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Typography and composition by RAM
Printing by RALARD PRINTING, Dade City Florida.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our appreciation to the following people who have made special contributions to TAMPA BAY HISTORY.

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FROM THE EDITORS

In his 1865 novel, *From the Earth to the Moon*, the Frenchman Jules Verne ushered in the space age. Imagining a giant cannon thrusting a rocket to the distant skies, he selected the fictional Tampa Bay town of Stones Hills as the launch site. In reality, Florida’s takeoff was propelled not by gunpowder but by steel and steam. The transportation revolution of the 1880s reshaped the Tampa Bay region, altering its living spaces, recasting its economy, and redefining time. "How the railroad kills time and space," exclaimed a Florida newspaper in the 1880s. That decade witnessed an extraordinary revolution on the west coast of Florida. In 1880, residents of Tampa or Ft. Myers traveled by sail or horse or foot. In other words, transportation in this area had not progressed beyond the Egyptian chariot. The stagecoach still served Tampa and isolated communities. The arrival of the railroad in 1884 transformed the region, integrating it into a national economy and communications system. Quickly, the automobile and airplane made this area even more accessible.

Modern Florida is largely a product of improved technology, and this issue of *Tampa Bay History* highlights the importance of machines and the people who operated them. During the Civil War, superior technology gave the Union an upperhand in its effort to defeat Confederate forces. The article "Steamers, Tenders and Barks: The Union Blockade of South Florida," authored by Irvin D. Solomon and Grace Erhart, explores the role of federal ships in the effort to strangle Confederate commerce along Florida's Gulf Coast. Several generations later, flying machines made history in Florida, as explained by Thomas Reilly in his article, "The St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line: 90 Days That Changed the World of Aviation." Commonly associated with the name of the pilot Tony Jannus, the inauguration of commercial aviation actually involved a number of farsighted pioneers. In the photographic essay "Working Women in Florida," Laura F. Edwards reveals how technological changes offered both opportunities and restrictions for women seeking paid employment.

In "Citizens Now! Political Participation by Tampa Women in 1920," Jeff Hutchison shows the importance of class and ethnic considerations in the first votes cast by local women. Ethnicity also figured prominently in a little explored topic - burial practices - examined by Gregory P. Ferrara in the article "Tampa's Centro Asturiano Cemetery."

Once again, the editors wish to express their appreciation for the continued support of dedicated subscribers. The "Acknowledgements" on pages 2 and 3 give formal recognition to the growing number of subscribers who have generously contributed extra money to keep *Tampa Bay History* solvent. As a nonprofit journal that accepts no advertising, *Tampa Bay History* depends on readers for its life blood. The editors donate their time, but the contributions of subscribers pay the costs of publication. Thus, we are grateful for your generosity.
STEAMERS, TENDERS, AND BARKS:
THE UNION BLOCKADE OF SOUTH FLORIDA
by Irvin D. Solomon and Grace Erhart

During the Civil War, the Union Navy sought to cripple the Confederacy with a blockade of southern waters. In Florida, this task fell primarily to the East Gulf Blockading Squadron, whose mission was to deprive the South of vital food and supplies by capturing blockade runners and raiding salt works. After the blockade of Tampa in 1861, Charlotte Harbor became the only port in South Florida accessible to runners. Consequently, this harbor became a rendezvous point for runners and an important target for the Union Navy. During the war, many kinds of sail and steam-powered craft plied the deep waters of the Charlotte Harbor region, where they operated as blockade runners, blockaders, supply ships, and tenders. Four ships – the *Salvor*, the *Gem of the Sea*, the *Honduras*, and the *Ariel* – exemplified the types of vessels that routinely operated in these waters. This article examines the history of each of these four ships to give a sense of naval encounters along Florida's West Coast during the Civil War.

The 450-ton screw-steamer *Salvor* was possibly the first blockade runner to operate at Charlotte Harbor and the first to be captured and converted to Union service. Built in 1856 in Buffalo, New York, the craft began its career as a wrecker on the Great Lakes. In 1860, Tampa cattle shipper James McKay, Sr., purchased the steamer to transport South Florida's beef cattle to Cuba. In New York, McKay had the ship cut in half and seventy feet added to its middle section. The *Salvor*'s new length ideally suited it for duty as a cattle boat. At one hundred and sixty-one feet in length, and with a twenty-five-and-one-half-foot beam (width), the steamer could carry as many as three hundred cattle in its dark and expanded hold. With its nineteen-foot draft, the *Salvor* could navigate the deepest waters of the Gulf of Mexico, Tampa Bay, and Charlotte Harbor with ease. Square-rigged, the steamer sported masts that towered above its wooden decks. These carried auxiliary sails, clouds of canvas that helped assure the ship would never lie dead in the water in case of engine failure. Even the ship’s older wood and soft-coal burning engines proved advantageous to Florida duty. This fuel was much easier to obtain in Florida and Caribbean ports than the hard anthracite, or Cardiff, smokeless coal preferred by top-class northern ships. The steamer's single gun, though not powerful enough to intimidate warships, did prove a deterrent to pirates and smaller, hostile craft.

Despite these advantages, McKay’s antebellum use of the *Salvor* achieved mixed results. During the summer of 1860, the steamer failed to arrive on time at the cattle holding pens at Ballast Point on Tampa Bay, causing a financial disaster for McKay as some thousand cattle perished because of a local drought. In November 1860, the *Salvor*'s base of operations shifted to Charlotte Harbor, where the steamer loaded cattle from McKay’s new wharf, near present-day Punta Gorda.

Soon the *Salvor* saw nearly continuous service. In January 1861, McKay purchased 10,000 head of cattle from a South Florida rancher and shipped many of them to Cuba. The captain, realizing that war was imminent, had also agreed to supply cattle to the Federal forces in Key West while continuing to sell beef in Cuba. News of the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in
April 1861 led McKay to believe the Cuban cattle trade was, at least temporarily, doomed. He attempted to sell the *Salvor* to the Confederate Navy, but a southern naval officer who inspected the ship at Tampa Bay rejected the purchase rafter he rated the steamer too large to work on the rivers and too slow to evade Yankee warships at sea.\(^5\)

Undaunted, McKay loaded more cattle aboard the *Salvor* and steered a risky course for Havana. Unfortunately for McKay, the Union command had learned of his attempt to sell the vessel to the Confederate Navy and ordered it seized as he attempted to skirt the Florida Keys. The Federal troops at Key West immediately retrofitted it and pressed the ship into their own service. The steamer’s hard duty in the salt waters of the Gulf of Mexico soon “burned out” its boiler. When McKay, who had somehow arranged his own release from the Union forces, arrived at Key West from Tampa, he found the *Salvor*’s boiler seriously deteriorated. Ever the optimist, McKay offered his reclaimed ship to the U. S. Government. The Federals, however, had little use for the crippled ship, although McKay collected some money in lease fees for its limited service.\(^6\)

McKay gave his word that he would not attempt to run the blockade again and sailed the disabled *Salvor* to Cuba. He expected to sell the steamer to a Cuban bidder, but the buyer had withdrawn his offer by the time McKay reached Havana. Hoping to sell the steamer and a contraband cargo at Nassau, McKay had the *Salvor*’s boiler repaired and readied for the voyage across the Straits of Florida. He also changed the ship’s name to *M.S. Perry* and transferred title to a British subject so the ship would have foreign registry and would, theoretically, be safe from capture by the Federals. On October 1861, McKay set off for Nassau with a cargo of small arms,
percussion caps, coffee, and cigars. This would prove to be the Salvor’s final voyage under his command. 7

Although supposedly repaired, the steamer’s engines propelled it along at a modest three-and-one-half miles per hour. Every two hours the engines had to be shut down for servicing. McKay’s short-handed crew, consisting of a mate, two sailors, two engineers, and a cook, probably could not muster enough force to set the Salvor’s massive sails. Thus, the limping ship proved no match in speed for the Federal warship U.S.S. Keystone State, which inspected and took it as a prize near the Tortugas on the evening of October 13, 1861. After sailing to Key West, the Salvor was condemned and shipped North, never to return to Florida waters. Later that year, the steamer was sold at auction in Philadelphia for $38,250.94. After the war, the ship served as a freighter on the Metropolitan line between Boston and New York. 8

In June 1863, long after the blockade-runner Salvor had exited Florida waters, a notably different kind of ship entered the area. Whereas the Salvor operated at Charlotte Harbor for only seven months, the 371-ton command bark Gem of the Sea blockaded the port for eighteen months. This vessel, as the Salvor had done for Confederate actions, typified the class of Federal ships that routinely plied these waters during the war years. 9

Originally built in 1853 in Warren, Rhode Island, the Gem of the Sea had dimensions that suited it for a career in the merchant marine. Although only 116 feet long, the ship had a twenty-six-foot beam and a massive hold (fully thirteen feet five inches deep), allowing it to carry large amounts of cargo but preventing it from navigating shallow waters and rivers such as those characterizing Charlotte Harbor. As a sailing vessel, the Gem of the Sea had but one source of power, which came from the huge canvas sails set on three masts that towered above its wooden decks. The ship was rigged as a bark; rectangular sails graced its fore- and main-masts, while a fore- and aft- “spanker” hung parallel to the decks on a stubby mizzen-mast. 10

The Union Navy purchased the Gem of the Sea for $15,000 in August 1861. Shortly thereafter, dock workers at the Brooklyn Navy Yard set about converting the bark into a blockading-type warship. They cut gun-ports into the ship’s wooden hull and mounted six 32-pounder cannons to serve as its battery (two of the guns were later removed). Although far from the heaviest artillery available, these weapons could easily demolish the small, unarmed blockade-running craft that the vessel would later encounter in Gulf waters. The ship’s deep hold proved a valuable asset, allowing the Gem of the Sea to store enough supplies to last several weeks. In September, Irvin B. Baxter, a career sea-captain commissioned as an Acting Volunteer Lieutenant in the Navy, took command of the Gem of the Sea and its seventy-man crew. He remained the ship’s captain through most of its Florida service. Five other officers, including an assistant surgeon and a paymaster, also served on the bark. In late October, the Navy commissioned the former merchant ship and gave Captain Baxter his first duty assignment. 11

Attached to the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, the Gem of the Sea accompanied a fleet of coal and powder ships during their voyage south from Hampton Roads, Virginia, to Port Royal, South Carolina. There the fleet supplied theater commander Admiral Samuel Du Pont’s gunboats for their successful attack on Port Royal in November 1861. Afterward the Gem of the Sea served briefly off Charleston and Bull’s Bay, South Carolina, before taking up station off the
city of Georgetown. Near Georgetown the blockader’s captain and crew captured numerous rice-runners and supplied and protected a camp of escaped slaves and refugees on outlying North Island. In October 1862, having sustained minor damage after seizing five blockade runners, the *Gem of the Sea* sailed to the Boston Navy Yard for minor repairs. After servicing, the bark sailed south to join the East Gulf Blockading Squadron at Key West.¹²

In December 1862, the *Gem of the Sea* took up temporary station off Indian River, where its success continued. In January 1863 the blockade-runner *Anne* fell prey to small boats launched from the bark. The same boats later assisted in the March 1863 capture of the rebel schooner *Charm* and another unidentified sloop. That month, Baxter sent word to Squadron Commander Theodorus Bailey that blockade-running in and near the Indian River area seemed stymied, at least temporarily. Unconvinced, Bailey kept the *Gem of the Sea* on duty there until June 1863, allowing the bark to add the blockade runners *Petee, Inez*, and *Maggie Fulton* to its ever-growing list of prizes. Commander Bailey then ordered the ship to Key West, where it mounted an extra gun (a 20-pounder rifle) that strengthened its battery of four 32-pounder smooth-bores. Thus armed, the *Gem of the Sea* sailed for its next and final station, Charlotte Harbor on the peninsula's southwest coast.¹³

The bark arrived at Charlotte Harbor in July 1863, just in time for its crew to witness a Union raid up the nearby Peace River. The sailing tender *Rosalie* and two cutters from the bark *Restless*, which would shortly leave the harbor for duty elsewhere, had sailed and poled up the Peace River in an effort to capture two small blockade runners. Baxter sent a boat to assist the expedition, but the “cutting-out” party of armed and now land-borne sailors needed no help. The
The Gem of the Sea quickly assumed a supervisory role over shore operations and the general blockade at Charlotte Harbor. The ship’s launches and cutters assisted the smaller, shallow-draft tenders on their expeditions up the rivers and sometimes caught a runner or two themselves. But the deep-draft command bark seldom, if ever, pursued Confederate prey in the coastal waters; in fact, there are no records of any such missions. Rather, these types of shallow-water missions remained the duty of the smaller tenders and launches manned by cutting-out parties. In a sense this added an unusual character to the naval war in the Charlotte Harbor area, since military records reflect few similar actions by other blockading ships on the West Coast of Florida.

The Gem of the Sea provided invaluable service at Charlotte Harbor. It became a reservoir of men and supplies and often detailed prize crews to sail captured runners’ ships to Key West. The Gem of the Sea also stored much of the food used by the Charlotte Harbor blockading vessels, not only for the larger ships in the theater, but for the crews of the various tenders as well.

By 1863 the command bark assumed new responsibilities in the area. This occurred largely as a result of the Union’s rising concern for attempted cattle-running out of Charlotte Harbor. In December 1863, when a detachment of the Forty-Seventh Pennsylvania Regiment arrived from Fort Taylor, service boats from the Gem of the Sea transported the volunteer force to their new base on Useppa Island near the mouth of Charlotte Harbor. They helped organize a locally recruited unit composed of draft evaders (“layouts”) and Union sympathizers (known as the Florida Rangers – later the Second Florida Cavalry), which would obviously require naval support. Theater Commander Theodorus Bailey wrote Captain Baxter, “You will therefore render them [the troops] every assistance in your power and protect them with your guns and all the force under your command, if necessary.”

Baxter then ordered the Rosalie to join the Gem of the Sea at Charlotte Harbor. Apparently Commander Bailey, who maintained close and frequent contact with Captain Baxter, intended the Rosalie to be the chief communication link and “quick alert” vessel between the land-based Rangers and the deep-draft command ship. His efforts paid off in December 1863, when the Rosalie’s cannon fire provided strategic cover for a detachment of sailors making a rendezvous with Rangers of the Second Florida Cavalry on the mainland. Under attack by Confederate guerrillas, the Union men retreated to the water’s edge where the shallow-draft tender picked them up. The Rosalie completed similar duties throughout its service in these waters.

