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FROM THE EDITORS

Disease occasionally shapes the contours of civilization. From the "Black Death" to AIDS, incurable contagion has created panic and affected social patterns. In 1887, Florida was hit by one of the periodic epidemics of yellow fever that ravaged the state’s population. Eirlys Barker traces the reactions of Floridians to the "Sneaky, Cowardly Enemy" by focusing on Tampans’ efforts to deal with this crisis. Her article won the 1985 *Tampa Bay History* Essay Contest.

John S. Otto recreates the days of "Open-Range Cattle-Ranching in South Florida." With few written sources to draw on, he uses a Hardee County rancher to bring alive a bygone, era. Stephen Kerber suggests some other sources for bringing the early years of this state’s history to life in his’ study of the "P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History."

The photographic essay by Milly St. Julien traces the evolution of public education over the past century. The revealing photographs in Part I of this two-part essay suggest that Florida’s educational system has experienced extensive change. One of the most significant changes in higher education in southwest Florida was initiated thirty years ago when the state legislature authorized the establishment of the University of South Florida in Tampa. Mrs. Grace Allen, wife of USF’s first president John Allen, recalls the excitement of those early days of planning and building.

With this issue, *Tampa Bay History* completes its eighth year of publication. Financial conditions, including dramatic increases in printing and mailing costs, have forced some changes. We have always been and will remain a non-profit journal. However, the long-delayed time for an increase in subscription rates has arrived. Renewals and new subscriptions will now cost $15.00 per year.

If *Tampa Bay History* is to continue, readers need to show their support by renewing subscriptions with the recognition that the journal depends on subscribers to survive. The editors have appreciated your collective support and encouragement over the past eight years and look forward to continued cooperation.
Florida’s mild, sub-tropical climate has long received praise as delightful and healthful. However, it also fostered tuberculosis, malaria, and other endemic tropical diseases, for which there was no known cure in the nineteenth century. Periodic visitations of dreaded epidemic diseases added to the health hazard. Indeed, prior to the twentieth century, certain diseases affected the pattern of Florida’s development.

Yellow fever was a particularly feared disease during the last century, for it was a killer with horrible, painful symptoms. Since its cause was unknown, it became mysterious. The variety of symptoms and its unpredictable course added to its mystique. Not until 1901 were yellow fever’s secrets revealed with the discovery that it was transmitted by one species of mosquito, the *Aedes Aegypti*. The actual nature of the microorganism was not fully understood until the 1920s, but after 1901 it was clear that effective mosquito control could eliminate yellow fever in areas where it had been a frequent killer.¹

The Tampa Bay area has always been known for its mosquitoes. Indeed, it was originally part of Mosquito County. In setting up the area’s first permanent fort in November 1823, Colonel John Mercer Brooke received orders to do so before the “sickly season” began in April. Fort Brooke’s early cases of “yellow jack” were sporadic, involving soldiers who were transferred from other cities and garrisons in the South.² Until the late 1850s, the fort and the town of Tampa that grew up around it were not large enough to sustain and fuel the spread of the disease. Despite Tampa’s reputation as a “perfect Arcadia,” being “relatively free from disease,” it experienced some cases in 1839, 1841 and 1849. In 1853, 1858 and 1867, as the town grew, substantial epidemics occurred, with over 200 cases in each year. Nevertheless, yellow fever was regarded as just another hazard of living in the South, and its appearance did not halt the development of Tampa any more than it hampered growth of other cities in the region. Tampa was still more healthful than its main ports of contact, Pensacola, Key West, Havana and New Orleans. However, Tampa increasingly imported the disease from these areas as trade grew.³

Despite a local newspaper’s assurance in May 1871 that “the health throughout this section of country was never better,” a severe outbreak occurred in the fall with forty cases and ten deaths. This epidemic introduced a young local doctor, John P. Wall, to the disease, for he sickened after attending a cabin boy on the *H. M. Cool*, which had arrived from fever-afflicted Cedar Keys. Wall survived, but his wife and infant daughter died. He was later recognized both statewide and nationwide as an authority on yellow fever, and he was the leading physician in Tampa until the 1890s.⁴

By the mid-1880s, Tampa was a far different town than the settlement described by Silvia Sunshine only a few years earlier as “the remains of Tampa.”⁵ As a result of the arrival of the cigar industry, Tampa was fast becoming a full-fledged city. However, with an expanded
A graphic presentation of the scourge of “Yellow Jack” pulling down Florida disrupting trade, as “Columbia” comes to the rescue. Drawing by Matt Morgan from *Leslie’s Illustrated Magazine*, 1873.

