took place during the convention. This meeting, which the paper deemed "the most pleasant and interesting feature of the great gathering," consisted of both sides facing one another in columns. Rather than meeting with fixed bayonets, the two sides met with hands extended and "a most hearty hand shaking was indulged over an imaginary chasm." The hand then played a medley of "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and "Dixie," followed by speeches from veterans on both sides. Speakers reaffirmed their respect for the valor of former enemies; a Union veteran stated that Southern courage "was an honor to the 'Lost Cause'" and one former Confederate soldier reassured the audience that he "loved the valor and courage of the Union soldier, and the harder he fought, the more he loved him." Southern speakers articulated their relief that the slaves had been freed and both sides agreed that the Alliance could help "obliterate all traces of bitterness" between the former foes.22 Throughout the convention the "shadow of the Civil War" remained relevant and in many ways affected events as they unfolded.23

Even non-members of the Alliance perceived a change in North/South interaction. Terrence Powderly, Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, received considerable media attention while in Ocala. His speech during the convention pointed to the difference between the Sub-Tropical Exposition and an exposition in New Orleans five years earlier. Northern newspapers had charged that the New Orleans Exposition glorified southern culture and ignored national reunification. Powderly told the crowd that the Sub-Tropical Exposition seemed different, and he believed Southerners had truly forgotten and "forever buried" the sectionalism that had separated the two groups. Powderly further argued that the convention itself represented "a living protest against what incendiary politicians charge against you for their own base purposes." He related a conversation with Semi-Tropical Exposition President George Wilson. Powderly asked Wilson if the convention had any "relic of the rebellion," or anything "suggesting the lost cause." Wilson "scratched his head and answered 'well, really, we had forgotten that.'" Powderly believed people in the South had truly moved beyond the Civil War and reiterated that the two former antagonists were united once again.24

While disagreements existed, unification of farmers around the nation still seemed to be the main goal of the convention. Delegate W.S. MeAllister of Mississippi declared that only through a "holy war against sectionalism" could farmers exert the power and influence necessary to keep their movement strong.25 By uniting the Alliances across the Mason-Dixon Line and ignoring racial divisions, the National Alliance excluded minority groups from an equal footing in the movement. Reconciliation between Union and Confederate adherents superseded the interests of black Alliance members.

Just before the convention, The Farmers' Advocate wrote that the "interests of the people of the west and the south are identical, and their political forces must be consolidated against the power of corporate greed."26 Progressive Farmer wrote an open letter to all other reform publications, hoping that at the "great, grand meeting" in Ocala, farmers would join into one organization to "make common cause against a common danger."27 It seemed farmers around the nation agreed that they shared common goals and interests, but had very different views as to how their goals could be achieved.

By merging the two regions, convention-goers hoped to answer the "chief question" they faced: whether to form a third [political] party or work inside the present political framework.28 Delegates from various Western Alliances, particularly Kansas, posed the "third party" question most forcefully.29 Southern Alliances found that they exerted their greatest influence when voting for Democratic candidates who promised to represent alliance interests. These men recognized the power of the Democratic Party in the South, found success working inside the Democratic Party, and knew Democratic candidates held similar views concerning racial issues. Clanton argued, "There was still a Mason-Dixon line on the alliance map, and a racial one as well," and according to "white-southern logic" the Southern Alliance needed to be certain that reform through the Democratic
Party was impossible. Once the Democratic option had been invalidated, remaining southern populists would embrace the third party movement.30

It is difficult to define the relationship between Farmers’ Alliances and their African American members. Blight believes that because the alliance movement opposed the power of banks, railroads and other business endeavors, and stood against oligarchy and privilege, their members would have held beliefs contrary to the myth of the “lost cause.” By bringing African Americans to the political forefront, populists threatened traditional southern racial, political, and social norms.31 The Southern Alliance did not admit black members, but exerted an inordinate amount of influence over parallel “Colored Alliances.”32 One difference between those in favor of a third party and those opposed was the viewpoint concerning the black vote, reflecting Western desire for black voter support and Southern desire to retain the racial status quo. Put simply, those in favor of the third party movement tended to seek out and encourage African-American voting and those in favor of working within the system discouraged it.33 This desire to encourage black voting did not translate to inclusive views of racial interaction. Anna Rochester, author of The Populist Movement in the United States, finds no clear indication that the Populists wanted to make the black vote a central issue, but many supporters of the third party movement wanted to protect the black right to vote.34

The historiography of race and populism reflects a contest between the populist movement’s theoretical ideals and the restrictions of contemporary society. Historian Norman Pollack has argued that different states interpreted the “Negro question” in different ways and, at least on a national level, populists were interested in helping members of both races. The Ocala Demands and the third party question separated conservative elements from the populist movement.35 Although many (if not most) of the members were racist, populist policies tended to be more racially progressive than other political groups.36 Historians Jack Abramowitz and Robert Saunders contend that populists were less racist than non-populists; while historian C. Vann Woodward believes that the Democratic appeal to racism forced populists to downplay the issue of racial equality among potential political allies. Essentially, these arguments underscore the that, while populists were progressive for their time, they were still products of their time. They acted on political expediency and economic issues, rather than racial ones.37

At the convention, members of the Colored Alliance participated almost ex-
clusively as non-voting “observers.” This opportunity allowed the races to “symbolically albeit futilely” extend a hand to one another.\textsuperscript{38} Colored Alliance members voted within group meetings to oppose or support National Alliance amendments, but this voice held little sway with white Alliance members. Limited representation did exist for at least one member of the Colored Alliance. John A. Sawyer, an African-American delegate from North Carolina, served on the “most important committee-platform and resolutions.” Sawyer needed money to get back to his home state, so other delegates provided funds and encouraged him to speak. “Being the only delegate from an important southern Alliance state whose whites had shunned the convention” and perhaps “the only representative of his race serving as a delegate,” Sawyer told the convention that his people “were willing to follow the lead of the whites,” but asked, “For God’s sake not to lead them astray.”\textsuperscript{39} The presence of one exception does not negate the exclusionary practices of the convention, but underscores that distribution of power, no matter how lopsided, never falls completely to one side. The ambiguous role of Colored Alliance delegates echoed their role in the populist movement, American politics, and in the entire society.