In January 1864, Captain Baxter received orders to assist and protect the Federal troops that moved in to occupy the old post at Fort Myers, used during the Seminole Wars. Shortly afterward Charles H. Rockwell replaced Baxter, who departed to take command of the steam blockader Fort Henry (altogether four different officers would command the Gem of the Sea). The sturdy ship fulfilled its new mission well until it departed Charlotte Harbor in January 1865. By that date it had captured or assisted in the seizing of nine blockade runners. If the rebel vessels captured by its tenders are counted, the bark orchestrated the capture of nearly two dozen runners.
After departing the southwest coast in early 1865, the battle-scarred *Gem of the Sea* sailed first to Key West and then north for repairs. It never returned to Florida waters. Auctioned at Philadelphia in late 1865, the *Gem of the Sea* fetched a paltry $6,500. What its new owners, A.C. Purvis and Son, did with the proud vessel remains a mystery.  

Besides the ubiquitous blockaders and runners, a third type of vessel routinely operated at Charlotte Harbor – the supply ship. The most significant supply vessel in South Florida undoubtedly was the wooden side-wheeler *Honduras*. Built in New York, the *Honduras* first saw sea duty in 1861. Somewhat surprisingly, the U. S. Navy initially overlooked this handsome 376-ton ship in its rapid expansion early in the Civil War. After the screw-steamer *Salvor’s* initial detainment at Key West, the Cubans, to whom cattle-shipper James McKay, Sr., sold his beef, bought the *Honduras* to import cattle from Truxillo to Battabano, Cuba. The Union Navy purchased the side-wheeler from the Cubans in July 1863 for $51,000. Converted to a war-ship, the *Honduras* received its commission that September. Assigned to the East Gulf Blockading Squadron as a supply ship (and sometimes a dispatch boat), the side-wheeler served throughout the war in this capacity.

Indeed, the *Honduras* proved well-suited for this task. Its spacious ten-foot-deep hold easily carried large amounts of supplies. In spite of its sizeable dimensions (150 feet long, with a twenty-seven-foot beam), the *Honduras* drew only eight to nine feet of water when fully loaded, allowing it to restock ships operating in fairly shallow areas near the runners’ favorite clandestine ports like Charlotte Harbor and the Peace River. The steamer’s tall masts and fore and aft schooner rigging complemented a single walking beam engine, which normally pushed the *Honduras* along at a respectable seven knots. At its utmost, the side-wheeler could reach twelve-knot bursts. The steamer burned coal, necessitating rather frequent trips to the naval base at Key West to refill its bunkers.

Although not designated as a blockade ship, the *Honduras* initially mounted two 12-pounder sea rifles, a minimal but sufficient armament for routine hostilities. On October 9, 1863, the steamer’s battery was reinforced by a 20-pounder rifle and two 24-pounder howitzers. Six days later, the supply ship captured its first blockade runner, the Scottish-built steamer *Mail*. The side-wheeler stood in pursuit, but the blockade runner proved both fast and desperate. A six-hour chase ensued, with three small Federal tenders joining in the pursuit. Off Tampa, the *Mail* finally hove to and surrendered to the persistent *Honduras*.

The *Honduras* then resumed its regular supply duties, carrying beef and vegetables to the ships on blockade duty and occasionally ferrying captured contraband, such as cotton and turpentine, to Key West. In January 1864, the *Honduras* received orders to assist the schooner *Matchless* in transporting a detachment of the Forty-Seventh Pennsylvania Volunteers from Key West to Fort Myers. The *Honduras*’s speed and reasonably shallow draft, which allowed the side-wheeler to navigate the shifting Caloosahatchee River twelve miles upriver to the fort, made it ideal for this service. Commander Theodorus Bailey detached the steamer from regular supply duties for two weeks to further assist the troops. The *Honduras* not infrequently ferried captured Confederate sympathizers, dispatches, and occasionally Confederate cattle to Key West. Later, the side-wheeler participated in the May 1864 raid on Tampa Bay. Again, the steamer served as a troop and supply transport, but this time an armed boatload of sailors from the *Honduras* joined
Admiral Theodorus Bailey, Commander of East Gulf Blockading Squadron, from December 9, 1862, to August 7, 1864.

Photograph courtesy of the Naval Historical Foundation, Washington, D.C.
the landing party and participated in the capture of the *Neptune*, a blockade-runner carrying fifty-five bales of cotton.24

After its service at Tampa, the *Honduras* returned to its normal supply duties. Through August 1864, the steamer continued its supply runs to the Charlotte Harbor area, despite a yellow fever epidemic sweeping the squadron. Even though some sailors aboard the side-wheeler eventually contracted the disease, the crew and ship faithfully performed their duties.25

In July 1865 the *Honduras* departed Florida waters for New York, where the steamer was decommissioned and sold for $27,000. The ship’s career in Florida, however, had not ended. Late in 1865 the nefarious cattle runner James McKay, Sr., purchased the side-wheeler and used it to revive South Florida’s cattle trade with Cuba. Renamed the *Governor Marvin*, the steamer once again served in the familiar waters of the Charlotte Harbor region. Its ultimate destiny remains a mystery.26

While the *Honduras* served primarily as a supply ship and transport, another type of vessel performed different, yet equally valuable, services for the Union forces at Charlotte Harbor. These were the tenders, small sailing craft assigned to assist the command ships. Typical of these small vessels was the nineteen-ton schooner *Ariel*. Possibly built by John Curry at Key West, this former blockade-runner was captured by the steam blockader *Huntsville* in November 1862.
Condemned as a prize at Key West, the little schooner was formally purchased by the Navy Department the following July for $1,450 (although it had actually begun documented service in January of that year). The Ariel’s most important feature was its shallow, four-foot draft. This allowed the little vessel to operate much closer to shore than the larger command blockaders and supply ships. A small crew, probably consisting of no more than eight men, sailed the ship, while a single light 12-pounder smoothbore cannon (the smallest caliber artillery available) provided the vessel’s main armament. The tender’s twin masts and fore and aft sails supplied its only power.27

Thus outfitted, the Ariel first served as a tender to the flagship St. Lawrence near the Bahia Honda reef, about thirty miles northeast of Key West. Three months later the schooner routinely patrolled the waters between Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor. Normal duty called for the vessel to scour the coast-line from Charlotte Harbor to Cape Sable as an advance boat for command ships like the Gem of the Sea, which were actually expected to capture enemy prizes. Once, while on such duty, the Ariel captured the blockade-runner sloop Magnolia about five miles off Caximbas Bar, just north of Marco Pass. Even though the Ariel saw extensive duty in these waters, the Magnolia represented one of only four ships the Ariel captured in the war.28

In May 1864, the Ariel, along with three other tenders, assisted in General Daniel P. Woodbury’s raid on Tampa Bay. The diminutive Ariel served as a troop transport, landing infantry on the shore. However, the Ariel’s role in the July 1864 raid on Bay Port proved greater. After assisting in the transportation and landing of some 260 assorted Federal infantry troops near the Anclote River (north of Tampa Bay), the Ariel, accompanied by the tender Sea Bird, proceeded to Bay Port. Officers from the Ariel had the honor of taking possession of the town long before any Federal troops arrived, capturing a quantity of cotton as well.29

Following the war, the decommissioned Ariel joined the tenders Rosalie, Sea Bird, Two Sisters, and Stonewall on the auction block at Key West in June 1865. The small schooner sold for only $1,270 to John Curry, possibly the ship’s builder. Afterward, the Ariel, like many of its sister ships in southwest Florida, disappeared from recorded history.30

The types of ships serving in the waters of South Florida during the Civil War clearly reflected the nature of the conflict in that area. While blockade runners like the Salvor’s owner, James McKay, Sr., persisted in challenging the Union net, Federal blockaders just as doggedly adapted to their daring attempts. By 1863, both Confederate runners and Union commanders realized that the shallow waters of Charlotte Harbor represented the last active naval theater on the West Coast of Florida. However, as the Union adapted to this new shallow-waters orientation by orchestrating cutting-out parties and by servicing command barks like the Gem of the Sea with more versatile shallow-draft, quick-response vessels like the Honduras and their tenders like the Ariel, the number of Confederate prizes increased and the number of would-be Confederate runners decreased. Though different in class, duties, armaments, and assigned missions, vessels like the Salvor, Gem of the Sea, Honduras, and Ariel served as representative examples of the types of ships that operated in South Florida during the Civil War and subsequently sealed the last remaining leaks of the East Gulf Blockading Squadron on the West Coast of Florida.
U.S.S. Ariel.

Photograph courtesy of the Naval Historical Foundation, Washington, D.C.


6 McKay, “History of Tampa of the Olden Days”; Mervine to Welles, June 8, 1861, Mervine to French, June 10, 1861, French to Mervine, June 10, 1861, Mervine to Welles, June 12, 1861. United States War Department, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion (Washington, D.C., 1894-1922) (hereafter cited as ORN), ser. 1, vol. 16, 530-31, 542-43, 543-44, 545-46; French to Thomas, October 17, 1861, McKay to Thomas, December 7, 1861, Stickney to Seward, February 13, 1862, ORA, ser. 2, vol. 2, 960-61, 966-71, 977-78. McKay to Thomas, December 7, 1861, McKay to the District of Columbia, ORA, ser. 2, vol. 2, 966-71, 981; McKay, “History of Tampa of the Olden Days”; Brown, “Tampa’s James McKay,” 420. Orders from William Mervine to Commander Shaw specifically stated that any presumed hostile vessels previously warned away from Key West by the blockade (and the Salvor had been detained at Key West on suspicion of disloyalty) could legally be considered a prize, no matter what the nationality of the flag they flew. Mervine to Shaw, June 7, 1861, ORN, ser. 1, vol. 16, 531-32.


The city of St. Petersburg can legitimately take credit for many firsts. One of the most important, yet least known, is being the birthplace of commercial aviation. On January 1, 1914, on the sandy shores of Tampa Bay, the world’s first scheduled passenger airline service was inaugurated. Those directly responsible for the airline were Percival Elliott Fansler, Thomas Wesley Benoist and Antony Habersack Jannus, but several forward-thinking citizens of St. Petersburg, such as L.A. Whitney and Noel Mitchell, provided crucial assistance. Nevertheless, almost from the beginning, Tony Jannus received almost exclusive credit for the inaugural flight. The young man from Washington, D.C., garnered the accolades, the newspaper coverage and the memorials to his honor. To be sure, Jannus was the spark plug, the gifted public speaker and a well-respected pilot. However, launching the airline took the combined effort of many people, not just one individual.

The genesis of the airline can be traced to a 1,973-mile flight that Tony Jannus had taken in 1912. From November 6 through December 16, Jannus made a well-chronicled flight from
Omaha, Nebraska, to New Orleans. This forty-day trip was widely featured in American newspapers and magazines. Percival Fansler, a Purdue-educated salesman living in Jacksonville, Florida, avidly followed Jannus’s flight along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Fansler wrote to Tom Benoist, owner of the Benoist hydroplane used by Jannus on the flight. According to Fansler, “After receiving two or three letters that dealt with the details and capabilities of the boat, the idea popped into my head that instead of monkeying with the thing to give ‘jazz’ trips I would start a real commercial line running from somewhere to somewhere else.”

Benoist and Fansler agreed that Benoist would provide two flying boats and crews and that Fansler would serve as business manager, which included selecting a route and working out all details.

Fansler initially found little support for his proposal of a scheduled airline. He first approached the leaders of Jacksonville, who showed no interest. Unwilling to accept rejection, he boarded a train and headed to Tampa. There he presented an idea for an airline that would operate from Tampa to St. Petersburg. His presentation to Tampa officials in early December 1913 fell on deaf ears because Tampa businessmen and city officials did not care if people could easily travel between the two cities. To them, Tampa was the ultimate destination, not St. Petersburg. The Pinellas peninsula, site of St. Petersburg, had been part of Hillsborough County until 1911, when a bill creating an independent Pinellas County became law. Rivalry and even animosity dominated relations between the two counties.

Despite encountering rejection in both Jacksonville and Tampa, Fansler continued on to St. Petersburg. He was familiar with the area since he had recently sold a Buffalo road roller to Pinellas County, and he was struck with the opportunities available. In many ways St. Petersburg was the ideal city for an airline. The route from St. Petersburg to Tampa was a distance of only twenty-one miles, fifteen of which were along the shore of Tampa Bay. The winter weather was good, and the many tourists formed a pool of potential customers. Most importantly, St. Petersburg, located at the tip of a peninsula, remained effectively isolated from the rest of the world. The trip from St. Petersburg to Tampa by steamer took two hours. A train trip required eight to twelve hours. The drive by automobile was almost unthinkable, given the state of the roads. A trip by airplane would take only twenty minutes.

For Percival Fansler, Tampa Bay was familiar territory, but for Thomas Wesley Benoist, a St. Louis manufacturer of airplanes, flying boats and hydroplanes, a move to St. Petersburg represented a major undertaking. Benoist was motivated by economic considerations and, to a lesser extent, the wish to avoid local government interference. In addition to the sale of aircraft, Benoist derived a great deal of his income from exhibition flying. Throughout 1912 and 1913, Tony Jannus and the Benoist team had flown thousands of exhibition flights in the Midwest and South. Exhibitions and flying schools both sold airplanes. As the airplane became more familiar to the American public, demand for exhibition flying diminished. Moreover, the harsh St. Louis winters precluded daily flying. Benoist had also complained that the city of St. Louis had asked him for five dollars for a license to fly an airboat and that the state had added another ten dollars. Whether this was fifteen dollars a day, flight, or year, is unclear, but already Benoist looked upon St. Petersburg as an opportunity to teach flying, garner publicity and sell airplanes.