Photograph courtesy of the Florida State Archives.
population and increased outside contact came an epidemic which took Tampans by surprise. The town had been free of yellow fever since 1871, and citizens had grown accustomed to hearing doctors, editors and other public figures minimize the possibility of future epidemics. It was almost inconceivable that economic advancement—that sign of God’s favor to this Protestant community—was not a harbinger of continuing prosperity. The complacency of Tampa’s citizens led many to denounce and abuse those that first declared that yellow fever had returned to the town in 1887.

In May 1887, the news reached Tampa that fever had broken out at Key West. As the number of cases increased there, a panic enveloped Tampa. The city imposed a prohibitive quarantine against persons, baggage and freight, except for tobacco and the U.S. mail, originating in Key West and Havana. By June 9, the Hillsborough County board of health had set up a quarantine camp at Ballast Point. Passengers from Key West and Havana were detained there for fifteen days. The Plant Investment Company, in a progressive yet pragmatic, effort to protect both its extensive investment in the town's future and its profitable steamship connections, paid for the tents, cots and provisions.

However, leading citizens considered it an over-reaction to the situation when Jacksonville inflicted a quarantine on all people from Tampa. This action was protested by the editor of the Tampa Weekly Journal, Harvey Cooper, who claimed that it hurt the “Hotel Interest.” Cooper seemed especially concerned about Henry Plant’s plans for building a magnificent hotel at Tampa to attract thousands of tourists—and millions of dollars—every winter. In defense of this vision, Cooper sarcastically reported that the city was no longer in a state of panic, and “the people are laughing at their own foolishness...Only one death in Tampa since—the Lord only knows when, and that occurred last Sunday. It was a mule. It would be dangerous for Jacksonville to lift their quarantine against Tampa yet awhile.”
Nevertheless, Tampa continued to deal with the effects of the Key West epidemic. The U.S. Marine Hospital Service established a refugee station on Egmont Key early in July 1887. By July 11, twenty refugees had arrived from Key West as a part of the “depopulating” process. This term described a program in which non-immunes—persons who were not natives of an endemic area and, therefore, had never been in contact with the disease—were evacuated from infected cities. This tactic had long been the army’s response to yellow fever, but was obviously not as easy to accomplish in a large city, especially one with very few immunes.

As later reported by Dr. Wall, a local black attendant working at the Egmont station took sick and other cases ensued. One death occurred among thirty or so individuals detained there in August. Rumors surrounding this fatality fed the local panic, and to further heighten the alarm, smallpox broke out in Cuba. However, Tampa was spared the catastrophe of a double epidemic.  

Despite the threat, public officials remained confident that yellow fever would pass them by once more. The local correspondent for Jacksonville’s *Florida Times-Union* reported in September that “business is beginning to pick up and the indications are that our merchants will do a lively business this fall.” Key West’s epidemic was on the decline by mid-August, but Dr. Wall believed that, as a result, “more or less clandestine communication between Key West and Tampa and other points on the Gulf Coast” had begun. Wall thought that the existence of a
quarantine had paradoxically triggered this illegal traffic, and that it was this traffic, not the legitimate trade by way of Plant’s steamers, which was the source of the infection. Wall believed thePlant Line had taken enough precautions so that it was in no way responsible for the epidemic. Its ships did not remain in Havana at night during quarantine season; baggage and freight were fumigated with sulphur on board the ships; and the line excluded all suspect individuals and their goods.¹¹

Dr. Wall was always as much a business booster as a physician, and he was extremely competent in both roles. He was conscious that this period was crucial to Tampa’s development. Cigar manufacturer Vicente Martinez Ybor’s recent investment in the area was obviously profitable, and the Plant steamers had been making twice-weekly runs between Tampa and Havana through Key West since February 1886. They had already brought some two thousand Cubans to settle in Ybor City.

