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**Things Remembered: An Album of African Americans in Tampa**

by Rowena Ferrell Brady

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Denham’s book is a judicious and well written account of how Floridians defined crime, dealt with obstacles in punishing it, and created the beginnings of a criminal justice system. In addition, it provides a revealing view of everyday life as Floridians struggled to bring order to "A Rogue’s Paradise."

Robert P. Ingalls


Rowena Brady’s pictorial collection showcasing Tampa’s black community effectively illustrates African Americans’ varied experiences and contributions to the city’s past. Though not a historical essay, this work shares images of the African-American experience in Tampa and, in the process, illuminates a dynamic community that has not been well documented in the past. This pictorial account contains many photographs never before available to the public. Brady adds substance to this collection through explanations of photographs that help the reader understand the context of the times and events. Many activities and people depicted will be unfamiliar to the audience, which is precisely what makes this an important project. What strikes the reader most is the vision of a parallel African-American community existing alongside, but very much separate from, the white community.

The work opens with explanatory comments by Brady and a short description of African-American history in Florida contributed by Cantor Brown, Jr. This provides perspective for succeeding chapters, which generally follow a chronological order. Brady moves through the nineteenth century quickly, concentrating primarily on the period from the early 1900s through the 1960s. She chooses 1970 as the end of her chronology because, as she says, by then urban renewal and the negative impact of desegregation "undermined and eventually physically destroyed much of this community." The final two chapters of the book focus respectively on the history of St. Paul’s A.M.E. Church and notable individuals and groups in Tampa’s more recent past.

This work provides insight into many aspects of African-American life in Tampa - an experience highlighted by strong social, religious, and economic ties, but often characterized by inequalities of opportunity, pay, and status. Through pictures painstakingly gathered from personal collections and public archives, Brady gives us a sense of the daily lives of blacks in Tampa, although admittedly the book "concentrates on individuals who made contributions of substance." The importance of these individuals notwithstanding, the contributions of blacks from all walks of life were important in building and shaping both the African-American community and Tampa in general. It is particularly important to realize that within marginalized groups, economics was often less a determinant of social status or contribution to the community. Since the early days of Reconstruction, Tampa’s African-American community leaders have come from many walks of life.

Although largely marginalized by whites throughout the city’s history, the black community nurtured an independent spirit that insulated blacks to some extent from the racism around them. This book clearly documents the successes and pride of that "community within a community,"
largely invisible to whites, that characterized the African-American experience. Perhaps surprising to white readers, Brady offers a different perspective on segregation. Many of us share memories that center around the African-American struggle for equality and access. Brady shows that, for all its ills, segregation gave black businesses an opportunity to flourish within their own community and African-American children had classroom experiences less marred by racism. This noted, pictures showing black children gazing through the fence of a "whites-only" playground provide a haunting reminder that segregation carried a high price for blacks.

This album of African Americans in Tampa will help round out existing Tampa histories which have often overlooked or ignored the accomplishments of the black community. Brady’s work should serve as a reminder to researchers interested in Tampa that the African-American community deserves a place in any history of the city. If the vitality and scope of African-American contributions to Tampa’s history surprise some, they serve notice that our view of history is shaped by whom we include - or exclude - as contributors. It is time we more fully acknowledged African-American contributions to Tampa’s development. Since the beginning of the city’s history, blacks and whites worked along side each other to build the community. Hopefully, Brady’s work will inspire increased efforts to more completely document the role of African Americans in Tampa.

Kathleen S. Howe