In his effort to sell their proposal, Fansler met first with Major Lew B. Brown, owner and editor of the St. Petersburg Evening Independent. Brown was taken by the idea and...
recommended that Fansler meet with L.A. Whitney, secretary of St. Petersburg’s Board of Trade. Whitney quickly embraced the idea and pledged $1,200 of his own money to guarantee that the airline would meet its expenses. Whitney asked only that Fansler persuade St. Petersburg businessmen to match his pledge. Fansler’s next stop was the real estate office of Noel E. Mitchell, who was already familiar with Tony Jannus, having seen him fly in New York City only two months earlier. Mitchell agreed that St. Petersburg should have an airline and pledged a thousand dollars. Mitchell has been accused of being nothing more than a clever promoter, interested only in gaining publicity for his real estate business. Whatever his reasons, he financially backed the airline, and it became a reality. Fansler and Mitchell signed a preliminary contract that was drawn up on the back of a piece of Mitchell’s stationary.

On Friday, December 5, 1913, Fansler wired Benoist that it would be necessary for him to come to St. Petersburg. That same day, the St. Petersburg Daily Times reported: “With a fleet of hydro-aeroplanes running on schedule between St. Petersburg and Tampa, making the trip in 18 minutes, and carrying passengers, a new ‘boat’ line which is likely to be established in the city will in all probability instantly become popular.”

Pictured in January 1914 (from left to right) were Tom Benoist, Roger Jannus, Tony Jannus, Heinrich Evers, and J.D. Smith.

Photograph courtesy of St. Petersburg News Bureau.
While Fansler and Benoist worked out the details, Tony Jannus, Roger Jannus and J.D. Smith were flying exhibitions in Cairo, Illinois. After an appearance the trio went to Paducah, Kentucky, on December 11.6

The following week Benoist and members of St. Petersburg’s Board of Trade signed a contract setting the terms of the country’s first scheduled airline service. The contract, dated December 17, 1913, read as follows:

We, the undersigned businessmen to St. Petersburg, do this day promise to pay to the officers of the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line, fifty dollars a day through January and twenty-five dollars a day, through February and March, for every day, Monday to Saturday of each week over a period of three months, on which regularly scheduled flights from St. Petersburg to Tampa are made, regardless of passenger or cargo, and on scheduled time.

It is understood that if the public takes to the air in sufficient numbers to pay costs of Airboat Line, such payments will be forfeit.

The Benoist Aircraft Company, through its president, Thomas W. Benoist, does hereby promise and agree to furnish airboats, pilots and crew and maintain service on schedule two round trips daily for three months.

Furthermore, the city of St. Petersburg agrees to build a hangar on the seawall of the North Mole to house the airboats when not in operation, and agrees to keep the Central Yacht Basin and Bay in front of the Basin, free from boat traffic during the hours of scheduled flights.


As soon as Benoist and Fansler signed the contract with the city, they sent word to Tony Jannus to prepare Benoist flying boat number 43 for rail shipment to St. Petersburg. On Tuesday, December 23, the disassembled flying boat was crated and loaded onto a railroad freight car headed for St. Petersburg and expected to arrive no later than Christmas day. Meanwhile, Benoist returned briefly to St. Louis, and Fansler went to Jacksonville to move his pregnant wife to St. Petersburg. By Christmas, the Benoist crew and Fansler were in St. Petersburg, where they discovered the flying boat had been lost. Railroad authorities had no idea what had happened to the half-ton aircraft. The phantom aircraft did little to reassure St. Petersburg officials that the airline was anything more than hot air. However, seven days after leaving Paducah, the missing flying boat was located and arrived at the St. Petersburg freight yard on December 30.8 As soon as the railroad flat car was pushed to a spur below First Street, the crew set about putting the dismantled flying boat together.9

Benoist flying boat number 43 had originally been constructed in May 1913. Powered by a seventy-five-horsepower Roberts engine, the aircraft had a top speed of sixty-four miles per hour, but it could carry only two people, including the pilot. The plane weighed approximately fifteen hundred pounds, had a wingspan of forty-five feet and was twenty-six feet in length from nose to tail. The engine was placed in the hull, directly behind the pilot; flying was both dirty and very noisy. The hull was constructed of three thicknesses of spruce with doped fabric layered between them. Six water-tight compartments in the hull made the craft buoyant in the water.
Shortly after delivery of Benoist number 43 to its owner in June 1913, the flying boat crashed in Minnesota and was largely destroyed, but it was rebuilt at Benoist’s St. Louis factory and returned to service. In St. Petersburg it would make history.¹⁰

Tony Jannus at the controls of Benoist flying boat number 43.

Photograph courtesy of Florida Aviation Historical Society.
On January 1, 1914, three thousand people jammed St. Petersburg’s waterfront. The Italian Band of Johnny Jones Carnival played *Dixie*. The first ticket on the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line was auctioned off by R.C. Bannister. At 9:15 a.m., Bannister held up his hand and the auction began. With a bid of $400, A.C. Pheil, the former mayor of St. Petersburg, won the right to become the first paying passenger on the world’s first airline.

Percival Fansler stood in the sand to address the crowd. Dressed in his trademark dark suit, complete with vest and bow tie, Fansler spoke briefly. He looked at the crowd and said: “The Airboat Line to Tampa will be only a forerunner of great activity along these lines in the future. A new factor in transportation has come above the horizon – literally – and within a few days the air above Tampa Bay and its tributaries will be filled with swiftly moving craft carrying passengers on a regular schedule at rates little above those charged for land trips in hired automobiles.”

The loading platform at St. Petersburg was little more than a hastily constructed dock of 2x4s, measuring approximately twenty-five feet long by six feet wide. The flying boat sat on it, so passengers could enter the aircraft without getting their feet wet. During the speeches and ceremonies, J.D. Smith, the mechanic, nervously made last-minute adjustments to the flying boat's seventy-five-horsepower Roberts engine.

Tony Jannus spoke after Fansler. In his brief remarks he promised to “always keep the maxim ‘safety first’ foremost in my mind.” Jannus then climbed into the flying boat’s cockpit. Fansler helped the elderly Pheil into the passenger seat next to the pilot. Jannus stood up and cranked the engine with the starting bar. At 10 a.m., Jannus taxied the flying boat out of the enclosed harbor toward Tampa Bay. After building up adequate speed, the airboat rose out of the water. Fifteen feet above the water, Jannus headed toward Tampa. Years later, Percival Fansler recalled, “Rapidly old 43 dwindled in size, winging her way towards Tampa. The crowd settled down to wait. I heard many interesting comments during the next few minutes. Some said she’d fall into the water before she got halfway across, and I doubt if many actually believed the trip would be carried out on schedule. At 10:26 a.m. the telephone rang and my elation could not be concealed as I heard the attendant at the Tampa terminal say, ‘Tony’s coming up the river, and there’s a big crowd yelling their heads off.’” The “terminal” at Tampa was little more than a mud bank on the Hillsborough River.

A crowd of two thousand people alongside the Hillsborough River awaited Jannus’s arrival in Tampa. An estimated one thousand spectators gathered on the Lafayette Street Bridge with another five hundred gathered on the opposite side of the river. The crowd had to be held back by police while W. C. Burgert and W.A. Fishbaugh photographed the event. After their arrival Jannus and Pheil bowed and smiled while three moving picture cameramen recorded the historic scene. Twenty-five years after this famous flight, Mrs. Lottie C. Pheil recalled her husband’s eagerness and her fear. She remembered, “He had talked about it for several days. He was dead set on going. I was home when the bidding was conducted for the honor of being the first passenger, and did not know that he had bid the highest. When I got there, he was in the plane about to take off. I was worried all the time he was gone.”
At eleven o’clock, Jannus began his return to St. Petersburg. The flight took only twenty minutes. That afternoon, Noel Mitchell paid $175 for the second scheduled round trip between St. Petersburg and Tampa. The resulting $615 was donated to the city of St. Petersburg and used to purchase a pair of harbor channel lights.

The cost for a one-way trip was five dollars. A round trip was ten dollars. Special flights were available at a minimum charge of fifteen dollars. Passengers were permitted a weight of 200 pounds. Excess was charged at five dollars per 100 pounds with a minimum charge of twenty-five cents. Express rates were five dollars per 100 pounds and provided hangar-to-hangar service. Weekly revenues for the six-day week of scheduled operations amounted to only $120 – barely enough to cover expenses.\textsuperscript{16}

Even before Fansler and Benoist had received approval for the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line, they had already envisioned expansion. St. Petersburg would serve as their hub, with ever increasing spokes to area towns such as Bradenton, Safety Harbor, Tarpon Springs and Clearwater. Once the Florida expansion was successfully accomplished, they intended to push north. During the summer, they foresaw connecting the shores of New Jersey, Connecticut and New York.\textsuperscript{17}
Percival Fansler did everything he could to market and publicize the airline. On the second day of operation, an advertising flyer promised “fast passenger and express service.” Each day, a cargo of the *St. Petersburg Times* newspaper was flown to Tampa and distributed. The editor of the paper claimed that the *St. Petersburg Times* was the first newspaper in the world to use flying machines to deliver papers. However, that was not true. As early as July 1912, a pilot flew from Hillsdale to Adrian, Michigan – a distance of thirty-six miles – to deliver copies of the *Hillsdale Daily.*

The company’s first woman passenger was carried on January 2. Mae Peabody of Dubuque, Iowa, contracted for a charter flight before the airline’s scheduled morning trip to Tampa. The weather had been bad, with heavy winds. Jannus tried to dissuade Peabody from flying, but she insisted. For her perseverance, Mae Peabody earned the distinction of being the first woman to fly in St. Petersburg, as well as the first woman ever carried on the world’s first scheduled airline.

On January 2, the scheduled afternoon flight ended with Jannus and the disabled flying boat floating helplessly in the middle of Tampa Bay. Glenn Smith, a flying student was Jannus’s passenger. At the halfway point of the return flight from Tampa, the Roberts engine had lost power, and Jannus landed in the bay. People on the shore who had seen the landing dispatched a motor boat to offer assistance. Jannus assured the would-be rescuers that everything was all right. However, Smith was concerned that he would be late for his afternoon shift at the post office, so he dove out of the aircraft and swam to the boat. (Tampa newspapers later claimed that passengers were so desperate to get out of the flying boat that they were willing to swim to shore.) Shortly afterward, Jannus repaired the engine problem and arrived at the hangar fifteen minutes before the motor boat. On takeoff, the flying boat had sustained minor damage requiring repair, so one flight had to be cancelled. Nevertheless, the airline’s record of operation was nearly unblemished. According to Jannus, “In the entire season of three months the Airboat Line was laid up only four days because of mechanical troubles.... All told the repairs for motors and planes did not quite reach the $100 mark.”

On January 6, a governmental flap arose that threatened to shut down the airline. After the arrival of the morning flight at Tampa, Jannus was accosted by a Tampa port inspector, who inspected the flying boat for life preservers, fog horn, charts, lights and pilot rules. Jannus was informed that his flying boat fell under the laws governing motor boats and required licensing. If the airline could not produce a license issued by the United States Department of Commerce, it would not be permitted to carry passengers. Before the situation was finally resolved, it took a six-page ruling by the federal government, declaring that “the hydroaeroplane at present plying between St. Petersburg and Tampa is a ‘motor boat’ within the letter as well as within the spirit of the Motor Boat Act.” Tony and Roger Jannus had already applied to the U.S. Department of Commerce for a license, which made the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line the world’s first regulated airline.

Soon the airline proved its value as freight hauler. On January 12, Hefner’s grocery store in St. Petersburg ran out of ham and bacon. Replenishment from Tampa required at least a day by land, so L.C. Hefner asked Fansler if he would carry a load of hams and bacon from Tampa on the morning flight. With Fansler’s agreement, Hefner cabled his order to Tampa at 8:52 a.m. By
11:25, a shipment of twenty-two pounds of ham and eighteen pounds of bacon had arrived by air in St. Petersburg. The unique cargo received wide press coverage in American newspapers and magazines. Hefner’s newly coined advertising claim became, “Although they came high, the price is low.”

The hangar promised by the city of St. Petersburg in the original contract took longer than expected to complete. While in St. Louis, Benoist took an active part in the planning of the hangar. He personally drew up the plans for its construction and forwarded them to Noel Mitchell. The plans were then given to C.D. Hammond, the city's commissioner of public works. When St. Petersburg’s carpenters complained that Hammond intended to use non-local labor, construction came to a halt since unemployed local carpenters threatened a labor action. A compromise permitted work to continue, but the delays forced the airline to operate out of doors until the hangar was completed in late January. On February 9, Fansler claimed the subsidy guaranteed by his contract with St. Petersburg. He billed the city for $540 to cover the period of January 2 through January 31.

Demand for service was so high that Benoist shipped two additional flying boats toward the latter part of January. Number 43 and number 45 were used for both scheduled and chartered passenger service. A smaller flying boat, named the *Kitten*, served as a training aircraft, until it crashed while being flown by student Heinrich Evers. Only its Roberts engine was salvageable. By mid-February, Benoist’s St. Petersburg flying school had five students. They included...
Heinrich Evers, Lloyd South, Harry Railsback, Glenn I. Smith and J.D. Smith. Roger Jannus and Weldon B. Cooke of St. Louis gradually took charge of the day-to-day operation of the airline while Tony used the larger flying boat for charter and exhibition work.28

In February, the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line encountered competition. However, it was competition for attention, not for the transport of passengers. Raymond V. Morriss, a pilot for Glenn Curtiss, arrived in St. Petersburg and awaited the arrival of his own flying boat, a Curtiss M boat. Characterized as one of the most attractive flying boats ever built by Curtiss, the M boat had been designed and constructed specifically for Morriss, who announced that he intended to use St. Petersburg as his base to train for several international races scheduled for Europe during the coming summer.29

On March 31, the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line made its last flight. Tom Benoist departed the city almost immediately and headed back to St. Louis in order to oversee the final details of a flying boat currently under construction. Just prior to Benoist’s departure, he said, “We have not made much money but I believe we have proved that the airplane can be successfully used as a regular means of transportation and commercial carrier.” The Jannus brothers were not yet ready to leave Florida, and Tony announced that he would continue to provide scheduled service between St. Petersburg and Tampa three times a week. The flight school still trained students.30

Percival Fansler also remained in St. Petersburg. He was determined not to allow the airline to go out of business without a fight. On April 7, Fansler met with the Board of Trade and attempted to get the contract renewed, creating a permanent locally based airline. He was advised to prepare a written proposal for the board of governors. However, interest in an airline as an every day practical means of transportation had faded. The leaders of St. Petersburg had their eyes set on the Tampa and Gulf Railroad. Fansler and Charles R. Hall tried to form a company, but they failed to secure either the private capitalization or the city’s support.31

Many have claimed that the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line was nothing more than a publicity stunt. The leaders of St. Petersburg may have intended it as such, but that was definitely not the motivation of Fansler, Benoist and Jannus. Edward A. Korn, Tony Jannus’s assistant at Kinloch Field in St. Louis, recalled that “...the first commercial airline, ‘St. Petersburg-Tampa’ was not a publicity stunt, it was down to earth business.”32

Benoist and Fansler never expected to make a lot of money in St. Petersburg, at least not at first. Instead, they hoped to demonstrate that air travel was practical in any kind of weather. Barely self-sustaining, the airline operated on a shoestring budget with a very limited cash flow. At one point, for example, Jannus wanted to conduct some experiments regarding air turbulence that would have required the use of smudge pots. Fansler wrote, “But such crude experiments cost money, and there was just about enough of that to keep the gang from being hungry.”33 Once, when talking about the airline’s fleet, Fansler said, “Tom Benoist had one [flying boat] finished, but not entirely paid for, as he had almost no working capital.”34

The airline definitely proved that it could carry passengers on a scheduled basis and that a demand existed. The two machines used by the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line logged a total
of 11,000 miles and carried a total of 1,205 passengers.\textsuperscript{35} The three-month life of the airline changed commercial aviation forever. Out of the experiment by Fansler, Benoist, Jannus and the forward-thinking businessmen, St. Petersburg pioneered a new means of public conveyance. The St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line was not only the first scheduled airline in the world, but it also was the first subsidized airline, the first airline to be regulated by the government and the first airline to require government licensing of its pilots. In addition, the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line’s insistence on safety-first produced the so-called pilot’s choice in which the decision to fly or not fly was left to the pilot. The airline proved the dependability, practicality and safety of scheduled air service.