The National Colored Alliance seemed overwhelmed by the National Alliance. On December fourth, the Florida Times Union reported that the Colored Alliance had been “in session all day” but “transacted no business of importance.” The delegates were “awaiting the action of the national alliance on fraternal relations with other bodies.”\textsuperscript{40} The next day the same paper reported that the Colored Alliance had censured the actions of the National (white) Alliance for passing a resolution opposed to the federal election bill: “Because such action has no reference whatever to the aims and purposes of the organization and was calculated to check the growth and influence of the alliance.” The same day the Colored Alliance was “ready to be received for fraternal greetings,” but their reception was postponed, with no reason given.\textsuperscript{41} On December fifth, the Colored Alliance’s resolutions were similar to the previous day’s, with “the principal change” being the “elimination of the paragraph criticizing and denouncing the white national alliance for its action.”\textsuperscript{42}

The Weekly Floridian reported that white and black opposition over a bill constituted further “evidence that the races cannot be made to fraternize,” and that African-Americans were “ignorant,” “suspicious of,” and “prejudiced against whites.” It seemed to the author that things would “never be different until the negro can be made to understand that what is good for the white man is best for the negro.”\textsuperscript{43}

According to historians Irvin Winsboro and Moses Musoke, white populists offered African-Americans “optimism and the Populist rhetoric of camaraderie,” but the 1890s produced “no discernable solidarity between whites and blacks in the agrarian south.” White Alliance members made overtures to their black neighbors, but “eschewed meaningful and permanent black participation” in the political apparatus.\textsuperscript{44} The experiences of John Sawyer and the entire Colored Alliance support Winsboro and Musoke’s assertion that black farmers believed the alliance movement may “erase, or at least ease, the despised color line” but “recognized the harsh reality that the Populists’ reform agenda excluded substantive changes to the code of white supremacy.”\textsuperscript{45}

White delegates were confined by their social reality and viewed African-Americans paternalistically, as second-class citizens. Louisiana Populist M.H. Brian did not seem concerned with African-American involvement in the populist movement. A southern supporter of the ‘third party’ option, Brian told a reporter that the people he represented also supported the third party and could “manage the colored men in the Alliance very well.” He and his constituents were “not a bit frightened about negro supremacy.”\textsuperscript{46} Surely, Brian understood that southern Democrats held views which supported the traditional racial divide; but he also felt that the white members could subjugate Colored Alliances with little effort and African-Americans would welcome white leadership. Historian Bruce Palmer argues that populists around the South used racist language freely and regularly with little qualification, an unsurprising observation considering the social norms in the late nineteenth-century South.\textsuperscript{47} Alliance members (especially in the South), it may be supposed, acted out of a racist paternalism present in their time and not a genuine dedication to a belief in black equality.\textsuperscript{48} According to Palmer, paternalism “al-
Mechanization enabled the citrus industry in Florida to meet burgeoning demand and employ thousands of workers. This c.1910 postcard displays “modern” packing house. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society.)

allowed a greater degree of flexibility in rearranging relations between black and white” but “was based ultimately on a racism as strong as the other more explicitly racist approaches contemporary with it.” In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that “differentiation...is dependent upon disgust,” believing that divisions between social purity and social hybridization became a necessary element in the act of exclusion. Although Stallybrass and White discuss the European *bourgeoisie*, their arguments may apply to the exclusion of African Americans at the Ocala convention. Members of the white Alliances felt they had more in common with other white populists, regardless of region, than they had with members of Colored Alliances.50

Gendered roles and women’s space at the Ocala Convention belied the complexity of relationships and human interaction. In her seminal work *Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis*, historian Joan Wallach Scott argues that “the term ‘gender’ suggests that relations between the sexes are a primary aspect of social organization.” Scott further argues that historians must “immerse the expanding production of discourses on sex in the field of multiple and mobile power relations.” In this context, a seemingly straightforward case of exclusion becomes complicated by social organization and the dispersal of power.51 Relationships of power and the concept of citizenship complicate any gendered analysis of the Ocala Convention. Women asserted a role inside the convention but did not subvert male authority in any meaningful way that could be immediately recognized.

For women, exclusion from political action did not represent a break from tradition, but a continuation of their gendered experience. Historian Nancy Isenberg argues that women “had the appearance of citizenship but lacked the basic rights to be real citizens.” Isenberg has written that political dialogue in the late nineteenth century separated women into two classes: either those who symbolized weakness or morality. This created a “contradiction between social and political equality” and limited women’s real equality with men.52 This understanding of (in)equality applies to the female role at the Ocala Convention. While few would argue that the Ocala delegates treated women as immoral, their role at the convention demonstrates the limited social and political forays women could, at the time, make into the “realms of men.”
Turpentine collection near Wachula, in the early 1920s. A spin-off of the lumber industry, turpentine augmented other Florida forestry produce. (Courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

Additionally, it illustrates their means of interaction inside social space.

Women's sphere at the convention represented the limited access to power symbolized in segregated space. The Alliance Exposition relegated women's role to a separate "Ladies' Department," effectively minimizing their influence on the proceedings. Even in the historical record of the event, women and blacks are segregated, both from each other and from reports of the convention generally. Contemporary newspapers of the time set articles concerning "ladies' issues" and "colored issues" apart from one another, making any integration between the two difficult despite the fact that they would have interacted on some level. Despite their segregated status, the female presence at the convention also illustrated their importance in the agrarian economy. Mrs. E.A. Dyke of Leon County managed the Ladies' Exhibit at the Semi-Tropical Exposition. Not only did Mrs. Dyke "very credibly" represent Leon County, she also presented "as fine a collection of ladies' handiwork as was ever seen in Florida." Mrs. Dyke's department was "visited daily by numbers of ladies and gentlemen" and the manager took great "delight in showing them around and talking up Leon County." Any woman in the city or the county was "cordially invited to visit and take an interest in the Ladies' Exchange" and all were welcome to "make articles of any kind either fancy or plain" for sale. Items entered for exhibit or sale included "a beautiful silk crazy quilt," fruit preserves, a "crayon drawing" which was "a genuine specimen of art," eggplant, canned fruits, oil and water color paintings, blackberry wine, embroidery work and bananas. Although participation in the convention restricted farmer's wives inside traditional gender definitions, these were representative of women's position in the nineteenth-century agrarian economy. Women played an active and vital role in the management and success of family farms. Despite the lack of representation in governmental action, the treatment of women at the Ocala Convention resembled their experiences at home. This resemblance reinforced their status as non-voting, but important, workers without whom the farms could not run. By main-
taining what they perceived as ‘proper’ gender relationships, convention organizers upheld the social order.