Charlie Turk of Ybor City had the dubious distinction of being the first person in Tampa to die of “yellow jack” in 1887. An alleged fruit smuggler, he managed a barber shop.¹² His family contended that he had contracted the disease by using a blanket belonging to an Italian fruit dealer named Pepe. Pepe, it was said, had fallen ill with strange symptoms, but had recovered and mysteriously disappeared.¹³ While Turk was still lying ill in Ybor City, the first case within Tampa proper occurred on September 16, when a second Italian fruit dealer, Louis Moses, took sick. Other Italian traders soon followed. Possibly six Italians contracted yellow fever, as did a few of their American customers.

Dr. Wall was out of town when Turk and Moses had become sick. When the physician returned on the twenty-fifth, the town was seething with rumors of the scourge’s presence. Wall immediately suspected the worst. By September 29, Wall had seen five suspicious cases, including two that other physicians had diagnosed as bilious remittent fever. However, he deemed it “prudent to await further developments,” for “it is a very serious thing to announce the presence of yellow fever.” Of the suspicious cases in September, only Turk’s had been fatal which suggested that dengue—a non-fatal disease with symptoms similar to yellow fever—might have been the cause. Therefore, Wall continued to observe possible cases, and he did not make the fateful declaration until all his doubts had disappeared.

That point was reached on October 4, by which time he had seen a total of seven cases. Two patients had died, and albumin in the urine—a typical symptom of yellow fever—was present in two other cases. Summoning the board of health, Wall announced his diagnosis. He noted that this was received “with many objections, on the part of the other members, on the ground that the city was very healthy, hardly anybody was sick, and that very few deaths had occurred, certainly not as many as might be expected in so large a population.” Wall conceded that there was no epidemic yet, but he hoped to avoid one by depopulating the city and by urging all non-immunes to flee. He wanted this implemented before the news leaked out by wire, so that those leaving would not be denied refuge everywhere they went.¹⁴

In the end, Wall prevailed. On October 5, he began spreading the news to local citizens, while the board of health went beyond his suggestions and declared that epidemic proportions had already been reached. A few of Tampa’s citizens had fled even before this date. On October 4, a
Jacksonville paper reported that a refugee from Tampa died at Palatka and around one hundred of Palatka’s citizens had, in turn, fled from that City. Fear, it seems, was as contagious as yellow fever.

Roby McFarlan, a Tampa resident, recorded the developing crisis in her diary. On June 1, she noted that there was a “great scare of yellow fever.” From June to September 21, she reported only her daily housekeeping activities, such as “clean kitchen, scald roaches,” but she mentioned that “mosquitoes [were] bad.” On September 21, however, she wrote that a “man died of yellow fever at Ybor City.” Five days later she reported another death in Ybor City. For October 5, her entry read: “Beautiful day, sunshine hot. We work, get dinner, then a report of yellow fever in town. Mr. McKenzie sick, he died this eve, people scared.” The following day, she wrote that Mr. Sprinkle had died and was “buried soon. People moving out of town. . .Nania Hill sick with fever, a great many sick with the fever.” On October 7, Roby saw Dr. Wall who told her “the fever was yellow fever, and advised all the people to get out of town.” She added, “No more deaths as yet, a great many sick.”

The McFarlan family took Wall’s advice and stayed with friends eight miles from Tampa. The family had still not returned to their home when Roby ended her diary in April 1888. Her husband visited Tampa at intervals, but always during the day, as the board of health advised. Roby continued to record the number of cases as they were reported to her. Her diary makes it clear that ordinary citizens were convinced from the outset that the disease was yellow fever, and they were quite prepared to flee. Unlike the city fathers, they had no economic motive for hiding the epidemic’s presence. Their lives and good health were more important to them than the continued growth of the city.