Tony Jannus returned to St. Petersburg in January 1915, anxious to relive the success of the past year. He planned to fly the rebuilt Benoist number 45, renamed the \textit{Florida} and owned by L.E. McLain. When Jannus had left St. Petersburg the previous May, he was extremely complimentary about the town's citizens and officials, saying “All told we believe that our work has stamped St. Petersburg as the aviation headquarters of Florida and this, of course, is largely due to the hearty co-operation of the city and citizens of the town.”\textsuperscript{36} In less that a year’s time, his mood toward the city that had once showered him with accolades and adoration had turned rancorous. Because the St. Petersburg Board of Trade refused to renew any subsidies, Jannus stipulated that tickets had to be sold only in Tampa.\textsuperscript{37}
The successes of the prior year were not repeated. On February 25, 1915, while flying with Ruth Crawford of Baltimore, Jannus crashed the *Florida* into Tampa Bay. He was unhurt, and his passenger sustained only minor injury. However, the *Florida* was virtually destroyed. Only a month after his triumphant return to St. Petersburg, Tony Jannus folded the operation and left town.38

The fate of the two flying boats used by the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line has been a source of confusion. For many years, it was believed that the Benoist model 13, number 43 flying boat was sold to St. Petersburg resident L.E. McLain. He then supposedly hired Byrd Latham as his pilot, who took the flying boat to Conneaut Lake, Pennsylvania, where it was crashed, rebuilt, and brought back to St. Petersburg and renamed the *Florida*. That is not the case. Number 43 was still owned by Julius Barnes of Duluth. When Tony and Roger Jannus and J.D. Smith left St. Petersburg in 1914, they took number 43 with them. Number 45, the second Benoist flying boat to be shipped to St. Petersburg was actually the one purchased by McLain. Several sources prove this. The most reliable, was none other than J.D. Smith, the airline’s mechanic. In 1939, Smith examined a picture of a Benoist flying boat that he had personally crashed while flying in San Diego, California, in 1915. He looked at the photograph and exclaimed, “That’s a picture of old 43. It was taken right after I crashed her up in the bay at San Diego in 1915.”39

Throughout the years, several individuals have challenged the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line’s claim as the world’s first scheduled airline. Some have pointed to an airline, operated by Silas Christofferson, that carried passengers between San Francisco and Oakland, but only on an ad hoc basis. H.P. Christofferson, brother of Silas, wrote that “it was not run on schedule, or did we carry mail or express.”40 Further confirmation of the Florida claim came from the federal government. In a nationwide radio broadcast, as part of the series “Early Wings for Commerce,” the U.S. Department of Interior stated in 1939: “The carrying of passengers by heavier-than-air craft scheduled over an established route was first achieved in America. This was the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line, organized by L.A. Whitney and P.E. Fansler.”41 Thus, the honor of being the first scheduled airline rightfully belongs to the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line.

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3 Questionnaire filled out by Mrs. Percival Fansler, May 1952, Florida Aviation Historical Society Archives, St. Petersburg, Florida.
4 *St. Petersburg Independent*, February 16, 1914.
5 *St. Petersburg Daily Times*, December 5, 1914.
6 *Paducah News Democrat*, December 12, 1913; *Aero and Hydro* (December 13, 1913): 135.
8 *St. Petersburg Daily Times*, December 30-31, 1913.
9 J.D. Smith Scrapbook, Florida Aviation Historical Society Archives.


12 Ibid., January 2, 1914.


14 Tampa Morning Tribune, January 2, 1914.

15 St. Petersburg Daily Times, January 1, 1939.

16 St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line Rate Card, 1914, Florida Aviation Historical Society Archives.

17 St. Petersburg Daily Times, December 21, 1913.

18 Ibid., January 2, 1914.

19 Aero and Hydro (July 17, 1912): 381.


27 Tampa Tribune, December 31, 1980

28 Aero and Hydro, (February 14, 1914): 255.


31 Ibid., April 8, 26, 1914.

32 Edward A. Korn to G.B. White, January 8, 1953, Florida Aviation Historical Society Archives.


34 St. Petersburg Evening Independent, January 4, 1930.

36 *St. Petersburg Daily Times*, May 6, 1914.

37 Tony Jannus to L.E. McLain, December 26, 1914, Florida Aviation Historical Society Archives.

38 *St. Petersburg Daily Times*, February 26, 1915.

39 Ibid., January 9, 1939.

40 H.P. Christofferson to G.B. White, July 20, 1952, Florida Aviation Historical Society Archives.

WORKING WOMEN IN FLORIDA:
A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY
by Laura F. Edwards

The distance between popular conceptions and the actual history of women and work could not be wider. Most people assume that women entered the workforce only recently. Until then, their lives supposedly centered around their duties as wives and mothers. Reinforced in a barrage of media images, news reports, and statements by government officials and political candidates, these assumptions cohere in a story that goes something like this: Women first took up paid employment in large numbers during World War II, temporarily stepping out of their traditional role to help with the war effort. They became Rosie the Riveter, the robust, patriotic, young woman who appeared in so many wartime advertisements, cheerfully manufacturing war material for the men overseas. After the war, however, Rosie went back home. She married her sweetheart, traded in her factory uniform for an apron, and bent her considerable will to maintaining her suburban home and raising a family of young boomers. In short, she became June Cleaver. But the transformation was never complete, according to this widely accepted story. During the 1950s, married women slowly drifted back into paid employment to supplement their families’ incomes for luxuries like larger homes, another car, a vacation, or new living room furniture. During the 1960s, the trend intensified, women’s work gradually became acceptable, and some women began to move into jobs previously reserved for men. Then, in the economic uncertainty of recent decades, women’s employment became the rule, not the exception. Of course, people draw dramatically different conclusions from this story. But while some people insist that the changes in women’s work lie at the heart of our society’s problems and others identify them as the most positive developments in recent history, they do share one the underlying assumption that women’s current work patterns represent a complete break with the past.

The historical record, however, does not bear out this assumption. Working women are not new at all. The notion that they are is a product of our own recent past, rooted in our familiarity with forms of family life specific to the postwar period and enduring popular images that idealize men’s and women’s roles. But the years following World War II do not represent all history, just as June Cleaver did not even represent all the women of her own time.

The number of women in the workforce had begun to rise rapidly long before “Leave It To Beaver” aired. In fact, the increase predates World War II, beginning as far back as the late nineteenth century. By 1910, women already comprised 20 percent of the work force, a figure representing nearly 25 percent of all women. By 1950, women were nearly 18 percent of the work force. That rose to 32 percent in 1960, 37 percent in 1970, and 50 percent in 1990. In that year, nearly 58 percent of all women participated in the labor force.¹

At first glance, these statistics still seem to support the idea that widespread women’s employment is relatively new. But the statistics obscure as much as they reveal. Workforce participation rates among certain groups of women – such as unmarried women, African-American women, Mexican women in the southwest, Latin women in Tampa, and...
working-class women as a whole – were always much higher than the average. Statistics on workforce participation also hide women’s paid labor by counting only the number of people employed as identifiable fulltime paid laborers. Most working women, however, did not fit into this category until recently. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many women, particularly married women, performed paid labor outside the home for short stints, working a few months every year or a few days here and there as their families needed income. Because their work was irregular, it disappeared through the bureaucratic cracks and left little trace. Other women worked in their homes, sewing, taking in boarders, making hats, washing, and ironing. Many put in longer hours than they would have in a factory, but were not always counted as laborers because of the location of their work. Adding to the problem, the statistics tend to underestimate women’s experience with paid labor because of the common assumption that workforce participation rates taken at a particular moment in time represent people’s working patterns over a lifetime. If only 6 percent of women were in the workforce in 1820, it would follow by this logic that 94 percent of women never had and never would work for wages. Such a reading of the figures applies more to men than to women, who regularly moved in and out of the work force. Finally, the statistics on workforce participation do not acknowledge the value of unpaid housework in the same way as paid labor. Childcare, cooking, shopping, cleaning, washing, and running errands not only involved labor, but also had value as services that would otherwise have to be purchased. Women’s labor thus enhanced their families’ economic standing even when they were not working for wages.

Not only did more women work than commonly assumed, but they performed jobs that June Cleaver would not have acknowledged as “women’s work.” The nation’s first factories – textile factories in the early nineteenth century – recruited only women because the owners thought that men would never submit to the close supervision and subordination required of factory hands. As this example suggests, cultural notions of what constituted appropriate “male” and “female” work changed over time. They were also shaped by race, class, and ethnicity. Later in the nineteenth century, for instance, southern textile factories were lily white, while lower-paying domestic service jobs were exclusively black. Segregation even took place within factories, where men and women as well as women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds often worked at distinct jobs in separate areas. Job typing did not come only from employers. People from different racial, class, and ethnic backgrounds had their own ideas about what constituted appropriate work for women and men. As a result, women can be found doing an array of jobs, often in unexpected places. Of course, women’s roles were not completely elastic. Even when women worked outside the home, they were still held responsible for basic domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare. But people in the past did not always define a woman’s “domestic responsibilities” in the same way as June Cleaver. Depending on the time and their economic position, women might have to do fieldwork, take in laundry for pay, work in a factory, or even foment a strike to put food on the table and clothes on their families’ backs.

The following photos recapture the rich history of women’s work in the Tampa Bay area. Drawn from state and local archival collections, they show both the wide variety of jobs that women did and the wide variety of women who did them. Together these photos reacquaint us with working women in the past – women whose presence and importance has been erased from our historical memory. They also complicate our view of women’s work in the past and, in so doing, recast our understanding of this issue now.
Gertie Rhines, pictured here in 1922, took in laundry at her Clearwater home. After emancipation, domestic service was one of the few occupations open to African-American women in the South. Although the hours were long, the wages low, and the working conditions demeaning, these women did manage to establish some boundaries to the work. White employers, for instance, preferred that domestics “live in,” where they would be on call 24 hours a day. But many African-American women insisted on going home at night. Or, like Gertie Rhines, they took laundry home where they could combine wage work with their own domestic chores and free themselves from the watchful eyes of their white employers.

Photograph courtesy of Heritage Park/ Pinellas County Historical Museum.
Employees of Bradenton Laundry in the 1920s. The racial categorization of work did change over time, despite the insistence that certain jobs were “naturally” suited to people of certain races. In the South mechanized, steam laundries hired white women and thus transformed the racial composition of work previously considered appropriate only for black women.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.

Women, like these workers, sorting gladiolas for shipment in Ft. Myers, have traditionally performed seasonal, agricultural labor for short periods. Although not reflected in statistics on workforce participation, such work allowed women to earn wages without completely abandoning their other domestic responsibilities.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
From the late nineteenth century until very recently, southern textile factories hired white operatives. Within the industry and within factories themselves, jobs and wage levels were determined by sex. In a given factory, men would work at tasks deemed more “skilled” with higher wages, while women worked “unskilled” positions at lower wages – although it is often difficult to determine whether “unskilled” referred to the intrinsic difficulty and value of the job or the fact that women did it. In Tampa, clothing manufacturers employed not just native-born whites, but some of the area’s Spanish, Cuban, and Italian population as well. But as these photos of seamstresses at the Southern Manufacturing Company in 1937 and Sunstate Slacks workers in 1958 suggest, Tampa’s factories still segregated by sex and followed the characteristically southern practice of excluding all people classified as “black,” whether African American or Afro-Cuban.

Photographs courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System and USF Special Collections.
Local employers practiced sex and racial segregation. In this grapefruit canning plant in 1932, African-American women worked in one area of the plant. When black women did work in factories, they were usually assigned the messiest tasks like these workers, who are peeling and sectioning the acidic fruit by hand. There are no whites here, although there is at least one man, with his back turned toward the camera in the second row. This may seem a violation of the rule, but employers were never as concerned about mixing black women and men.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

In this grapefruit canning plant, white men and women are working on the same floor during the 1930s. But unlike the workers in the previous photo, the men and women are performing different jobs and are carefully divided by sex. They are also working directly with machines that canned the prepared fruit. Using racial justifications, southern factory owners usually reserved such mechanized labor for whites.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
Unlike the textile industry, southern tobacco factories were not lily white. Tampa’s cigar industry was no exception, hiring experienced Latin workers, including Afro-Cubans. Many Latin women worked in the cigar industry, as revealed by these two photographs of Ybor City employees in 1892 and a much later period. These women worked because their families needed their paychecks. But it was not just poverty that pushed these women out of their homes and into the factories. They also came from a culture familiar and comfortable with women’s wage work in cigar factories.