African Americans and women were relegated to a particular sphere, but they successfully subverted it in some cases. According to the Florida Times Union, there were eighty-eight voting members present at the convention. In addition to these, there were “456 more visiting alliance men from outside of the state, including alternates and women, and all these can attend the deliberations of the council.” The paper counted five women amongst these non-voting delegates, including vice-president of the Kansas alliance Fannie Vickery.57

There is little information concerning Fannie Vickery in the historical record, but according to the Ocala Banner she had “gained an enviable reputation as a fluent and captivating campaign speaker” during the Kansas elections earlier in the year and she closed the Saturday speeches “in a manner that pleased and cheered all who drank in her inspiring and eloquent words.”58 Earlier in the week Vickery had taken part in a debate concerning the inclusion of women in the alliance. Mrs. Neville, another Kansas delegate, put forth a resolution to “place women on an equal footing with men as to initiation fees etc.,” and Vickery “offered an amendment to strike the word ‘male’ from the constitution. Colonel Livingston, a Georgia delegate, contended that women were included in the legal use of the word ‘man,’ but men were excluded by the use of the word ‘woman.’ Mrs. King, from Florida, replied that “women should be on equal footing with men; that man without woman would degenerate and decrease.” Male delegates ended the conversation because “it was fast assuming a woman’s rights discussion,” and there was a limit to male alliance-men’s willingness to discuss women’s issues.59

Like John Sawyer’s inclusion in the convention, the roles of Fannie Vickery and other women did not reflect a broad power base, but illustrated the imbalance of power in the late nineteenth century. The experiences of women and African-Americans at the Ocala Convention illuminated the many limitations of nineteenth-century reform. The white male leadership of Farmers’ Al-
liances kept white women and black men peripheral in different ways. Officially segregated into a female “Ladies Department,” women had a definite place to exert limited influence and celebrate their contributions to society. Female delegates, non-voting but invited to speak, had little real authority in the proceedings but symbolic gains in their representation. African-Americans occupied ambiguous space within the convention, without a specific place and with little power to shape their own future, or the movement’s.

Winsboro and Musoke point to a “dearth of primary sources” in the historical record concerning African Americans in the populist movement.60 This also applies to women’s role in the movement. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that “the presences and absences embodied in sources or archives are neither neutral nor natural. They are created. As such, they are not mere presences and absences, but mentions or silences of various kinds and degrees.”61 Trouillot’s conception of historical silencing, (structured absences in the historical record), applies to the voices of African-American men and white women at the Ocala Convention. White men treated both groups paternalistically, believing that white male direction would properly steer the rest of society. This viewpoint, when applied to historiography, silenced under-represented groups “because any single event enters history with some of its constituting parts missing. Something is always left out while something else is recorded.”62 The two groups subsumed in the Anglo, male-dominated press accounts, voting records and sources have been left out of the Ocala Convention. African Americans and women had some space inside the convention, but it was limited and malleable, conditions pointing to larger issues involving gender, race and inclusion in nineteenth-century social reform. Any non-white and non-male reformers who wished to work inside the Farmers’ Alliance movement were restricted by nineteenth-century relationships of power.

ENDNOTES

1. The meeting is also occasionally referred to as the meeting of “the National Alliance Supreme Council Meeting,” “the Populist Convention,” “the Alliance Convention,” and the “Ocala Convention.” For the sake of uniformity, I will be using the term “Ocala Convention” in this paper.

2. Florida Times Union, 2 December 1890, 1, 2.

3. The designation of “North” and “South” is correct when understood as a reunification of those who fought in the Civil War, Union and Confederate. It may prove confusing for the reader as Northern (at least Northeastern) Alliances were weak and the real re-unification was between Western and Southern Alliances.


7. Between a share of gate receipts, reduced or free travel and lodging, plus other financial considerations, Jacksonville offered around $1,800 and Ocala offered around $15,000. Proctor, 162-3.

8. The Ocala Banner, 4 July 1890, as quoted in Proctor, 163.

9. Lawrence Goodwyn, The Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 226. Historian Gene Clanton believes there may have been even more farmers represented, he estimates that the delegates represented thirty states and “perhaps as many as one and a half million farmers,” see also Gene Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference in America, 1890–1900 (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 58. The Weekly Floridian, 3 December 1890, writes that thirty-five states were represented. The most definitive list seems to be that from the Florida Times Union, 3 December 1890, which appears as Appendix B.


11. The movement had been sectional until the first National Meeting St. Louis on December 3, 1889. McMath, American Populism, 108.


14. The “Ocala Demands” are sometimes referred to as the “Ocala Platform,” see Appendix A for a complete list of the Ocala Demands.


17. The three works on the Florida Alliance are: James Andrew Mead, “The Populist Party in Florida” (M.A. diss., Florida Atlantic University, 1971), and the already cited Cory and Proctor pieces.


19. No references to African-American women were ever specifically uncovered in the research for this
work, therefore any reference to African-Americans implies they are men and any reference to women implies they are white.

20. Ocala Banner, 5 December 1890, 1:5. In discussions on the rift and racial tension, Alliance men generally blamed members of the Republican Party. For examples see The Weekly Floridian, 3 December 1890 and The Florida Times Union, 27 November 1890. The Florida Dispatch Farmer and Frazier Grover, 5 May 1890, blames "New England Philanthropists" and "Massachusetts Gospel peddlers" for national racial animosity.


22. Ocala Banner, 12 December 1890 5:1.

23. Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference, 67. Historian David Blight's work, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory, illustrated the effects of the Civil War on race relations and his arguments illustrate some reasons former Confederate and Union soldiers united at the Ocala Convention. Blight argued that three different visions of Civil War memory collided in the years following Appomattox: reconciliationist, white supremacist, and emancipationist. In the late nineteenth century, white supremacist thought combined with white reconciliationist vision which would have underscored African American humanity and equality. In order to re-unify the nation, Americans faced the Herculean task of understanding and combining both "healing and justice," but divergent definitions of the former abounded in the south and "for many whites, especially veterans and their family members, healing from the war was simply not the same proposition as doing justice to the four million emancipated slaves and their decedents." Southerners and former slaves knew of the rift that divided them, and white southerners found the transition to friendly relations went much more smoothly with white Yankees than with black southerners. David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 2-3.

24. Florida Times Union, 7 December 1890.

25. Florida Times Union, 4 December 1890, 1:2.


27. As quoted in the Weekly Floridian, 26 November 1890.


33. Anna Rochester, The Populist Movement in the United States (New York: International Publishers, 1943), 59. This book must be considered with the proverbial "grain of salt." There is no clear indication that Anna Rochester is/was a historian and International Publishers is a communist publisher, making it entirely possible that the book was meant as much as a political tract as a historical one.

34. Ibid, 60.


36. Norman Pollack, ed., The Populist Mind (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1967), 359. By "racist" I mean that they were in some way shaped by their social reality and environment, believing in inherent racial differences between black and white.


38. Clanton, Populism: The Humane Preference, 59. Although the lack of public debate seems to indicate that the alliances were in accord over "colored" inclusion, Clanton argues that "there was probably more disagreement" among the white delegations than is revealed in the press because "Alliance rules discouraged public disagreement or open attacks of one member on another." According to the Florida Times Union, Colored Alliances came to the convention from 15 different states; see 8 December 1890.