A more laconic account of these events was kept in the diary of a local farmer, James H. Metcalf, who lived just north of Tampa. On October 5, 1887, he reported: “Yellow fever panic in town. A.B. McKenzie died.” Three days later he wrote: “Went to Tampa with Charlie Shockley. Yellow fever plenty.” On November 4, Metcalf casually mentioned the subsequent death of his friend, Shockley, without any personal comment.

On October 6, 1887, the Tampa Journal admitted that panic gripped the city. “There is no use denying the fact that the people of Tampa are panic stricken,” the Journal observed. “Whether our fears are well-founded remains to be determined.” The newspaper mentioned the “general and exciting exodus” and reported that scores of people had left on the northbound train the previous evening. However, the Journal tried to minimize the threat by stating “the fact that we are having an epidemic of Dengue fever.” Conceding that “three cases of an aggravated type. . .have proved fatal,” the paper declared that “many people have jumped to the conclusion that we have Yellow fever.”

On October 8, Tampa’s epidemic made the front page of the New York Times. Noting the “wild excitement” in the city, the Times did not doubt that the disease was yellow fever. “The fever seems to have supplanted reason, no one seemingly knowing what treatment to adopt, and
Tampa’s epidemic makes headline news in New York City.
everyone, even physicians, seeking safety in flight,” the Times reported. “The city is now virtually deserted... The panic was so great, that, in many instances, thousands of dollars worth of property was left unprotected.”

The depopulation tactics used by Wall and the county board of health became a matter of controversy. Almost immediately, Jacksonville’s Times-Union attacked officials who “deliberately betrayed their trust,” so that the “people of Tampa are stampeded all over the country from the Mississippi River to New York.” The paper’s editor called for “a rigid investigation” to see if the stampede was the result of “a pardonable mistake, or an inexcusable blunder, or worse.”

Dr. Wall contended that refugees “magnified the true condition of things in Tampa.” He also noted those who had stayed behind abused him for declaring the disease’s presence, especially since none of the other local doctors initially concurred with him. Wall persuaded the mayor, George B. Sparkman, to send a request for aid to the U.S. Marine Hospital at Key West. On hearing the news, Dr. Joseph Y. Porter, the health officer for the city of Key West, came to Tampa to aid Wall. Porter had extensive experience with the disease, having suffered from it himself in 1867. He also brought trained yellow fever nurses, both male and female, with him and shared Wall’s popular abuse when he concurred with Wall’s diagnosis. By October 14, Porter and Wall agreed that the disease was yellow fever, but they found it difficult to estimate the number of cases. Dr. Leslie Weedon, one of Tampa’s recent arrivals, thought that there were already a hundred cases, and Wall believed there were at least fifty.

Meanwhile, Tampa’s city council had taken steps to deal with the mounting crisis. On October 6, it appointed an executive committee to take charge of affairs and to “fill any vacancies that might occur.” This committee, composed of council members Silas L. Biglow, William B. Henderson and Frederick M. Meyer, soon provided “means to meet urgent sanitary and other expenses.” The committee appropriated $500 for this work and appointed Captain F.W. Edmonds as Sanitary Inspector. The city council also set up a relief committee, comprised of J.W. Giddens, T.W. Givens and the city clerk, Lamont Bailey, to aid the “destitute poor.” The committee coordinated its work with a volunteer group, the Citizens Relief Committee, which had been created “for the purpose of relieving the wants of the sick and destitute during the prevalence of Yellow Fever.” The Relief Committee soon became the only aid organization when the city’s official committee merged with it.