Photographs courtesy of USF Special Collections.
Latin workers brought their own unique work culture into the factories. Dependent on skilled, experienced labor because so much of the work involved in cigarmaking was unmechanized, owners at first acceded to many of these traditional practices. There was a gender hierarchy among cigarworkers, with the most skilled, highest paid jobs going to men. But Tampa’s cigar factories did not always segregate male and female workers or assign them different tasks. Here women are handrolling cigars, one of the most respected crafts within the industry.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Beginning in the 1930s, the composition of the workforce in Tampa’s cigar factories began to change. Owners hoped to create a more docile workforce and began to hire more women and, specifically, more native white women who lacked a strong union tradition. After World War II, as this photograph shows, Anglo women producing cheap, machine-made cigars replaced the skilled Latin men and women who made luxury cigars by hand.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.
Contrary to the Rosie the Riveter myth, many of the women who worked in the nation’s industries during World War II already had experience with factory work. For these women, the war provided an opportunity to move into better paying manufacturing jobs that had previously been reserved for men. Prior to the war, industries such as clothing and food processing, relied heavily on women workers, as shown in these photographs in Manatee County (c.1930) and Tampa (1937). Employers hired women because they were inexpensive, earning wages half or less than half of those earned by men for comparable work.

Photographs courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society and Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Not all women left their factory jobs after World War II. In 1952, long after Rosie the Riveter had supposedly retired to married life in the suburbs, this woman was doing skilled assembly work at the Tampa Armature Works.

Photography courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Women’s workforce participation rates continued to rise during the 1950s. But the woman assembling armatures was not the typical woman worker. Like these waitresses at the Tampa Bus Station lunchroom in 1948, women were more likely to be employed in lower paying service-related jobs.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
In the early nineteenth century, secretaries had been men. But women, like this secretary working in the office of an Ybor City cigar factory, moved into these expanding occupations in large numbers during the late nineteenth century, transforming service-related work into “pink collar” women’s work.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

By the twentieth century, secretarial work was reserved for young, attractive white women without foreign accents. Black secretaries usually worked at segregated companies and institutions, like these women working at Tampa’s Howard W. Blake High School in 1956.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
New technology opened up new service-related positions for women. Telephone operators were usually women, like those pictured at the switchboard of the Peninsula Telephone Company in Bradenton in the mid-1920s.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.

The first flight attendants, known as “stewardesses,” were all women, like these posing in Tampa with an executive of Pan American World Airways, probably during the 1940s.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
New fashions created employment for women. In the nineteenth century, women did not make regular trips to the beauty parlor. All that changed with the entry of “the bob,” which required regular cuts. Madame Hines Beauty Parlor was temporarily set up in the Tampa Theater to publicize the “Clara Bow haircut” in the 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Black women training in a cosmetology class at Tampa’s Howard W. Blake High School in 1956. Beauty became a promising field for women workers because it held the possibility of becoming their own bosses. Those who could not afford the rent of a beauty parlor ran businesses out of their homes, capitalizing on community ties to build their clientele.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
An art teacher in the Tampa area. Although many women worked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, very few professional careers were open to them. Teaching and nursing were among the first. The advocates of these women’s professions faced an uphill battle. Members of the middle class insisted that women’s only calling was marriage and motherhood. Advocates countered that teaching and nursing capitalized on women’s natural talents for nurture and were thus extensions of their proper role.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Women extended their teaching mission into library work. Helen Virginia Steele, pictured here in 1946, organized and ran the Tampa Public Library System for three decades before her death in 1947. Women like Steele made great personal sacrifices to pursue a professional career. At the turn of the century, marriage and a career were considered incompatible for women, particularly middle-class white women. Yet professional women were never alone, as they established far-flung female networks with similarly situated women. Steele helped organize the Florida Library Association and was also a member of many professional organizations.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Red Cross nursing class in Palmetto, Florida, 1918. In the early nineteenth century, nursing had no professional status at all: it was a particularly degrading form of domestic service performed by untrained men as well as women. During the Civil War, however, middle-class women entered the field and began to transform it into a skilled occupation for women that required a specialized education.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.

As women, nurses struggled continually with male doctors and hospital administrators for recognition of their professional status and medical skills. Although conditions for nurses slowly changed, they remained subordinate to doctors. In this photograph, a nurse stands waiting to execute the doctors’ orders in an operating room.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
The effort of nurses to gain recognition of their medical skills has another sad, ironic twist. The professionalization of medicine, of which nurses were a part, meant supplanting and even criminalizing the practices of midwives. A few midwives held out. Sadie Thomas, whose house is pictured here, was still practicing in Manatee County in the 1940s.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Although black men and women had worked as nurses throughout the nineteenth century, most hospitals hired only white women as nurses to treat white patients. Black women nursed at separate, segregated hospitals in the South. Gathered at Tampa’s African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1944, these nurses probably worked at the Clara Frye Hospital, named for the black nurse who operated it.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Airplane stunt woman Mabel Cody and pilot Don C. McCullen in 1927. It is fitting to leave a woman who performed acrobatics on the wings of an airplane hundreds of feet above ground for last. Cody’s work was unconventional, but it would be better not to set her aside as an “exceptional” woman. Flying high without a net, she captures the determined spirit of working women in the past and symbolizes the difficulties so many faced. Her name and daring deeds all but forgotten, Cody also poignantly underscores the historical neglect to which women workers generally have been subjected.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
CITIZENS NOW!
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION BY
TAMPA WOMEN IN 1920
by Jeff Hutchison

The most popular and important aspect of the women’s rights movement in the early twentieth century was the question of the vote. The suffrage movement had stagnated for nearly fifty years, but, when coupled with other progressive reforms, it gained a second wind as state after state ratified the Susan B. Anthony amendment to the United States Constitution. By World War I, the question was no longer if suffrage would become a reality but how soon, and in 1920 final approval of the Nineteenth Amendment made woman suffrage a reality.\(^1\)

This article examines the arrival of woman suffrage in Tampa, Florida. It focuses primarily on the year 1920 with particular concentration on the special election in October 1920 because it was the first opportunity for Tampa women to vote. The thesis of this article is that the significance of the special election was largely women’s participation in it. Tampa women wanted the vote not (at least initially) to advance any specific agenda, but simply to enjoy the full meaning of citizenship. Once they became participants, they used their new power in gender-neutral ways to advance causes more related to economic or racial considerations than to gender factors. Thus, despite the hopes of some suffrage advocates and the fears of some men, women in Tampa did not vote as a bloc.\(^2\)

Tampa was a growing and prosperous city in 1920. Nevertheless, it was struggling with the major strike of the century in the cigar industry and a serious downturn in shipbuilding and repair, an industry that had boomed during the war. The city government consisted of a strong elected mayor and a city council composed of representatives from each of the city’s wards. Nearly fifty years earlier a relatively homogeneous population of 800 residents had adopted this form of government. It had changed little except to add more wards as the city grew. By 1920, the city government was serving a very diverse population of more than 51,000.\(^3\) There had been previous attempts to change the city government, but all had failed to garner popular support. Finally, in the spring of 1920, city voters passed a measure to create a Charter Committee. The sole function of the Charter Committee was to write an amendment to the city charter that, if accepted by the voters in October, would bring Tampa fully into the Progressive Era (already a thing of the past elsewhere) by instituting a commission form of government.

The commission form of government was a popular progressive reform that more than one hundred cities around the nation had already adopted. Its objective was to wrest power from traditionally conservative political machines and to make the performance of city executives more professional. It was a means of putting power in the hands of “reformers.” In practice, commission-based governments encompassed three characteristics. First, all commissioners were elected at-large rather than by individual wards. This change eliminated “safe” seats in gerrymandered districts and made the entire city commission responsible to a single democratic majority. Second, the strong mayor became little more than a ceremonial position. A city manager, hired by and responsible to the city council, exercised executive authority. In theory, city managers would be trained career bureaucrats and therefore more professional and efficient.
An antisuffrage cartoon showing the “Suffragist-Feminist” leaving home to participate in politics, which “masculinizes women and feminizes men.”

Cartoon from Votes for Women! edited by Majorie Spruill Wheeler.
than elected amateurs. Finally, the concepts of initiative, recall, and referendum were incorporated into city charters to give the electorate an oversight and intervention capability should city officials stray too far from the will of the majority. All of these features were in the proposed amendment of Tampa’s Charter Committee which completed its work in June 1920. The charter amendment was debated in the city from then until the special election on October 19, 1920. Throughout this period, Tampa women were disenfranchised spectators in the political process.

Tampa’s 1920 population included 25,610 women of whom 10,704 were citizens and over twenty years of age. Of these 10,000 who would become eligible to vote, probably more than ten percent belonged to one or more of Tampa’s multitude of clubs. Most of these clubs were primarily but not exclusively women’s clubs. Some, such as the Tampa Civic Association and the Tampa Women’s Club, were very well organized and remain active today. Others formed for more specific, short-term functions. The Women’s Protective League, for example, organized in May 1919. Claiming 500 members, it sought to rid the city of houses of ill-fame. These reformers petitioned state legislators to pass laws to prohibit such houses, and while waiting for the legislature to act, they offered to provide “moral report cards” on any young man on request from any of the city’s young ladies.

A recent study of women’s clubs in Tampa found that “enfranchisement had never been a primary objective of clubwomen.” But like an onion, this finding needs to be peeled back a
layer. Most of Tampa’s women’s clubs belonged to the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, a statewide organization that in 1919-1920 emphasized education, Americanization, and child welfare. The Federation, following the lead of the nationwide General Federation, considered suffrage a political matter “outside the orbit of the Federation’s program.” The charters of the clubs may represent official independence from suffrage, but fail to reflect the feelings and activities of individual clubwomen. Club members, including Federation leaders, attended and spoke at the Florida’s Statewide Equal Suffrage Convention, held in Tampa from October 30 through November 1, 1919. And both the Tampa Civic Association and the Tampa Women’s Club held “Suffrage Days” for educational purposes. Generally, however, the Federation felt that the active work for suffrage should be left to organizations specifically formed for that purpose. The Tampa Equal Suffrage League was just such an organization.

Beginning in December 1917, the League’s twenty-one members met regularly in the courtroom at city hall. But the League attracted little attention, and its activities have been left largely undocumented. A history of Tampa women noted that the League's officers were “apparently middle-class women, whose names were not the known names of local leadership ...” However, this judgment may underestimate the League’s first president, Mrs. I.O. Price. If Mrs. Price was not well known in December 1917, she would be soon. Some background on Mrs. Price reveals a typical middle-class clubwoman.

A postcard from 1911 claiming that woman suffrage would clean up politics.

Photograph from One Woman, One Vote, edited by Majorie Spruill Wheeler.
Ada Price and her husband, Ivil, came to Tampa sometime between 1911 and 1916. Ivil, a commercial traveler (traveling salesman), settled his wife and their children in a home on Bayshore Boulevard. Ivil changed jobs at least once a year, holding various sales positions until 1922 when he became a deputy chief marshal. He stayed in the marshal’s office until 1929. He spent part of that year as a customs appraiser before retiring. In 1918 the Prices moved to a house on Morgan Street in Tampa Heights, where Ivil resided for more than two decades. Murlin, the oldest son, had arrived in Tampa in 1911, possibly before his parents, and worked as a clerk and musician. In 1922 he started what would become one of Tampa’s most successful music stores and music publishing houses. During the war, Murlin served in the Army. His brother, Hugh, served in the Navy and worked as a stenographer, clerk, and salesman before joining Murlin’s business as sales manager. Sister Edith was a student in 1917. She later worked as a clerk and as assistant librarian for the Tampa Public Library before also joining Murlin’s business as vice president. Murlin’s wife, Edna, succeeded Edith as vice president. They all lived at home even after Hugh and Murlin married. The married couples moved out when they could afford their own homes.  

Ada Price would have been nearly fifty years old when she assumed the leadership of the Equal Suffrage League. She was a featured speaker at the Equal Suffrage Convention when it met in Tampa in 1919, and she served two terms in 1919 and 1920 as president of the prestigious Tampa Civic Association. It is a compliment to describe Mrs. Price as a model of Progressive Era republican motherhood.

The Tampa women’s clubs are a window through which we can view middleclass suffragists like Mrs. Price. These women eagerly anticipated suffrage and prepared for it with nonpartisan, educational programs. Their activities reveal some extent of the anticipation that the clubwomen felt as suffrage approached.

All the clubs had similar formats for their meetings. They included musical entertainment (usually by one of the members), a light lunch or dessert, and a guest speaker or discussion of a book or popular issue. Reports of club activities show the range of their interests. The meeting of the Tampa Woman’s Club on April 2, 1919, hosted several out-of-town speakers who addressed suffrage and women’s roles in society. A guest from Virginia defended woman suffrage, telling the gathering: “Women want the ballot so that they may have a voice as to the conditions under which women and children are to work.” Mrs. Edgar Lewis, president of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, followed with a “tribute to Motherhood, as being the highest standard of work for women.” In June 1920, the club adopted the project of beautifying the new Children’s Home, the public schools, and other locations. They extended an invitation to the city’s other clubs to join them in the effort.

In March 1920, Judge Horace Gordon (soon to become mayor) gave a talk on suffrage to the Tampa Civic Association. At the following meeting, the club members developed their program for the next year. It included a systematic study of citizenship and cleaning vacant city lots. In April, the association turned its attention to the problem of the quality of milk being produced at local dairies. A guest speaker described the problems and invited the ladies to visit, some of the dairies and see for themselves. They not only accepted this invitation, but made it a combined event that had participation from at least nine clubs. A month later streets and playgrounds were
on the agenda. The members agreed to contact clubs in other cities to see if there had been any success in getting a commissioner appointed to coordinate city beautification efforts. They also selected a committee to visit mayor-elect Gordon to address the plight of the city’s playgrounds.\footnote{14}

The Tampa Business and Professional Women’s Club met regularly in 1920. On July 15, a speaker urged fellow members to prepare for their part in politics. In August they invited former Mayor D.B. McKay to speak on the subject of “closed shops.”\footnote{15} The club announced no position on the issue but took more than casual interest.

