

12-1-1996

From the Editors

Tampa Bay History

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Recommended Citation

Tampa Bay History (1996) "From the Editors," *Tampa Bay History*. Vol. 18 : Iss. 2 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol18/iss2/2>

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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.