39. Ibid., 67. Clanton also points out that Sawyer's speech is filtered through the notes of a reporter and not necessarily quoted directly.

40. Florida Times Union, 4 December 1890, 1:3.

41. Florida Times Union, 5 December 1890, 1:2.

42. Florida Times Union, 6 December 1890, 1:3.

43. Weekly Floridian, 10 December 1890.


45. Ibid., 1373.


49. Palmer, 65.


53. Weekly Floridian, 26 November 1890, 1:4. This sentiment is reiterated in the Ocala Banner, 5 December 1890.

54. Weekly Floridian, 10 December 1890.

55. Ocala Banner, 5 December 1890.

56. Weekly Floridian, 3 December 1890.

57. Florida Times Union 3 December 1890, 1:5. The only information I've been able to find about Annie Vickery (without going to Kansas) is this: Annie Randolph married H.N. Vickery in Lyon County, Kansas on 25 June 1885 (information at http://www.rootsweb.com/~kslhgsly/tuvmarriages.html). According to the "Kansas Historical Quarterly," 9:2 (May 1940): 223-224, Annie Vickery was re-elected historian of the Lyon County Chapter of the Kansas State Historical Society on 31 January 1940. There seems to be good reason to believe that this person is one and the same Careolton Beals, The Great Revolt and Its Leaders: A History of Popular Uprisings in the 1890s (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1968), 207 mentions Annie Vickery but only that she was "tall," "willowy," and spoke at the convention. Other female speakers mentioned in Beals' text were "Clara B. Colby, Vice-President of the Women's National Press Association," "Anna L. Diggz, the indefatigable Prohibitionist and reformer of Colorado and Kansas," "Mary Ellen Lense, the great Kansas female orator; pretty Eva Valesh of Minnesota," and "Betty Gray, who owned a large Texas plantation." I've found no mention of any of these women in the newspaper accounts of the time and Beals does not expand
much on their roles or backgrounds.
58. *Ocala Banner* 12 December 1890, 6:1. It should be
noted that her speech occurred at the same time as
Terence Powderly's and the same issue of the
*Ocala Banner* reported that he "touched upon the
question of equal pay for women who do the same
work as men, advocating it at some length."
59. *Florida Times Union* 6 December 1890.
60. Winsboro and Musoke, 1355.
61. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power
and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon
62. Trouillot, 49.

Appendix A
The Ocala Demands
1. A. We demand the abolition of all national banks.
B. We demand that the government shall establish
sub-treasuries or depositories in several states,
which shall loan money direct to the people at a
low rate of interest, not to exceed two percent per
annum, on non-perishable farm products, and also
upon real estate, with proper limitations upon the
quantity of land and amount of money.
C. We demand that the amount of circulating medi­
um be speedily increased to not less than 850 per
capita.
2. We demand that Congress shall pass such laws as
will effectively prevent the dealing in futures of all
agricultural and mechanical productions; provid­
ing a stringent system of procedure in trials that
will secure the prompt conviction, and imposing
such penalties as shall secure the most perfect
compliance with the law.
3. We condemn the silver bill recently passed by Con­
gress, and demand in lieu thereof the free and un­
limited coinage of silver.
4. We demand the passage of laws prohibiting alien
ownership of land, and that congress take prompt
action to devise some plan to obtain all lands now
owned by aliens and foreign syndicates; and that
all lands now held by railroads and other corpo­
tions in excess of such as is actually used and need­
ed by them be reclaimed by the government and
held for actual settlers only.

5. Believing in the doctrine of equal rights to all and
special privileges to none, we demand:
A. That our national legislation shall be so framed
in the future as not build up one industry at the ex­
pense of another.
B. We further demand a removal of all the existing
heavy tariff tax from the necessities of life, that the
poor of our land must have.
C. We further demand a just and equitable system
of graduated tax on incomes.
D. We believe that the money of the country should
be kept as much as possible in the hands of the
people, and hence we demand that all national and
state revenues shall be limited to the necessary ex­
penses of the government economically and hon­
estly administered.

*Florida Times Union, 9 December 1890, 1:1.

Appendix B
List of states represented and manner of
representation.

"The report of the committee on credentials show
eighty-eight actual delegates present from the fol­
lowing states, each state having a full accredited
delagation in attendance: Alabama 5, Arkansas 5,
Colorado 1, Florida 3, Georgia 7, Illinois 2, Indiana
2, Indian Territory 2, Kansas 8, Kentucky 4,
Louisiana 4, Maryland 2, Michigan 3, Mississippi 4,
Missouri 6, North Carolina 5, South Dakota 2,
Pennsylvania 2, South Carolina 4, North Dakota 2,
Tennessee 4, Texas 4, Virginia 4, West Virginia, 2.
Other states and territories having organizations
and entitled to delegates are California, New Mexi­
co and Oklahoma, but as yet no delegates have ar­
rived from either. In addition to delegates, there
are ten or twelve persons entitled to votes, which
brings the actual numerical strength of the body up
to one hundred. Besides these one hundred, the lo­
cal committee on entertainment reports 456 more
visiting alliance men from outside the state, in­
eclading alternates and women, and all these can at­
tend the deliberations of the council. Among the
delegates are five women, Mrs. Vickery, vice-presi­
dent of the Kansas alliance being in the number."

*Florida Times Union, 3 December 1890."
Death in a Strange Land: Burial Practices and Memorials in *Il Cimitero l’Unione Italiana*, Tampa’s c.1900 Italian Immigrant Cemetery

Maureen J. Patrick

The Italian immigrant community in Tampa

Ybor City, a planned community founded by cigar manufacturers in 1886, relied on immigrant laborers from its outset. The first and largest group of these came from Cuba, where the tobacco trade was well-established. Ethnic Spaniards (natives of Cuba or Spain) made up the transplanted trade’s “white collar” workforce, holding (as they did in Cuba) the more highly paid administrative and salaried positions. However, labor agents and word of mouth very quickly enticed large numbers of rank-and-file workers from countries other than Spain and Cuba. The industry solicited and acquired thousands of Italians, nearly all directly from Sicily or from U.S. communities to which Sicilians had already emigrated. Some of the earliest to reach the area came from New Orleans, Louisiana and St. Cloud, Florida, where the sugar cane industry had attracted significant numbers of Sicilian workers. Back-breaking labor conditions and nativist violence in those settlements caused many Sicilians to look elsewhere for work, and the tiny but ballooning community of Ybor City attracted their attention. Through communication with relatives and friends still in Sicily (who were further stimulated by the efforts of labor agents), these early Sicilian immigrants initiated a “chain migration” to Tampa. At first a trickle, the stream of Sicilians to Tampa reached several hundred per year by 1895, providing some of the 4,683 workers in the 120 cigar factories of Ybor City, as well as laborers in the other trades and enterprises that Italians practiced in the area.