This brief survey of club activities shows that while suffrage may not have been a primary objective of clubs, the women were not indifferent; suffrage and other political issues were very much on their minds. The survey also indicates that clubwomen had changed little since the turn of the century. In a study of these earlier Tampa clubwomen, one historian concluded:

Of all Tampa’s residents, these women were the likeliest to live in nuclear families, reside in privately owned houses, and accept the ideology of separate sexual spheres. They, like their counterparts across the nation, assumed that home and city were two distinct entities and that the latter could be improved by an infusion of values from the former.\footnote{16}

In early 1920, Tampa’s women remained disenfranchised, but they were no longer disengaged, as the vote loomed on the horizon.

Throughout the summer the suffrage question garnered significant national headlines, especially considering that 1920 was also a presidential election year. North Carolina had a chance to be the magic thirty-sixth state required to ratify the Susan B. Anthony amendment, but the legislature soundly defeated the measure. Not content with their own victory, sixty-three members of North Carolina’s legislature signed an urgent telegram to Tennessee legislators urging them “not to force suffrage upon the people of North Carolina.”\footnote{17} Back in Tampa, Mrs. Flossie Taylor opened the August 12 meeting of the Tampa Business and Professional Women’s Club with a statement that women would soon be voting whether they wanted to or not. Mrs. Taylor was referring to the continuing ambivalence of some women towards suffrage in the face of inevitable ratification. Mrs. Elizabeth Bernard added that many business women “do not understand what the two great parties of the country mean.” She argued that the time had come for women to study the questions of the day so that they could “intelligently align themselves on the right side.”\footnote{18}

Despite the Tarheels’ efforts, Tennessee ratified the Nineteenth Amendment on August 18, 1920, and woman suffrage became the law of the land. The \textit{Tampa Tribune}, which had generally trivialized woman suffrage, responded to the event with the statement that “there is no need for alarm over this new entrant to the voting booth.... Most of those who vote will be the mothers of the country; and we believe, a mother is a mother still, the holiest thing alive.” The \textit{Tribune} advocated “full and immediate registration of women.”\footnote{19}

The \textit{Tampa Daily Times} had a somewhat longer record of support for suffrage. Typical of the \textit{Times} position is an editorial on May 20, 1920, in which editor D.B. McKay wrote that “woman has made good in every business and commercial life; she has made good professionally, in
medical and even legal circles, she will yet make good in politics for the day is as surely coming as the sun rises and sets.” In June, McKay noted that even women who did not want the vote were taking a greater interest in politics, and he advised politicians to start paying attention to women.20 The Tribune’s subsequent change of heart signaled that the competition for women’s votes between the two sides on the charter issue had begun. Meanwhile, the clubwomen of Tampa were preparing to vote.
Representatives from most local women’s clubs met at the home of Mrs. T.M. Shackleford, president of the Tampa Woman’s Club, on September 4. This enthusiastic gathering decided that the clubwomen as one combined group should study citizenship, municipal government, and the responsibilities of voters, so they scheduled a series of meetings, called an “Open Forum for Women Voters.” The weekly series appears to have been very popular, attracting men as well as women.  

At its September 24 meeting, the Tampa Civic Association voted to invite “some well informed man to give instructions on voting.” At the next meeting the group staged a mock election complete with the arrest of one member who tried to vote a second time. The Tribune covered the September 29 meeting of the Kiwanis Club that featured Mrs. R.A. Ellis, vice president of the Tampa Women’s Club, reassuring men that the ballot will “in no way change woman herself, but that she will be just as domestic and homeloving as ever.... The hand that rocks the cradle,” she said, “may rock the candidates, but the owner of that hand will not have to turn her back on her home life to do it.”

The Business and Professional Women’s Club invited one of the city’s commissioners to talk about property taxes and education. At the November 4 meeting, they celebrated the “twenty-first birthday of American women” in recognition of their achieving political maturity.

For Tampans the overriding election issue in 1920 was the proposal to amend the city charter. The idea of converting to a commission government was first put to the voters in the primary election in March 1920. The existing government consisted of a mayor and city council. The mayor, D.B. McKay, had held that office continuously since 1910. As mayor, he also served as chairman of both the Board of Public Works and the City Board of Health. The remaining duties were distributed among eleven councilmen and a few appointees. The city’s ten wards each elected one councilman, and the city at-large elected one more. In the years immediately preceding the charter amendment, the city council included men with surnames such as Ramos, Maggio, Sendoza, and Sierra, reflecting the ethnic diversity of the city and the ability of Latins to have a voice in ward-based elections.

Blacks and Latins comprised fifty eight percent of the city's voting-age population, but their political impact was limited. The Latin community included many aliens who were barred from voting, and African Americans faced severe legal restrictions. In addition to having to pay a poll tax to vote, blacks could not participate in local primaries which were run by the White Municipal Party and open to whites only. Thus, black men who met requirements of age and citizenship and who paid the poll tax had the right to vote only in meaningless general elections where candidates selected in the white primary ran unopposed. This may explain why the entire county had but seventy-five qualified black voters in 1918. When the large non-naturalized immigrant population is deleted, the remaining Latin voters were clustered in such a way that seven of the city’s ten wards become effectively native white. However, wards six and seven in Ybor City routinely elected at least one councilman with a Latin surname.

The charter amendment proposed to reduce the city council from eleven members to five, all to be chosen at-large, making it more difficult for the large Latin minority to elect one of their own in the city-wide elections. One of the five commissioners would serve as the
mayor-commissioner but would exercise little additional authority. The commissioners would hire a professional manager to act as the city's executive.27

Tampans, led by the two daily newspapers, divided immediately on the charter issue. The Tribune backed the change as forcefully as it could. The Times somewhat reluctantly also supported a switch to commission government as late as March 1920, just before the primary election. But when the Charter Committee proposed an amendment featuring an emasculated mayor, editor McKay switched sides. One of his great frustrations as mayor had been his inability to accomplish his goals. He could not support any reform that diluted the mayor's authority even more.28 The opposing editorial pages became a major battleground for the reform movement.

The forums sponsored by the women's clubs were genuinely educational and nonpartisan. Other less educational and very partisan clubs soon formed. These clubs had both male and female participants. The Commission Government Club organized first, sponsoring rallies to encourage voters to support the amendment. The Home Rule Club sprouted spontaneously when a mass meeting of the opposition looked for a more formal and permanent structure. The club elected a chairman and seven vice presidents, all of whom were clubwomen. Among the vice presidents were Miss Kate Jackson, Mrs. H.C. Macfarlane, Mrs. D.B. Givens, and Mrs. T.W. Ramsey. These names would appear on any short list of the city's most prominent women.29

Clubwomen actively engaged in the debate. The Tribune ran a series of interviews under the caption “Citizens Explain Why They Support Charter.” Mrs. T.L. Karn, Mrs. Amos Norris, Mrs. Sumter L. Lowry, Mrs. L.M. Broyles, and Mrs. Elizabeth Adams were featured clubwomen.30 Mrs. Norris later became the first female candidate for a commission seat but finished eighth in the primary election on November 15. Only the top five finishers moved on to the general election.31

Both papers accused their opponents of pandering to the black vote. The Times charged Mrs. Norris and Mrs. R.G. Albury, "prominent among club women of Tampa," with promising Negroes they would have more rights under the commission government.32 The Tribune a few days earlier claimed that charter opponents were campaigning to register black women to offset...
white women’s votes. By their estimate, however, the registration of white women was still running ahead.33

The *Times* generally made specific mention of women when it reported political meetings. For the mass meeting on October 4, “the court room was filled, perhaps a majority of the attendance being women.” When the final charter debate was held at the Tampa Bay Casino, “attendance was about equally divided as to men and women.”34

The newspapers and political clubs actively encouraged Tampa’s women to register and vote. The city council joined in that effort by passing an ordinance regulating registration and voting that was particularly favorable to women. The ordinance exempted women from the poll tax and provided separate voting booths for women. Further, the city attorney allowed women to certify their age at registration as simply “twenty-one plus.”35

The election on October 19, 1920, was a special election in several ways. There were no candidates, no personalities to appeal to the voters. There was only one issue – the charter amendment, which was approved by a vote of 3,769 to 2,999. This is the kind of election that often draws little voter interest. So it is not surprising that of the 22,647 potentially eligible voters, only 9,845 registered for the election.36 Women comprised thirty-eight percent of this total. The percentage of women registered equaled or approached fifty percent in the largely native-white wards but fell to around twenty percent in the heavily immigrant wards. It is also not surprising that only seventy-five percent of those who registered actually voted. The election day turnout was still seventy-six percent greater than that for the primary election the previous March. The *Times* noted that many of the cigar makers engaged in the long strike had left the city between March and October, and the paper estimated that women cast “more than fifty percent of Tuesday’s vote.”37 If women cast half the vote, then they had a turnout of about ninety percent which seems reasonable for their maiden voyage into the political arena. It appears that the women very likely decided the outcome of the election, but how did the women vote?

Because there were no candidates in the election, there were no pro-suffrage or anti-suffrage personalities to consolidate voting blocs. The single issue ballot was perfectly gender-neutral. While we have no exit polls to cite, it is apparent from the campaign that the women, actively engaged in both the Commission Government and Home Rule clubs, split on the issue. But along what lines?
As John Buenker notes in his book *Urban Liberalism and Progressive Reform*, not all “progressive reforms” were, in fact, either “progressive” or “reforms,” but instead became just changes instituted by political factions either to retain or capture power.\(^{38}\) An analysis of Tampa’s election returns at the precinct and ward level shows that one definite result of the change to commission government was a shift of power from an ethnically diverse city council to a native-white city commission; this meant a shift away from equal ward representation (including Ybor City) to the city’s white fringes which dominated at-large commission elections. The research for this article did not determine the Charter Committee’s intent, but the ethnic cleansing of the city council was a definite, if unintended, outcome. Indeed, no Latin surnames appear on the city council during the entire eight-year life of commission government. This shift was not unnoticed at the time and may have motivated some extreme actions. In the first municipal election under the charter, according to a newspaper report, “Councilman P.G. Ramos was arrested on the charge of aiding a voter to vote more than once, and two others were arrested and charged with having voted more than once.”\(^{39}\) Whether or not this was routine procedure in Latin precincts under the old system, it appears to be evidence of acknowledgment by Latins that they would have to win more than their ward to get representation on the new city commission. A majority of the women apparently voted to ensure that the city government would stay safely in the hands of middle- and upper-class native whites.

The probability that women voters were motivated more by social and economic considerations than gender factors is consistent with events in other parts of the country, where historians have found significant attitude shifts regarding citizenship and suffrage at the end of the nineteenth century. Earlier, beginning in seventeenth-century New England, citizenship had been justified on the basis of familial position; the freeholder was at once the head of the household and a citizen. By contrast, nineteenth-century citizenship was posed as a direct relationship between the individual and his government.\(^{40}\) The anti-suffragists still reflected the seventeenth-century view by holding that the unit of society was the family, not the individual. Thus, according to one scholar, “A man voted not for himself alone but for all the members of his family, as their political representative.”\(^{41}\) Women’s actions in Tampa’s special election demonstrated how outdated these views had become. Even the *Tribune*, no true advocate of suffrage, declared that the suffrage amendment enfranchised women, not wives, or daughters, or widows.\(^{42}\)

In preparing for and casting their first ballots in 1920, Tampa clubwomen operated as citizens, publicly exercising their new political rights. While they showed little support for the Equal Suffrage League in actively promoting the issue, women’s clubs made serious efforts to prepare for women’s entry into the political process. When the quest became reality, these women enthusiastically joined the public debate. On election day they delivered an unprecedented turnout of registered voters and cast the deciding votes. The single motivation that best explains the actions of Tampa’s clubwomen was best expressed by the Civic Association’s Mrs. Ada Price on October 4, 1920, when “after roll call and current events,” she “addressed the club, calling the members for the first time fellow citizens.”\(^{43}\) She thus followed in the footsteps of suffragists who, according to one historian, “did not simply want political power; they wanted to be citizens, to stand in the same relationship to civil government as men did.”\(^{44}\) Those Tampa women, who participated in the 1920 vote on the charter amendment, finally realized this aspiration.
This finding supports the thesis of Ellen DuBois in “The Radicalism of the Woman’s Suffrage Movement,” *Feminist Studies*, 3 (Fall, 1975), 63-71.


4 Pauline Lawes, *The Blue Book, Tampa*, 1917 (Tampa: Press of Tampa Tribune Pub. Co., 1917), 20-43. *The Blue Book* lists the Salvation Army, the WCTU City Federation, the YWCA, the Tampa Women’s Club, the Tampa Civic Association, the Saturday Card Club, the Scotch Club, the Wednesday Club, the Student’s Art Club, the Friday Morning Musicals, and a variety of yacht and country clubs. A list of church clubs and circles, Red Cross Auxiliaries, the Business and Professional Women’s Club, and more fail to exhaust the list.

5 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 23, 1919, 11.

6 Maryclare Crake, “‘In Unity There is Strength’: The Influence of Women’s Clubs on Tampa, 1900-1940” (M.A. Thesis, University of South Florida, 1988), 7.


9 Blackman, *Florida Federation*, 35.


12 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 28, 1919, 5; *Tampa Daily Times*, May 18, 1920, 6.


14 The Tampa Civic Association (TCA) Papers is a small collection of meeting and financial records located in Special Collections, University of South Florida Library, Tampa. These observations are from the Minutes for 1920, 93-99.

15 “Closed shops” is a reference to the on-going cigar workers' strike. McKay, both as mayor and as editor of the *Tampa Daily Times*, led the effort to break the strike.


17 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 12, 1920, 1. In the context of the source for this quote, the “right side” has no politically partisan meaning. Taylor is referring to her perceived obligation of voters to be fully informed when making decisions in the voting arena.

