1981

The 'Road of Remembrance' is 60 Years Old

Hampton Dunn

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune/vol7/iss1/17

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sunland Tribune by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.
SOLEMN CEREMONIES marked the dedication by the Rotary Club of Tampa of Memorial Highway at the corner of Howard Avenue and Grand Central Avenue (now Kennedy Boulevard) on January 2, honoring the Hillsborough County men who lost their lives in World War I.

-- Photo by C. VERNE KLINTWORTH
THE MEMORIAL MONUMENT at Howard Avenue and Grand Central Avenue (now Kennedy Boulevard) was still new when this photo was taken probably in the late 1920s. The Memorial Highway project was constructed in 1921. This photo shows a modest amount of traffic looking east on Grand Central from the monument. Monument Pharmacy, for many years a landmark at the intersection is shown at right. Note traffic sign warning the speed limit was 20 miles per hour. The monument at this point later became a traffic hazard and was often hit by speeding motorists.

-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION

THE ‘ROAD OF REMEMBRANCE’ IS 60 YEARS OLD

By HAMPTON DUNN

This year, 1981, marks the 60th anniversary of the dedication of Memorial Highway - Hillsborough County’s enduring "Road of Remembrance" now honoring veterans of two World Wars.
Chopped up by new expressways and expansion of Tampa International Airport and other modern projects, nevertheless there still remains a large portion of the old Memorial Drive, and even some of the lovely water oaks that were planted as part of the beautification back in 1921 are standing.

When the 15-foot "superhighway" was dedicated on January 2, 1921, a message was read from the president of the American Forestry Association declaring, "May these trees you dedicated on the first Road of Remembrance in the United States live as long as the memory of the 106 you so finely honor."

105 MEN, ONE WOMAN

The figure referred to was the number of A SUNDAY OUTING on Memorial Highway near Tampa was a popular event in the early 1920s. The highway was new and young couples parked along the way to pick oleanders and to sit on the bridge rails for picture-taking. The guys wore straw hats or caps and the gals all had on hats and long dresses.

-Photo from HAMPTON DUNN COLLECTION
Hillsborough County soldiers who lost their lives in World War 1. Actually, there were 105 men and one woman who made the supreme sacrifice in that conflict.

Both the highway and its beautification were sponsored by the Rotary Club of Tampa. The project was conceived by James G. Yeats, a Rotarian and then Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners. Jack Hedrick, a County engineer and also a Rotarian, laid out the highway, a planned asphalt ribbon that replaced a shell road from Howard Avenue, then the City limits, on Grand Central Avenue (now Kennedy Boulevard) to the Pinellas County line. The road was 131/2 miles long and cost $870,000, and when opened was considered one of the finest highways in all of Florida. The Tampa Rotarians spent $7,500 for beautification, lining both sides with water oaks and oleanders of many colors.

**AUGUST FOX, SCULPTOR**

There were two monuments, identical in design, and sculpted of marble and granite, which marked the east and west terminals. Each shaft was inscribed with the names of the dead Hillsborough heroes. The monuments were designed by yet another Rotarian, Ralph Martin.

ONE OF TWO SHAFTS in the Memorial Highway project stands proudly today at a triangular park on State Road 60 just off Kennedy Boulevard. The 12 mileposts which originally were spaced along the highway between Howard Avenue and the Pinellas County line encircle this monument which originally was erected at the county line. Another monument, which stood at Howard Avenue, now is located in front of the American Legion Cemetery on Kennedy Boulevard at Dale Mabry. Names of the 106 Hillsborough County veterans who lost their lives in WWI are engraved in plates on the milestones, as well as being etched on the base of the monuments.

-Photo by HAMPTON DUNN
The beautiful memorials were carved in the plant of Turner Marble & Granite Company. The sculptor was August R. Fox and this was one of several "special" jobs he did. Others included carving the Greek coins on the Exchange National Building and the decorations on the Scottish Rite Temple on Kennedy Blvd.

Fox was a native of Carrara, Italy, where the fine Carrara marble is quarried. He was born in 1875 and came with his family to the States when he was a young boy. They settled in Vermont where his father, Adrian Fox, worked in the granite quarries and young August learned the trade. (The Italian family name is "Volpei," which is "Fox" in English. August Fox had his name legally changed after he came to Tampa in the early part of this century.) His daughter, Mrs. Flora Fox Antinori, lives at 3019 Emerson Street, and recalls how proud her father was of his sculpture and always pointed with pride to it when the family drove by the monuments on Sunday afternoon outings. Mrs. Antinori is the widow of Ignazio Antinori, who also worked at Turner Marble and was called "Benny" by his co-workers. Sculptor Fox died in 1947.

**TRAFFIC HAZARD**

One monument stood for years in the center of the intersection of Howard and Grand Central. As World War II neared, the centerpiece became somewhat of a traffic hazard as automobiles frequently were driven into it. So in 1940 the shaft was moved to what is now the intersection of Dale Mabry Highway and Kennedy Boulevard. In 1958, when the intersection was widened, the monument was moved within the American Legion Cemetery, a short distance away.

The monument originally placed at the Pinellas County line at Oldsmar, was moved in 1963 to a park in a triangle on Memorial Highway just north of Kennedy Boulevard, as State Road 60 starts for Clearwater.

In the little triangle park also are placed the 12 mileposts that were set out by the Rotary Club in 1928. Each contained bronze scrolls on which several names of the veterans were etched.

**REDEDICATED AFTER WWII**

Memorial Highway was rededicated in June, 1948, to veterans of both World War I and II by the Rotary Club.

As the highway was widened and improved through the years, many of the old trees had to be sacrificed. From time to time they had been bumped by colliding automobiles.

Six decades have passed since that exciting day in 1921 when colorful ceremonies marked the opening of Memorial Highway and the monuments were dedicated. The inscription on the memorials was written by Ed Lambright, a past president of the Rotary Club and for many years Editor of The Tampa Tribune. It read:

"This Memorial Highway is reverently dedicated as a Road of Remembrance to those who gave their lives for Liberty in the World War, 1917-18, by the people of Tampa and Hillsborough County through the Tampa Rotary Club."