Initially shut out by Cuban and Spanish *tabaqueros*, the Sicilian workers persisted in their efforts to gain jobs in Ybor City’s tobacco industry. By apprenticing themselves for little or no remuneration in *chinchales* (small independent cigar manufactories, sometimes located in private homes) for as long as a year, Sicilian workers acquired and gained speed at the complex skills necessary to meet high production quotas in the large factories. Some Sicilians took the menial positions (such as sweeping the *galerias* or workrooms) available to them in the industry’s early decades and, through close observation of cigar workers on the job, achieved enough familiarity with the trade to merit more remunerative employment. By 1920, Sicilians made up the second largest group of rank-and-file workers in Tampa’s tobacco trade. That trade, by 1900, was producing 20 million cigars a year.

Considering the difficulties that confronted them when immigrant Italian workers first tried to penetrate the cigar industry locally, it is fortunate that many had the resourcefulness and skills to find other occupations. Averse to public welfare, Tampa’s immigrant Sicilians made *pane e labor* (bread and work) their rallying cry, and formed a large and diverse labor community. Many Sicilians started farms and in short order became Ybor City’s chief suppliers of dairy products, vegetables, and meat. Sicilians also established marine...
product ventures; Tampa's oldest seafood suppliers are Sicilian. Sicilian pasta factories produced that specialty foodstuff for the local community and for shipping out of the area. Ybor City's Mortellaro Macaroni Factory, founded in 1908, was one of the first enterprises of its kind in the Southeast. Groceries, restaurants, saloons, and bakeries were founded by Sicilian families and thrived for decades. Many of those early family names are still encountered in Tampa's and the Southeast's food merchant community: Demmi, Castellano, Pizzo, Ficarotta, Midulla, Greco, Licata, Spoto, Guagliardo, Valenti, Alessi, Ferlita, Geraci, Cacciatore, Pardo. The import trade in Italian olive oil was, predictably, started and dominated by Italians, as was wine import.

Apart from food-related industries, an array of trades and professions in early Tampa reflected Sicilian industry and resourcefulness. The barbering, tailoring, and dry cleaning trades, as well as wrought iron, masonry, decorative stucco, and woodwork were dominated by Sicilians within the first few decades of the ethnic population's installment locally. Venues for theater and opera provided work for Italian singers, musicians, actors, and arts educators; some visited the locale seasonally but others took up residence permanently, leading to a strong Italian artistic presence that persisted well into the 1930s. Even the business of birthing babies showed Sicilian influence: Ybor City's most popular practitioner was "Doña Pepina" (Giuseppina Valenti), an immigrant from Sicily who held a degree in midwifery from the University of Palermo.

Even as they acculturated to their New World environment, many of these early Italians clung to Old World ways. As late as 1905, the Tampa Morning Tribune noted that Sicilian immigrants living in Ybor City "still wear native garb." Clothing was not the only manifestation of immigrants' reluctance to abandon native outlooks and
practices. Social organization, courtship and marriage, food ways, language, political ideologies, religion and superstition, funerary practices; in these as in other behaviors, Sicilians in Ybor City retained outlooks and practices that preserved their cultural heritage and provided a sense of security in a strange and often hostile environment. Despite large numbers, gainful employment, and their collective growth and development as an ethnic enclave within the larger Tampa community, the Sicilians of Ybor City retained a sense of cultural insularity. Historian Gary Mormino has described the phenomenon thusly: “Primitive conditions and physical isolation intensified ethnic identities from within, while racial and nativist hostility imposed a sense of shared community from without.”

The dynamics of “shared community” were implemented by vigorous and protective social organizations. For the Italians of Ybor City, the most stable and influential of these was L’Unione Italiana.

L’Unione Italiana (The Italian Club)

Like all the immigrant populations of early Ybor City, Sicilians organized mutual aid societies. For the Italians – as for other groups – these societies supplied more than a locus for paesani affiliation. The Centro Español, Centro Asturiano, German-American Society, the Young Men’s Hebrew Association, the Union Marty-Macéo, L’Unione Italiana: these organizations provided resources (material, informational, social) to both assist immigrants’ acculturation and preserve/promote their ethnic heritage. Over time, the club buildings that housed these societies became cultural documents in their own right, grand architectural statements that bespoke cultural distinctiveness and the achievements of immigrant populations in Tampa.

The Italian social club’s vernacular history asserts that in 1894 five young men met at a grocery store at Fourteenth Street and Sixth Avenue in Ybor City. The society they formed became known as L’Unione Italiana, or the Italian Club. Club records date this initial meeting to April 4, 1894, while a lengthy public notice in the August 22, 1894 Tampa Daily Times records L’Unione’s organizational protocols in detail. L’Unione raised $40,000 in 1910 to
build its first clubhouse, a three-story building on Seventh Avenue between Seventeenth and Eighteenth Streets. This was an impressive sum for the time and represented the prodigious industry and soaring ambitions of the local Italian community. In 1915, when the building was destroyed by fire, members wasted no time in drafting plans for a new and even grander clubhouse. Without doubt the most elegant of the surviving social club buildings in Ybor City, the c.1918 l'Unione Italiana, located at 1731 East Seventh Avenue, is designated a National Historic Landmark and contributed to the nomination of Ybor City as a Landmark Historic District. The serene elegance of the three and a half story neoclassical structure belies its historically crowded docket of member events and services; local historian Anthony Pizzo described the club in its heyday as “a beehive of activity.”12

From the outset, l'Unione Italiana included eight committees: Recreation, Benefit, Sports, Dispensary, Finance, Purchasing, and Cemetery. Of these, the Benefit and Cemetery committees are the most pertinent to this study, since their activities sprang from and empowered traditional Sicilian practices surrounding death, burial, and memorialization.

Funerary practices in the Italian immigrant community of Tampa, 1886 - 1921

The Old World customs and beliefs that accompanied Sicilian immigrants to Ybor City addressed many areas of their lives, but none so markedly and durably as death, burial, and memorialization. Gary Mormino has posited that the displacement from friends, family, and patria was most wrenching for immigrants when they considered the consequences of death far from the comforting social context of home. “Immigrants,” Mormino suggests, “terrified of dying unattended and unnoticed in a strange land and concerned about the uncertainties facing them, banded together to formalize the rituals of life and death.”13

In Ybor City’s Italian immigrant community, the “rituals of life and death” included elaborate funerals. In 1893, the Tampa Morning Tribune described one such funeral, displaying “a corpse carried by four large men with uplifted hats, followed by a brass band, then an empty hearse and carriage preceding the regular concourse of sorrowing relatives and sobbing friends.”14

Longtime Italian residents of Ybor City recalled other funerary protocols for immigrant families. Ybor City had no mortuaries until the 1940s15 and so corpses were usually laid out at home (on ice, to prevent decomposition in the intense heat.) As in the 1893 funeral described by the Tampa Morning Tribune, funeral processions might include hundreds of mourners. Members of l'Unione Italiana were required to attend and the procession invariably paused before both the deceased’s home and the clubhouse, where American and Italian flags carried in the procession were dipped in respect. In 1911, the Tampa Morning Tribune noted that the funeral cortège of Pasquale Lazzara had “300 members [of l'Unione]...costumed according to the rules of the society.”16 Workers in the cigar factories routinely left work for these funerary events, which might last for some hours.