18 Ibid., August 13, 1920, 9.

19 Ibid., August 19, 1920, 8.
20 *Tampa Daily Times*, June 4, 1920, 4.
22 TCA Papers, Minutes for 1920, 103, 110.
23 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, September 30, 1920, 5.
27 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, July 22, 1920, 1.
29 Ibid., October 20, 1920, 7, and October 6, 1920, 3.
30 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, September 26, 1920, 7A; September 27, 1920, 3, and September 28, 1920, 4.
31 *Tampa Daily Times*, November 16, 1920, 11.
32 Ibid., October 8, 1920, 1.
33 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, September 29, 1920, 9.
34 *Tampa Daily Times*, October 5, 1920, 1, and October 16, 1920, 1.
36 *Tampa Daily Times*, October 18, 1920, 5, and October 20, 1920, 3.
37 Ibid., October 20, 1920, 3.
39 *Tampa Daily Times*, November 16, 1920, 11.
42 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 20, 1920, 8.
43 TCA Papers, Minutes for 1920, 104-105.
TAMPA’S CENTRO ASTURIANO CEMETERY
by Gregory P. Ferrara

Located on the southwest corner of Ola Street and Indiana Avenue in Tampa, Florida, the Centro Asturiano Cemetery is the older of two burial grounds established by one of Tampa’s early Spanish social clubs, El Centro Asturiano. The club, founded in 1902, catered to Latin males, most of whom were immigrant workers in Ybor City’s cigar factories. Members paid a monthly fee for health insurance, use of club facilities, and guaranteed burial.

Created in 1909, the cemetery was used continuously until the 1940s. In 1946, a new burial site – Centro Asturiano Memorial Park – was established near 56th Street and Martin Luther King Boulevard. After the creation of the new cemetery, burial in the older cemetery slowed, and eventually halted in the 1960s. The original Centro Asturiano Cemetery remains a visible manifestation of the values, lifestyles, and ethnic distinctions among Ybor City’s immigrant residents.

Tampa’s rapid growth at the end of the nineteenth century was clearly fostered by the founding of Ybor City and the arrival of Latin immigrants. In 1880, Tampa was little more than a sleepy fishing village, with a population of approximately 720 people. In just ten years, the population grew to 5,532. The astounding 768 percent increase resulted primarily from the influx of Spaniards and Cubans to work in the cigar industry founded by Vicente Martínez Ybor and Ignacio Haya. These Spanish-born cigar manufacturers had moved their operations from Cuba to the United States to escape political turmoil in the Spanish possession. Martínez Ybor had established himself in Key West and Haya in New York City, but in the mid-1880s both were primed for relocation. Martínez Ybor, the principal owner of a cigar factory in Key West, was embroiled in a bitter labor dispute with cigar workers. Haya, a co-owner of one of the largest cigar factories in New York City, was scouting for a more appropriate location to avoid the difficulties associated with manufacturing cigars in New York during the winter months. In 1885, Martínez Ybor and Haya purchased tracts of land northeast of Tampa, and Ybor City was born as a separate town, although it was soon incorporated into Tampa.

With the exception of a few dozen Spanish immigrants from New York and Havana, the first inhabitants of Ybor City were primarily Cubans, and anti-Spanish sentiment ran high. In addition to their ethnic identification with the hated imperial country of Spain, the Spaniards owned the factories and commanded supervisory positions in the cigar industry while the Cubans generally held the lower economic positions. Anti-Spanish sentiment among Cubans was exacerbated by anti-immigrant prejudice from native-born Anglos in Tampa.

Under these pressures, early Spanish immigrants in Tampa tended to overlook differences among themselves. In addition to important class distinctions between factory owners and their employees, Spaniards harbored conflicting regional loyalties to their native provinces of Galicia and Asturias. These two areas in the north of Spain provided the bulk of Spanish immigrants to the New World, and like peasants in many countries, Gallegos and Asturians defined themselves in terms of regional customs and behaviors that they often considered more important than their common Spanish heritage. However, in Tampa at the end of the 19th century, Spanish immigrants temporarily suppressed these regional differences in the face of anti-Spanish
sentiments among local Cubans and Anglos. In response, the Spaniards organized a mutual aid club, called El Centro Español, in 1891. The Centro Español was modeled after similar voluntary associations found in Spain and Cuba. Between the 1890s and 1930s, ninety percent of Ybor City’s first- and second-generation Latin men belonged to a mutual aid society. In addition to the Centro Español, the local clubs included Circulo Cubano, La Union Martí-Maceo and L’Unione Italiana. In the words of one historian, these clubs represented “collective means of reconciling individual/family concerns with those of the ethnic group and confronting the stark realities of urban life.”

The “stark realities” included numerous health problems that besieged Ybor City residents during the early years. Unsanitary health conditions led to epidemics of yellow fever, malaria, typhoid, and dengue fever. Poor hygienic precautions and the warm, moist environment of the factories led to outbreaks of tuberculosis that continued well into the twentieth century.

At the turn of the century, the Centro Español offered benefits to members and their families in the event of injury or death, but it provided no health services. A growing number of Asturian members urged the club to broaden its benefits to include medical support. Many of the Asturians were young, single males, for whom sickness often meant being bed-ridden without the funds or family to provide medical treatment. When Asturians proposed that the Centro Español construct a private hospital, the Galician leadership deemed the request “inadvisable” due to the economic condition of the club.

As a result, a large faction of dissident Spaniards seceded from the Centro Español and formed El Centro Asturiano in 1902. Initially a North American auxiliary of Cuba’s Centro Asturiano de Havana, which had 10,000 members, the Centro Asturiano of Tampa began with 546 members and evolved into the most stable, well-financed club in Ybor City. By 1907, its ranks had swelled to 3,030 members, mostly workers in the cigar factories. A modern clubhouse was constructed on the corner of Palm and Nebraska avenues in 1909, only to be destroyed by fire in 1912. The club members, not easily discouraged, financed a more ambitious clubhouse at the staggering cost of $110,000. Dedicated on May 15, 1914, the clubhouse was described as the most beautiful building in the South. Although the clubhouse served primarily the recreational needs of its members, it also provided educational facilities. In addition to an elaborate 1,200-seat theater, a cantina, and a ballroom, the Centro Asturiano contained classrooms and a well-stocked library.

Perhaps most important, the Centro Asturiano was conceived to provide quality medical care for members. Dues of $2.50 per month guaranteed both social and medical benefits. Immediately after its creation, the Centro Asturiano, began an ambitious effort to establish medical services for its members. In 1903, the club leased the Orange Hotel on Tampa Street and converted it into a temporary hospital. With membership climbing, construction began on a modern hospital on the corner of Jackson (now Euclid) and Ola streets. This new sanatorio was completed in April 1905 and may have been the first such hospital constructed by an immigrant group in the United States. The complex ranked among the newest and best equipped in Florida.

The society also designated special funds for the convalescence of tuberculosis patients, a disease common among cigarmakers. A branch of Centro Asturiano called “Agrupacion de Embarques,” raised money to send members to Spain, Cuba or Colorado for recuperation.
However, because tuberculosis was a chronic and eventually fatal disease, suicides among tuberculosis patients were common. At that time, the act of suicide did not have the social stigma that it does today. In some cases, it was even considered honorable. Patients sought to protect their family or friends from financial devastation.\(^9\)

Until the 1960s, women were prohibited from joining the Centro Asturiano. A women’s auxiliary did exist, but only to serve the male members. Nevertheless, beginning in 1929, wives and daughters of male members were permitted access to medical and welfare aid through a department called Beneficencia Asturiana.\(^{10}\)

Following World War I, in a move marking Latin cooperation and interdependence, the Centro Asturiano and Centro Español permitted Cubans and Italians to join their medical programs. By 1928, collective efforts allowed the Centro Asturiano to modernize facilities, and a new $175,000 facility was dedicated. Medical privileges derived from Ybor City’s mutual aid societies facilitated their continued cohesiveness and strength.\(^{11}\)

Peak enrollment in Centro Asturiano reached as high as 7,000 members during the 1930s and 1940s. Even as late as the 1970s, the club still retained approximately 4,500 members. In 1993

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*The Centro Asturiano clubhouse still stands on Nebraska Avenue in Ybor City.*

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
the club had approximately 300 members. Although the Centro Asturiano Hospital closed in 1990, medical benefits are still offered.\(^\text{12}\)

In addition to various social and medical services, the Centro Asturiano also offered a burial plot for members and their immediate family. Burial constituted quite a desirable benefit to the *solteros* (bachelors), who came to Tampa without any family. Many *solteros* were teenagers, who lived in boarding houses and worked in the cigar factories. Concerned about the uncertainties facing them, immigrants feared the thought of dying anonymously in a strange land: Furthermore, the Centro Asturiano provided a means of preserving Latin burial traditions that contrasted in some ways from those of Anglo Americans.\(^\text{13}\)

Prior to the nineteenth century, Americans were commonly interred in church graveyards, a tradition brought from Europe. These graveyards often were neglected and overcrowded. As industrialization brought large populations into densely settled urban clusters, the pressures on church graveyards increased, as did the demand for burial ground. Moreover, Americans came to regard cemeteries as esthetically offensive and even as a health hazard for the living.\(^\text{14}\)

Population pressures and changing attitudes led to the development of the planned cemetery that was usually non-denominational and located in a suburban or rural area. Dating from the early nineteenth century, so-called “garden” cemeteries offered people the opportunity to purchase plots and create family sections. This, in turn, permitted families to commemorate the departed with personalized monuments and landscaping, ranging from flowers to trees, for which the old church graveyard had no space.\(^\text{15}\)

The early twentieth century saw another radical change in cemetery design with the creation of memorial parks. As professional cemetery management began to undermine sentimental visions of the afterlife, Americans distanced themselves from the reality of death by relying on others to tend the dying, care for the dead, and maintain the burial grounds. Designed for easy maintenance, especially lawn mowing, memorial parks forbade monuments and required simple memorial plaques that were flush with the ground. Such strict controls were for the convenience of memorial park managers, but they were widely accepted by increasingly transient Americans who visited cemeteries less often and who viewed monuments as a needless expense.\(^\text{16}\)

Immigrants and their children, however, clung to nineteenth-century practices that placed great importance on respect for the dead. “Immigrant groups in the United States revealed an attitude toward the importance of a proper funeral and a respectable burial,” according to two scholars. “Thus, families who counted every coin nevertheless made whatever sacrifice necessary to join a local burial society.”\(^\text{17}\)

In Tampa, the mutual aid societies like the Centro Asturiano served this function. Centro Asturiano leaders selected Tampa Heights for the society’s first cemetery because of its proximity to the club’s hospital and adjacent cemeteries. In addition, Tampa Heights was the city’s first prominent residential suburb, and it had sufficient space for a “garden” cemetery. Although its residents were primarily Anglo-Protestants, Tampa Heights also attracted many wealthier Latins. For example, cigar manufacturer Facundo Arguelles’ home at 400 East Palm
served as headquarters for Juan Pumariega, a Cuban dignitary who visited Tampa to commemorate the opening of the Centro Asturiano Cemetery in 1909.\(^{18}\)

Despite its apparent silence, the Centro Asturiano Cemetery speaks clearly about the beliefs and traditions of the people buried there. Few headstones have elaborate epitaphs. Most of the epitaphs are commemorations from immediate family or friends. For example, “Recuerdo de su esposa” (Remembered by your wife) is typical of the secular nature of the epitaphs. The scarcity of religious epitaphs and icons in the Centro Asturiano Cemetery reflects the contempt that many Ybor City immigrants had towards the Catholic Church during the early part of the century. The impoverished Spanish felt ignored by he church, and this exacerbated their iconoclastic sentiment. Furthermore, many members of Centro Asturiano were also members of fraternal orders. Gravestones bearing insignias and inscriptions from the Loyal Knights of America, the Masons, Knights of the Light, and Woodmen of the World proliferate throughout the cemetery. The Catholic Church’s long-standing opposition to these secret orders undoubtedly contributed to their popularity among Centro Asturiano members.\(^{19}\)

The gravemarkers in the Centro Asturiano Cemetery exhibit a wide range of characteristics. Their diversity is reflective of time and economic status. Although the Centro Asturiano paid for a member’s burial and plot, the benefits did not include the headstone. These arrangements were usually made by either family members or friends. Since many members were cigarworkers, funds were often lacking, but a few members did have enough money for elaborate, costly
gravemarkers. However, gravemarkers did not necessarily have to be expensive to be fancy. This is evidenced by the inlaid mosaic tile graves found throughout the cemetery. The cost of imported marble or granite headstones was beyond the financial grasp of many members, but a cheaper and more appropriate alternative was to employ a local Italian tile worker to construct the gravemaker.

Almost all the marked graves in the cemetery have baked enamel or porcelain photographs mounted on the gravestones. This was a custom practiced by Tampa’s Latin immigrants – a tradition brought from their native countries. Originating in France in 1855, the practice became common in the United States by 1890. Funerary portraits obscure the memory of death and personalize the monument, adding individualistic and human qualities to the tombstone that many modern cemeteries lack. Most of the photographs in the Centro Asturiano Cemetery have retained excellent quality, attesting to their durability. Some cemeteries do not allow porcelain photographs due to their susceptibility to vandalism and breakage. Most of the photographs in the cemetery were shipped to Italy for the baking and enameling process. Many Latin families in Tampa still use inset photographs on tombstones.20

The Centro Asturiano Cemetery today contains over 800 graves, at least 500 of which are marked. Some gravemarkers indicate more than one occupant to a plot. Spouses or family members were buried either in the same plot or sometimes in an entirely different location in the cemetery. Evidence from cemetery records also points to a number of unmarked gravesites, many of which are in the children’s burial area. The absence of family plots and the existence of unmarked graves could be attributed to the low economic status of some Centro Asturiano members. Many of the headstones and graves have been vandalized. The chain link fence surrounding the original wall was erected in the 1970s in an attempt to reduce vandalism. The entrance to the cemetery originally touted iron gates and an archway, but both were removed in the early 1980s after the fence installation. The graves from the entrance to the altar in the center lie in organized, alpha-numeric sections, while graves in the rear half apparently lack organization. The reason for this is not clear, but one possible explanation is that as club membership grew, plans to partition the rear half were delayed by administrative changes.

Another peculiarity is the lack of any pattern in the location of graves according to death dates. For example, it is common to see an old grave next to a newer one. Some remains have been transferred to the Centro Asturiano Memorial Park or elsewhere, while others continued to be interred after the memorial park had been established. Some graves were also moved within the cemetery itself.21

Individual burial sites at the Centro Asturiano Cemetery reflect both larger customs among Tampa’s Spanish immigrants and highly personalized touches. The following is a sample of what the cemetery reveals about individuals buried there.
Antonio Prado, who died on March 29, 1904, at age forty-one, was the first president and a founding member of the Centro Asturiano. He died prior to the establishment of the cemetery and his body was exhumed from another cemetery and moved to its present location shortly after the cemetery was established in 1909. Prado was instrumental in lobbying the Havana chapter for greater autonomy in Ybor City and securing funds for the construction of the club’s first hospital.

