A Look At Some of Tampa's Cigar Factories Inside and Out

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HavaTampa Cigar Company
HAVATAMPA CIGAR CO., 2007 21st St., 1930
The most notable change in Havatampa Cigar Co. by Jan. 1, 1930, was in the size of the sales force—from about four in 1920 to about 40 in 1930. In center of picture on the front row with light-colored hat in hand is Ell Witt. Also on front row, fifth from left, is D. H. Woodbery (colloquial). On back row fifth from the right is T. W. McElvy. Back row on right end is W. Van Dyke and next to him is John Andrews.
By the turn of the century there had been many cigar manufacturers lured to Tampa as the result of wide publicity and the success of several large firms which had either started here or had moved here during the period 1885-1900. In the latter year there were 147,848,000 cigars made in Tampa and by 1905 production had increased to 220,430,000. (There were 410,000,000 cigars produced in Tampa in 1981). Many other factories continued to locate here, both new companies and a number from other cities.

Cigar production in 1919 had increased to close to 423,000,000. In 1920 the industry received a real jolt - the cigar makers strike. This upset the industry and dropped production to, 266,000,000 for the year. During this strike many new workers were brought into some of the factories and taught the skill of cigar making. Heretofore the workers were long time cigar makers, or members of their families and were mostly mates. This seemed to be a turning point in the makeup of the work force. Many females were taught the art and many men and women from other parts of Florida and from Georgia came to Tampa seeking jobs.

Production started climbing in 1923 and by 1929 reached a high of slightly more than 500,000,000. Things were going too well. The boom was on. Then suddenly B A N G!! It burst and dropped Tampa’s production to 292,000,000 in 1933. Later business did
take a turn for the better but not before a number of Tampa’s factories had folded. The next 30 years it was up and down with the increases coming out on top. In 1965, the year following the Surgeon General’s Report, Tampa’s factories produced approximately 750,000,000 cigars. This quantity was manufactured by the estimated 26 factories still in operation at the time. The number of factories still in operation in Tampa has decreased even more to the point that there are only about 15 or so.

But let’s turn history back to 1900. The Havana American Company, a member of the great American Tobacco Company Trust, had purchased several of the largest of the old companies, notably the Ybor-Manrara & Co. (formerly V. M. Ybor & Co.) and the Seidenberg & Co. Several photographs taken both inside and outside of these factories along with an explanation of each accompany this article.

There were many, many cigar factories that started after 1900 but as I do not have photographs or information on them I am unable to tell of their history. You will however find a brochure on Corral, Wodiskay Ca. and a series of photographs taken inside and outside the Havatampa Cigar Company which started in business in Tampa in 1902. Both of these companies are still in operation.
Post card view shows building and landscaped garden, taken showing the north side and west end of structure. The factory faced on 20th St. and was bounded by 11th Ave. on the south. Sign on wall advertises "La Flor De Cuba," the firm's best known brand.

Rattan (called wicker back then) furniture and a "bureau " dresser chest of drawers added a homey touch to the executive Office of Joe Arrango at Seidenberg & Co., 2205 20th St., in circa. 1895.
THE HOME OF JOE ARRANGO ON 12TH AVE.
The home of Joe Arrango is seen from the Seidenberg building looking directly north across 12th Avenue. The street car is on 12th Ave. between 20th and 21st Sts. and is marked C.E.L. & P.R.R. Co. (Consumer Electric Light & Power Rail Road Co.).

HAND ROLLING CIGARS AT HAVATAMPA
This photograph, taken in 1922, shows skilled cigar makers rolling the smokes by hand
WPA USED OLD FACTORY IN DEPRESSION
At the turn of the century, The Havana-American Co. purchased the Seidenberg Co. and operated it for a number of years, later closing it. During the 1930s, when this picture was made, the building was occupied by a sewing room of the Works Progress Administration (IVPA). The building at 2205 20th St. is shown with curtains in the windows of all three floors!

HAVATAMPA HOME’ FOR 52 YEARS
This building at 2007 21st St. was purchased from E. Regensburg & Sons. It was the home of Havatampa for 52 years. The photo was made in May, 1920-look at those sporty Fords!
BERING is the choice of GOOD cigar Smokers everywhere because it contains only the choicest Havana tobaccos, grown and matured in the gentle climate of tropical Cuba, properly aged and cured to mildness, skillfully blended and fashioned by hand into matchless perfection by skilled artisans, in the BERING factory at Tampa, Florida. Into every BERING Cigar go years of scientific production and pride of craftsmanship that for more than thirty years have produced America's finest ALL-HAVANA Cigar, the matchless BERING. Men who have tried them never change to another brand. This their finest tribute to BERING.

Since 1905, Our Motto…
"Only the Finest Shall Enter Here"

CORRAL, WODISKA Y CA.
Makers of Fine Havana Cigars
TAMPA, FLORIDA

SINCE 1905, when Corral, Wodiska y Ca. started manufacturing fine Havana Cigars, an invisible motto has stood sentinel at the doorway to factory and storeroom, "Only the Finest Shall Enter Here" ever watchful that ONLY the finest Havana tobaccos ever enter its storerooms and ONLY the finest cigar makers are employed. The never changing high quality and character of the BERING Mild Havana Cigar today stand as a tribute to those who so diligently guarded the reputation of BERING QUALITY these many years.

'ONLY THE FINEST SHALL ENTER HERE'

This old brochure of Corral, Wodiska y Ca. shows views around the plant and spotlights the firm's slogan.
ANOTHER SCENE OF WORKING CIGAR MAKING
This is another view of the cigar makers hand rolling their product at Havatampa Cigar Co., 2007 21st St., circa 1922. A poster on the wall advertising the Shrine Circus gives the laborers something to look forward to when they’re off.

HAVATAMPA GENERAL OFFICE IN APRIL, 1930
Havatampa employees, starting at left and continuing around the room, are Alma Glover, R. R. (“Railroad”) White, Mrs. Hawkins, Charlie Holmes, E. D. (“Chief”) Fisher, and standing, Joe Verdyke, one of the three original partners of the firm.
YBOR FACTORY LABEL ROOM CIRCA 1904
J. A. Dalton works alone in the label room of the V. M. Ybor factory in 1904.

PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCH ON CIGAR BOXES
Pasting the outside seal and Internal Revenue stamp on boxes of cigars at Havatampa in the late 1920s are foreground, George Hammond, A. C. "Tip" Frink and Lola Sanches; background, Loren Jones and Mr. Graham.
SELECTING WRAPPER TOBACCO
These Havatampa employees are selecting and counting wrapper tobacco in the late 1920s. The man in the photo is Harry Krasue, foreman.