As was true for other immigrant mutual aid societies in Ybor City, l'Unione Italiana was expected, from its inception, to address members’ death and burial needs by providing monetary benefits, not just marchers in funeral corteges. L'Unione’s initial charter asserts that the club shall “aid such members of the social association as may become sick and to provide for the paying of the burial expenses of such members as may die.”17 The original death benefit fund allotment to members was one dollar apiece; this rose by the 1930s to three hundred dollars. In addition to paying death benefits, the society provided what Anthony Pizzo described as “burial services in the magnificent and up to date cemetery that the Society owns, without cost to the family.”18 That cemetery was and is Il Cimitero l'Unione Italiana.

Il Cimitero l'Unione Italiana
(The Italian Club Cemetery)

Any study that addresses death and burial in Tampa’s early Italian immigrant community encounters a paucity of evidentiary material culture from the years 1850 to 1893, when the first burials took place in Il Cimitero l'Unione Italiana. Only a tiny handful of graves identifiable as those of Italian immigrants appear in the St. Louis
(Catholic) section of Oaklawn Cemetery, the c.1850 public burying ground located on the outskirts of Tampa, some two miles from the immigrant enclave of Ybor City. Nearly all of the Oaklawn Italian graves are of prominent, important and/or well-to-do persons from the early Italian community in Tampa. There are provocative and unanswered questions regarding the whereabouts of Tampa Italians' graves, especially those of ordinary immigrants who came in numbers to Ybor City after its 1886 founding and who died prior to the founding of the Italian Club Cemetery. One speculation is that there were few Italian deaths in that period, since most very early immigrants were young adult males. (A U.S. manuscript census from 1900 revealed only one Ybor City Italian – Annetta Vencento – over the age of sixty five.19) This speculation overlooks the high local incidence of diseases that killed age-indiscriminately – typhus, tuberculosis, malaria, cholera, dengue fever, and yellow fever – and deaths by accident. To date, no satisfactory information has come to light that might locate more Italian immigrant burials from this period.

In 1896, the Italian Club purchased a plot of land two miles north of Ybor City from the Armwood family, who farmed in the vicinity and had other enterprises in Tampa's early African American community. (Blanche Armwood, a prominent educator, is buried at the site, along with other members of the family.) A later donation of land by the Armwoods expanded the burial ground. The property, the main gate to which is located at Twenty-sixth Street and Twenty-third Avenue, was formally dedicated as a cemetery in 1900 (though numerous burials took place at the site between 1893 and 1900.)

The Italian Club Cemetery is both densely and democratically populated. There are grand family mausoleums, final testaments to immigrant families who arrived in the region with very little and gained, over time, very much, both socially and materially. There are also (in greater numbers), the graves of very humble Tampa Italians: workers in cigar factories, groceries, iron foundries, dry cleaners, barbershops. Men and women are represented in near equal numbers, and – as in all cemeteries dating to the late nineteenth century – there are many graves of children and infants. The famous and infamous lie side by side in the graveyard; mafiosi sleep undisturbed in the same ground as professional baseball players, mass murder victims, and WWII combat dead.

In terms of aesthetics, Il Cimitero L'Unione Italiana presents a startling visual contrast to mainstream American burying grounds of the region and era. It is quite crowded, not by accident but by design, with even the earliest burials placed in almost claustrophobic proximity to one another. Low railings of stone or masonry separate the gravesites, sometimes by only a few inches. Imported cypresses – features of European burial grounds – dot the landscape. There are very few signs of the rural cemetery aesthetic so prevalent in American burying grounds at the time the Italian Club Cemetery was created: no winding pathways, virtually no decorative iron plot enclosures, no memorial plantings or artful landscaping, minimal statuary of the sleeping lamb, broken column, and weeping willow variety. One notes, now and then, a Masonic emblem or Knights of Columbus shield on a grave marker, but they are sparse in comparison to mainstream American graveyards where fraternal symbolism is prolific and varied. While Il Cimitero Unione Italiana contains some elegant family tombs with statuary, stained glass windows, and wrought iron gates (and one large modern multiple-vault mausoleum), many more of the tightly packed graves are modest, with markers of granite or marble, while a sizeable number carry masonry markers decorated with stylized floral or geometric motifs in glazed tile. Inscriptions (especially of early graves) are almost invariably in Italian or in Sicilian dialect. Ceramic photographs of the deceased are frequently embedded in grave markers or vault doors. Regarding these photographic images and their use in Spanish and Italian memorials, one researcher notes: “Pioneer Spanish and Italian settlers say that this custom was followed in their youth in their own countries.” The assertion is supported by one aged Italian immigrant's explanation.

It is probably because he [the Italian] loves life and animation...When we visit a relative's grave and see his lifelike picture gazing at us from his monument, it obscures the memory of his death.21

There is no question that the Italian
Club Cemetery in Ybor City resembles a burying ground in late nineteenth or early twentieth century Italy, rather than any contemporary model among American cemeteries. Nevertheless, the resemblance is not exact. The *L’Unione Italiana* Cemetery is a singular and highly charged cultural document, one that displays both similarities to and differences from the graveyards in Italian immigrants’ homeland. What are the implications for a cultural historian of these similarities and differences? To answer that question, an examination of the cemetery as material culture must be essayed. As with other studies of the aesthetic, literary, and iconographic content of cemeteries, *Il Cimitero L’Unione Italiana* – silent for so long – will then speak eloquently of its past.

**Illustrations**

The front entrance, with ornamental iron arch, of *Il Cimitero L’Unione Italiana*. (*All photographs of the cemetery are courtesy of John McEwen.*)
This gravestone for Adela Ferlita, like most in the Italian Club Cemetery, bears an inscription in Italian. Translated into English, it reads: "Like a beautiful flower wilted in the best part of your life, your sweet image will be forever present in the broken hearts of your parents." The epitaph is highly interesting in that it conforms to a prevalent mainstream American cultural trend of the period: the "domestication of death," in which death is depicted in pastoral terms and the departed — often characterized as a bloom or flower — is separated in body but not memory from loved ones. American examples are: "Budded on earth to bloom in Heaven," and "Gone from our home, but not from our hearts." That this contemporary American epitaph style should be couched in Sicilian dialect is a marker of the cross-cultural exchanges at work in Ybor City's Italian community.