Estela, the daughter of Antonio Prado, died on June 5, 1925, at the age of twenty-one. Their gravestone typifies one of the cemetery’s burial patterns with more than one person within a single plot and another family member buried elsewhere. However, the stone's large cross is atypical of most headstones in the cemetery, which rarely display religious icons. The epitaph translates “To my unforgettable husband and daughter!”

Although otherwise unremarkable, the extensively damaged double gravestone of Gloria Garcia (1894-1921) and Maria Sanchez (1903-1930) has an ironic anecdote associated with its inception. Gloria Garcia and Maria Sanchez were sisters who both died at the age of twenty-seven. Gloria died from complications during childbirth. Maria died from complications associated with a tooth extraction. Severely burned as a child when her clothing caught fire, she was left disfigured and lame.
Gloria and Maria’s parents owned land in Spain, on which they lived. Their father frequently traveled to and from Cuba on business. On one particular night, their mother requested her husband to obtain some apples as part of their meal. He climbed a ladder, and while picking the apples, fell to his death. Subsequent to their father’s death, their mother decided to come to the United States, but she died one day before embarking. The property was then entrusted to the father-in-law. He was given power of attorney to sell the property and was to use the money to start a business in Spain.

However, when Gloria and Maria died, the family demanded $500 for the immediate purchase of an elaborate tombstone. They wanted the father-in-law to use the money from the liquidated property to pay for the monument. The father-in-law bitterly objected to the proposal, disputing the urgency issue. However, he reluctantly conceded and shortly thereafter died of a stroke.²²

Probably one of the best preserved tile graves in the cemetery, the final resting place of Generosa Salas (1903-1928) is an excellent example of ethnic cemetery folk art. Most of the tile graves in the cemetery were constructed by one man, Francesco Constantino, an Italian immigrant and president of Constantino Monument Company, whose company supplied and engraved many of the gravestones in the cemetery. Specializing in tile work, Constantino constructed many of the tile sidewalks in Ybor City, but the majority of his work has been covered over. The use of geometric patterns was common among tile workers. Strikingly evident
on the grave of Generosa Salas is the circular mosaic design on the vault cover. This design represents a decorative wreath, typically associated with commemorating the dead. Wreaths were also often displayed on doors in Spanish homes and businesses to memorialize the dead. 23

As the Centro Asturiano grew, its health benefits enticed members from other social clubs, including L’Unione Italiana, the Italian Club. Maria Mungiovi, who died on November 7, 1930, at the age of twenty-five, is one of several Italians buried in the rear of the cemetery. Italian graves can usually be recognized by use of Italian words, as opposed to Spanish. The monument for Maria Mungiovi includes both a photograph and the simple words “Madre e Figli” (mother and daughter).

Italians had a cherished set of rituals governing the funeral. The corpse was viewed at a private home, often laid out on a bed of ice to prevent rapid decomposition in the Florida heat. Hundreds of participants would march in the procession, pausing for a final tribute in front of the deceased’s home. A brass band accompanied the concourse of mourners. As the procession traveled through the city, merchants would close their doors, a gesture of respect and superstition. 24

Extensively damaged, the grave of Pepito Arduengo (1917-1924) is near a cluster of children’s graves, notably present in the northwest quadrant of the cemetery. At least 100 children are buried in this area, their deaths dating from 1909 through 1931. Most of the children fell victim to illnesses, such as cholera, measles, meningitis, bronchitis, and pneumonia. Pepito Arduento
died of meningitis at the age of six. “Pepito” (Little Joe) is an affectionate rendering of the name Pepe (Joe).25

Although the reason is unclear, it is evident that children’s graves were intended to be separated from those of adults. Gravemarker dates indicate that the adult burials filled the cemetery from front to rear, and the burial of children began in the rear of the cemetery and moved towards the entrance. There are also a number of unmarked children’s graves. As the cemetery filled, some adult burials were interspersed within the children’s burial area, in some cases over existing unmarked graves.

Many of the motifs and sculptures found on the children’s gravestones are not typical of twentieth-century gravestone art. The winged cherub engraved on Pepito Arduengo’s monument, which represented the deceased’s immortal soul, was a popular motif during the late eighteenth century. Other carvings characteristic of Victorian cemetery art can be found throughout the children’s burial area. Resting lambs adorn many other children’s gravestones. Lambs were a familiar sign of innocence and purity commonly associated with childhood. Sometimes lambs were paired with children, an expression of nineteenth-century perceptions of the child as close to nature. The role of the child in Victorian society was carried into the cemetery. Sculptured portrayals of small children reflected the separateness of children and adults by establishing clear visual correlations between the child and the home. The most common is that of the sleeping child. The asexual depiction and lack of clothing reflect the absence of moral blemishes that further reinforced their disassociation from adults.26
Although very little is known about Genaro Huerta, who died in 1934, his gravesite stands out because it is decorated with shells. Despite its uniqueness in the Centro Asturiano Cemetery, the use of shells was common elsewhere in the coastal South. The most frequently used shells were conch, freshwater mollusks, and saltwater bi-halves. The shells on this grave are whelks. The variety of arrangements found elsewhere includes placing shells along the axis of the grave mound from head to foot, surrounding the grave, and completely covering the grave mound. The tradition was also common in early African-American gravesites along the south Atlantic coast. According to Kongo religious thought, shells from the sea are emblems of the cosmos and symbolize the spiraling cycle of life and death. Although Genaro Huerta was not a salient member of the Centro Asturiano, his shell grave now warrants him belated attention.

Juan Lopez (1890-1911) was a member of an “Estudiantina,” a group of student singer/musicians who played at the Centro Asturiano clubhouse. These house musicians, called “La Estudiantina España de El Centro Asturiano,” specialized in playing a variety of stringed musical instruments (violin, guitar, mandolin). The ensemble often played at club-sponsored picnics, which drew multi-ethnic crowds, numbering as many as 6,000 people.

Lopez, who had emigrated from Spain, was a victim of cholera and died at the young age of twenty. The epitaph on the gravestone translates “Inconsolable parents and brothers dedicate this sad memorial to his memory.”
Clearly an unusual gravestone, the monument of Juan Cifuentes (1866-1912) was provided by the Woodmen of the World, a fraternal insurance organization. Several of these sculpted marble log monuments can be observed scattered throughout the cemetery. Woodmen of the World Life Assurance Society, as it was called, had numerous “camps” scattered across the South. Part of the membership creed supported the concept of a right to the dignity of a marked grave. Policyholders could arrange to have a Woodmen of a World monument erected on their grave for a modest rider on their insurance policy. Woodmen of the World was the most significant organization in the South dedicated to monument unveilings, a ritual associated with fraternal orders. Monuments were unveiled in formal ceremonies conducted by the local camp. These cults of piety were usually accompanied by a parade of camp members and a eulogy for the deceased member.29

Like many surviving remnants of immigrant communities, the Centro Asturiano Cemetery stands as a disintegrating reminder of the proud traditions that once thrived in Tampa.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Robert Brinkmann, Sandra Dunlop, Vera Garcia, Frank Gonzalez, and Jose Sanchez.
The gravemarker of Juan Cifuentes, a member of the Woodmen of the World.


2 Ana Varela-Lago, ‘From Patriotism to Mutualism: The Early Years of the Centro Español de Tampa, 1891-1903,’ *Tampa Bay History*, 15 (Fall/Winter 1993): 5-8.

3 Ibid., 8-16; Mormino and Pozzetta, *Immigrant World*, 70-71, 176-97.


5 Ibid., 197-203.


8 Ibid., 198-200.

9 Interview with Frank Gonzalez, March 15, 1993.


12 Interview with Frank Gonzalez.
13 Interview with Vera Garcia.
15 Ibid., 18-21.
16 Ibid., 28-31.
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21 Interview with Frank Gonzalez.
22 Interview with Jose Sanchez.
23 Interview with Joseph Constantino.
25 Cementerio del Centro Asturiano en Tampa, Registro de Fallecidos (1909).
BOOK REVIEWS


The Columbia Restaurant Spanish Cookbook is much more than just an ordinary cookbook. Its pages contain not only meticulous instructions for how to prepare a myriad of succulent Spanish, Cuban and Columbia-original recipes but also the real story behind the recipes, the restaurant and the family that has been at its helm since 1905. Featured in this culinary masterpiece of literary non-fiction is “The Gem of All Spanish Restaurants” – the Columbia – an Ybor City legacy born of the immigrant dream of Casimiro Hernandez I in 1905 and today the flagship of a six-restaurant dynasty. Adela Hernandez Gonzmart, granddaughter of the restaurant's founder, and Ferdie Pacheco, Tampa native son turned “Fight Doctor,” writer and painter, have woven a delightful tale of immigrant chutzpah and entrepreneurship. They bridge spaces, such as those between chapters like “Eggs and Omelettes,” “Fish and Seafood,” “Bean and Rice Dishes” and “Desserts,” with stories of how the restaurant grew from one small room to a whole city block, of who ran the place and filled it and of how a five-generation family business goes about raising children, saying goodbye to beloved parents and grandparents, pursuing musical careers and remaining as a beacon to all Tampa Latins and non-Latins alike, through thick and thin.

This “Gem” has survived the 1929 crash, the Depression, wars and 1960s urban renewal, and through it all, prize fighters and politicians, movie stars and foreign dignitaries, great musical artists and architects have graced its tables. Nestled between chapters on “Drinks/Bebidas” and “Meats/Carnes” is the story of the “Columbia family” – the chefs, waiters and others – in whom the Columbia inspired life-long devotion and sacrifice. These are people who have spent forty or fifty years working in the same place – people such as Gregorio Martinez (“El Rey”), who upon realizing that the owner was about to shut the place down during the Depression, immediately withdrew his life savings from the bank and handed them to a dumbfounded Casimiro, telling him, “Don’t close the place” (94). In the chapter “Golden Years,” Pacheco tells the story of Mess Sergeant di Bona, who with shipments of Cuban coffee and other ingredients sent by his Ybor City grandmother, set up his chow tent on Le Shima Island during world War II and called it “Columbia Restaurant, The Gem of All Spanish Restaurants, Pacific Division.” The chapter entitled “When the Violin Chases the Piano” relates the story of the handsome and talented Cesar Gonzmart who through gallantry and persistence captured the crown jewel of the “Gem of All Spanish Restaurants,” the lovely and talented Adela Hernandez. Cesar went from violin virtuoso to restaurateur and brought the Columbia to dizzying heights of elegance, sophistication and world-reknown.

Adela Hernandez Gonzmart and Ferdie Pacheco have written a delightful book whose utility far surpasses that of its mouthwatering recipes, which by the way are magnificent. Once you have read the personal history of the Columbia, of the people who have made and continue to make it what it is, the food you prepare from this cookbook can only taste better. The Columbia Restaurant Spanish Cookbook, through its anecdotes and photographs, takes on a life of its own,
which “The Gem of All Spanish Restaurants” indeed has. The only way to improve upon reading the book is to go to the Ybor City location itself and experience it first-hand.

Kenya C. Dworkin y Mendez


By the end of the 1890s, the existence of an American frontier slowly slipped into the realm of history and myth. However, the southern-most frontier in Florida remained intact well into the new century. Michel Oesterreicher offers a telling glimpse of this era in *Pioneer Family: Life On Florida’s Twentieth Century Frontier*. Her account is based mainly on oral interviews with her parents Huger (“Hugie”) and Oleta Brown Oesterreicher, and is an entertaining story of a Florida lifestyle all but gone.
Born in 1898, Hugie grew to manhood in a cypress-hewn cabin on the edge of wilderness between Jacksonville and Saint Augustine. In the isolation of the palmettos and hammocks he became a hardened woodsman, at home in places like Durbin Swamp and able to secure a living from its natural bounty. Life was hard for families like the Oesterreichers with dangers of rattlesnakes, bogs capable of drowning the unwary and death from disease with little proper medical care. The strong and the skilled not only survived but thrived, seemingly far from the modern world.

Hugie’s life changed forever in 1925, when he met and later won the hand of Oleta Brown and they began married life in a lonely cabin. Oleta slowly adjusted to an existence far from family, friends and civilization. The Roaring Twenties proved to be both the best and worst of times for the young couple. Catholics like Hugie and Oleta faced prejudice and intimidation in the 1928 Presidential election, as they were pressured not to support Catholic Al Smith over Republican Herbert Hoover. The next year found them financially ruined as banks in Saint Augustine and Jacksonville failed and swept away a lifetime of savings. Hugie and Oleta would literally find themselves with one dime to their names and with a growing family to support by the end of 1929.

The Great Depression was a trying time in northeastern Florida, and Pioneer Family poignantly chronicles the day-to-day struggle to endure. When the Durbin Swamp failed to adequately provide, Hugie even resorted to moonshining to earn money. The coming of fence laws and cattle tick eradication at long last brought modern times to the wilds of Duval County by the end of the 1930s, and World War II completed this change. By 1945 the Oesterreichers left the woods they loved and moved to Jacksonville Beach, where for many years they ran a grocery store.

Hugie and Oleta Oesterreicher seem almost like characters who could have sprung from the pages of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings or Patrick Smith. They were stoic “crackers” who faced adversity with hard work and faith, and always found a way to overcome. Professional historians, however, may be troubled by the fact that the episodic story of their life and times reads more like a literary work than a traditional history. The lack of a bibliography and index also detracts from the book’s overall value to the study of Florida history. Nevertheless, Pioneer Family makes a contribution to state and local history and hopefully will encourage more people to record their own family stories for the sake of future generations.

Robert A. Taylor
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TAMPA BAY HISTORY

Published Semi-annually by
The Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

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Correspondence concerning subscriptions, contributions, books for review, and all other editorial matters should be sent to the Managing Editor, Tampa Bay History, Department of History, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620-8100. (Telephone: 813-974-2807). ISSN:0272-1406.

Manuscripts from potential contributors should be typed and double spaced with footnotes, also double-spaced, placed at the end and prepared in conformity with the style used by the journal.

The subscription rate is $18 for one year. Single issues and back files are available. Printed semi-annually, in the spring/summer and fall/winter.

Tampa Bay History disclaims responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Tampa Bay History is indexed in Historical Abstracts, America:History and Life.

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