An angel surmounts the mausoleum of Francesco Ferlita and Maria, his wife. The Ferlita family came to Ybor City in the 1890s and built a bakery at Nineteenth Street and Ninth Avenue. The business thrived until the early 1970s, when urban blight marginalized the neighborhood.

This enameled portrait of Maria Ferlita, wife of Francesco, is affixed to her vault (below that of her husband) in the family mausoleum. It displays the photographic realism and permanence that made such memorial images popular with Italian mourners.
Filippo Cagnina mausoleum. Sicilian society was strongly patriarchal. A common practice was to designate family tombs with the full name of the male head of the household, in this case Filippo Cagnina. His social and familial primacy is reinforced by a portrait bust in marble, which surmounts the mausoleum.

As this enameled photograph of Filippo Cagnina (affixed to the door of Cagnina’s vault) attests, the portrait bust in stone atop the Cagnina mausoleum is highly lifelike. The dapper Italian in a nonchalant pose conveys the essence of immigrant success.
The grave marker of Maria Micheli combines several characteristic elements of “ordinary” gravesites at the Italian Club Cemetery: an enameled portrait of the deceased, decorative tile mosaics, and urns for floral tributes. The grave marker bears a curious error: Micheli’s birthdate, 1988, is surely 1898. At this gravesite, as at many others, the adjacent graves are almost touching, with masonry and stone railings only an inch or two apart.

At l’Unione Italiana Cemetery, the widespread American late nineteenth and early twentieth century cemetery aesthetic that produced forests of memorial statuary is far less evident. Nevertheless, there are some striking and iconographic examples, such as this angel scattering daisies. In grave art of the period, daisies often marked the graves of children or young people, whose lives, like the daisy’s, were brief and fragile. The daisy is also a symbol of the Virgin Mary, whose love, like the ubiquitous flower, can grow nearly everywhere.

The grave of Carmela Ruvolo (b. 1838 - d. 1922), like that of Maria Micheli and countless others, combines a photographic enameled portrait and decorative colored tiles.

This stone grave angel holds a palm leaf. Used by Romans as a symbol of victory, the palm leaf came to symbolize, among early Christians, a martyr’s triumphant sacrifice. Nineteenth and early twentieth century grave art borrowed the motif to symbolize victory over death.
One of the most highly charged nineteenth and early twentieth century gravestone motifs is this figure, Hope, often materialized as a comely young woman and always featuring an anchor. The Biblical source is the Epistle to the Hebrews 6:19: *Which hope we have an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.* The single star in the figure’s diadem crown suggests the light of Heaven, to which the figure gazes, while the wreath of flowers in her hand symbolizes the putting aside of earthly laurels in deference to a heavenly crown, as well as Life’s fragility.

While most burial sites at the Italian Club Cemetery are unprepossessing, a number – perhaps five percent – are elegant and even grand mausoleums. The Midulla tomb, with its baroque roofline, marble facings, and copper doors with raised floral designs, is one of the most appealing.

Unlike mainstream American cemeteries of the period, which prized winding pathways and garden-like arrangements of graves, the rule at *Il Cimitero l’Unione Italiana* is rectilinear order. Here a row of mausoleums marches in tight formation, with benches arrayed in front for mourners. While benches of this sort in mainstream Anglo cemeteries are usually installed facing away from the tomb, they are here resolutely turned inward, expressing both an intense focus on loss and the centrality of *famiglia* in Sicilian life.
One of the rare Anglo graves at the cemetery, that of Annie Holloman (b. 1886 – d. 1901), is one of only two to display an ornamental iron enclosure. Such enclosures were the norm in American cemeteries of the period, but were unknown in the European burial sites that served as the inspiration for immigrant cemeteries such as Il Cimitero L'Unione Italiana.

The Family Licata mausoleum is serene and dignified, but houses a shocking piece of Ybor City history. Within are interred five victims of the family, parents and three children, murdered in their sleep by an older son, a paranoid schizophrenic, on October 17, 1933.

Recurrent vandalism at the cemetery has damaged or destroyed many monuments and grave art. This fine statue of Cor Jesu (denoted by the heart encircled by thorns) has lost an arm, hand, and head.
ENDNOTES


2. In addition to large numbers of Cabans and Sicilians and a lesser number of Spaniards, Jews (mostly from Germany, Russia, and Romania) were significant contributors to both the ethnic make-up and economic base of the community. While some did work in the cigar industry (as laborers or owners), many of Ybor City's Jews founded mercantile firms, some so durable and successful that Ybor's Jews were called “the Princes of Seventh Avenue.” Two late nineteenth/early twentieth century Jewish cemeteries north of Tampa proper await study by cultural historians.

3. Mormino, 69. An interesting characteristic of Ybor City’s tobacco trade labor force is that it included large numbers of women who, by and large, earned equal pay for equal work alongside men and were highly activist in labor disputes. The prominence and militancy of Ybor City’s women workers made the community unique in the South.

4. The Mortellaro Macaroni Factory, c. 1908, was started by two Sicilian brothers. The firm became one of several food-related businesses in the area to provide employment outside the cigar trade for early Italian immigrants. It also represented a progressive marketing trend: the mechanization of food production, with regional and, eventually, national suppliers replacing the home kitchen or neighborhood vendor.

5. When the Federal Theatre Project came to Ybor City in 1936, it found that theater of various sorts was already thriving in the neighborhood. Most of the activity was housed at the c.1914 Centro Asturiano, home of the (Asturian) Spanish mutual aid society. An Italian opera company – absorbed into the WPY’s Federal Music Project – threw in the building for decades.

6. Tampa Morning Tribune, June 20, 1905.

7. Mormino, 90.


10. Tampa Daily Times, August 22, 1894. (USF Libraries, Special Collections, L’Unione Italiana Collection.)

11. Letter from Paul Longo, prev. cited.

12. L’Unione Italiana informational brochure, undated (L’Unione Italiana, Tampa.)


14. Tampa Morning Tribune, October 13, 1893. It is noteworthy that the procession described by the Morning Tribune took place months before the founding of L’Unione Italiana. Clearly, funerary protocols were established in the Italian immigrant community before their absorption into the cultural agenda of the mutual aid society. In 1895, ten mutual aid societies sent delegates to the funeral cortege of V.M. Ybor. The Tampa Daily Times reported that “a new ethnic element, Sicilians, also joined in the procession.” (Tampa Daily Times, December 17, 1895.)

15. A 1946 advertisement for the Taylor Funeral Home in Ybor City states that the facility has a “Ladies’ private room.” Public mourning – like many social affairs – was segregated by gender in Sicilian society; the ad is a nod to this custom. (Annual bulletin, L’Unione Italiana, 1946. Tampa: Ybor City Museum Society Collection.)

16. Tampa Morning Tribune, 1911.

17. Tampa Daily Times, August 22, 1894.


19. In Mormino, 84.

20. It is interesting that the only two decorative iron plot enclosures at the site surround graves with non-Italian names.

About the Authors

Dan Bertwell holds an M.A. in American History from University of South Florida. Bertwell’s areas of interest include population growth and change in nineteenth and early twentieth century American life. Bertwell lives with his wife in Rhode Island.

Charles Fuss, a Tampa native, achieved Quartermaster, the Sea Scouts’ highest rank. He went to sea in the Merchant Marine at an early age, served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War, and later earned a Master of Science degree from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. After thirty-one years in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Fuss retired. He has authored Sea of Grass (published by the Naval Institute Press) and over fifty magazine and journal articles. Fuss and his wife Carol live in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida.

Lucy D. Jones was one of the first graduates of the University of South Florida’s Florida Studies Program. A professional historian and technical writer, Jones worked throughout the Southeastern U.S. for a large cultural resource management company. She is now President of Florida History, LLC (www.floridahistoryllc.com), providing professional research services to homeowners, businesses, and communities. Jones is adjunct faculty at USF, St. Petersburg.

Maureen Patrick is a native Tampan. She holds an M.A. in Humanities from the University of South Florida. Her research interests embrace various aspects of American and European nineteenth century cultural history. Ms. Patrick is a frequent contributor to academic journals and symposiums, and has done singular research on nineteenth century Florida rural cemeteries. The former Curator/Education Curator at the Ybor City Museum, Ms. Patrick has worked with the Henry B. Plant Museum as a living history/museum theater specialist for 18 years. Ms. Patrick is the current President of the Tampa Historical Society.

Frank Schubert was born in Washington, D. C. and is a graduate of Howard University (B.A., 1965), the University of Wyoming (M. A., 1970), and the University of Toledo (Ph. D., 1977). He worked as a historian in the Department of Defense from 1977 to 2003, and was a Fulbright lecturer in Cluj, Romania, during the academic year 2003-2004. Schubert has written extensively on military subjects and has also lectured at universities in Hungary and Germany. His books include Black Valor: Buffalo Soldiers and the Medal of Honor, 1870-1898 and Voices of the Buffalo Soldier: Records, Reports, and Recollections of Military Service in the West. His latest book (September 2004) is On the Trail of the Buffalo Soldier II: New and Revised Biographies of African Americans in the U.S. Army, 1866-1917, co-authored with Irene Schubert.

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Annual Meeting
and D.B. McKay Award Dinner

Tampa Historical Society’s Annual Meeting was held November 16, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. at the Tampa Yacht and Country Club. In addition to introducing the 2007 Board of Directors, the Society was pleased to present its annual D.B. McKay Award at the Meeting. The Award’s 2006 recipient was Tom McEwen.

McEwen’s career has been described as “thirty years of press passes.” Born, as McEwen puts it, into “a rural pioneering Florida family of circuit riding preachers” and reared in Wauchula, Florida, Tom McEwen played on the “Wauchula Wildcat” football team (on which he was “quarterback, halfback, safety, corner, all purpose substitute and scorekeeper.”) He did military service in the Pacific during World War II (where his soldier buddies included Joe Garagiola and baseball Hall of Famer Early Wynn.) Remaining in the National Guard after the War, McEwen logged 24 years of service in uniform for his country.

When he returned to his native Florida after the War, McEwen pursued career interests in newspaper writing. With an earned degree in journalism from University of Florida, McEwen wrote for the Ft. Myers News-Press, the St. Petersburg Times, and the Tampa Tribune/Tampa Times. For 33 years he served as sports editor for the Tribune/Times; his regular column “The Morning After” was one of the best-read sports features in the South.

Along the near half-century road McEwen traveled as a newspaper man, there have been so many history-making people that they are almost impossible to enumerate. These include: James Michener, Mickey Mantle, Arnold Palmer, Vinee Lombardi, Joe DiMaggio, Donna Reed, Steve Spurrier, Jack Nicklaus, Muhammed Ali, Babe Zaharias, Manny Huerta, Vinny Testaverdi, Bobby Bowden, Wade Boggs, Don Shula, Bob Griese, George Steinbrenner, Red Grange, Casey Stengel, Jon Gruden, and hundreds more.

McEwen was instrumental in promoting professional athletics in Tampa Bay. He is widely credited with landing an NFL franchise – the Tampa Bay Buccaneers – for the area, for persuading the New York Yankees to establish their spring training facility in Tampa, for promoting professional soccer, and for bringing the National Hockey League – in the form of the Tampa Bay Lightning – to the city. As well, McEwen was central to projects to build state-of-the-art professional sports arenas for baseball, football, and hockey, and for attracting three Super Bowls to Tampa.

Tom McEwen was voted Florida Sportswriter of the Year 19 times. He served on the NFL Hall of Fame Selection Committee for 30+ years and is in the Florida Sports Hall of Fame. In 1993, he was awarded the Associated Press Sports Editors’ Red Smith Award for lifetime achievement (called by many the Pulitzer Prize of sports writing.) Former Tampa mayor Dick Greco (who in 1999 named a half-mile stretch of road near Raymond James Stadium for McEwen) said of him: “Most of what he dreamed of as a sports writer has come true in this town.”
Past Recipients of the D.B. McKay Award

1972  Frank Laumer
1973  State 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  Anthony 'Tony' Pizzo*
1981  Allen and Joan Morris
1982  Mel Fisher
1983  Marjory Stoneman Douglas*
1984  Frank Garcia
1985  Former Governor Leroy Collins*
1986  Dr. Samuel Proctor
1987  Doyle E. Carlton, Jr. *
1988  Leland M. Hawes, Jr.
1990  Joan W. Jennnewein
1991  Dr. Gary R. Mormino
1992  Julius J. Gordon*
1993  Jack Moore* and Robert Snyder
1994  Dr. Ferdie Pacheco
1995  Stephanie E. Ferrell
1996  Michael Gannon
1997  Rowena Ferrell Brady*
1998  Dr. Canter Brown, Jr.
1999  J. Thomas Touchton
2000  Dr. Larry Eugene Rivers
2001  Arsenio M. Sanchez
2002  Honorable Dick Greco
2003  Frank R. North, Sr.
2005  Doris Weatherford

*Deceased
Historical views of Tampa’s Lafayette Street Bridge