Despite these efforts, city officials came under attack. “Tampa appears to have a fine set of city officials,” the Times-Union observed sarcastically. “Nearly all of them skipped in the first stampede, and Dr. Wall says that in spite of infection being all over the place, the city authorities are doing nothing.” Two days later, the Jacksonville paper reported there was “no concert of actions between the board of health, the town council, and the city’s committee.” This type of confusion was common in nineteenth-century communities afflicted by epidemic diseases. Too often, no civic agency had the power or funding to act decisively, and the flight, sickness or death of local officials added to the general general confusion. Officials “who had shown the white feather” by mid-October included Mayor Sparkman, County Judge C.E. Harrison, W.B. Henderson, H.L. Knight and J.E. Mitchell. However, others such as I.S. Giddens and Lamont Bailey remained at their posts. Their actions were all the more heroic in view of the fact that they
Turning back refugees fleeing a Florida community struck by yellow fever.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.
and members of their families contracted the disease. Mayor Sparkman angrily answered the charges against him as “a falsehood from beginning to end,” claiming he returned to town by day. Sparkman admitted that five city officials had fled, but he emphasized that six had remained.  

Newspapers dealt in different ways with the epidemic. The *Tribune* reported the total number of deaths. The *Tampa Journal* did not print specific figures and mentioned only the names of the dead or stricken if they were members of the local elite. Its editor was more interested in reporting positive action, such as the erection of a “comfortable hospital building,” costing $500, to take charge of single men and others without family. However, there was no more talk of dengue. Jacksonville’s *Times-Union* was free to be more precise, and it published the official reports of the board of health, as did the *Fort Myers Press*.  

By Oct. 20, even the *Journal* conceded that an epidemic of yellow fever was under way. Business in Tampa had virtually stopped, although Hugh Macfarlane was later commended for having kept his store open and charging fair prices.

Even in the darkest days of the sickness, the *Journal’s* editor remained optimistic about Tampa’s future. He thought it would “require more than a mild epidemic, like the one through which we are now passing, to blot Tampa from the face of the earth and to blight its prospects for becoming one of the great cities of Florida and the South.” Tampa’s cigar factories did not close, and tobacco was exempted from the list of articles that had to be quarantined and fumigated. Henry Plant announced that he was going ahead with his plans for the hotel, and building began in what would otherwise have been Tampa’s gravest hour. Plant even suggested that if the state legislature held a special session to standardize quarantine regulations throughout Florida, he would pay for the cost of that session. No action was taken, however, since the regulations did not affect many prominent businessmen in the northern part of the state and the matter was not regarded as urgent outside the Tampa Bay area.

Kittie Lea, whose account of this period was written decades later, recalled that both Dr. Wall and Dr. Porter treated the sick in her home. Mrs. Lea herself was immune, as she had had the fever in Mobile seventeen years earlier. Her husband, Henry, and her son, Algernon, contracted the disease in 1887, but both survived. The youngest son, Willie, experienced very mild symptoms in the summer of 1888. Mrs. Lea recorded that the disease “would spread like a forest fire, blaze up, skip or take one or two in a thinly settled place and break out in unexpected spots, taking entire families, then die down for a few days, when we would hear of another case, so the dread of it never left us. As long as there was material to feed the horrible disease it would last.”

The epidemic continued to take its toll. By October 24, Roby McFarlan, in her country retreat, had “heard there had been 80 cases of yellow fever.” Four days later she wrote of “Forty-eight deaths.” On October 27, there were nineteen patients in the hospital. Other than Wall, all the Tampa doctors were stricken with the fever. The *Journal* mentioned on the 27th that Dr. Weedon was recovering, and Roby McFarlan noted that “Dr. Mitchel died.”

The *Journal* advertised for nurses, stating that they would be paid by the Citizens Relief Committee, of which Hugh MacFarlane had become head by the end of October. The Relief
Committee’s minutes recorded a list of nurses, how much they were paid, and where they were placed. Both males and females, white and black, were used. Some nurses received more than others. Sarah Scott, white, received three dollars an hour, while other, probably black, nurses, like Drusilla Jackson, received only half that amount. Patients who could afford to pay for the service of such nurses were expected to do so, but the Relief Committee paid for those without means. The *Journal* noted on November 3 that Relief Committee member Isaac Howard was responsible “to the colored people.” The committee furnished bread and wood to those in need. The unemployed could receive provisions by cleaning the streets. As a result, the *Journal* believed that the city “will be so clean in a few more days that the buzzards will have to apply to the Relief Committee.”

One of the sadder events was the death of nineteen-year-old William Cline on November 26. He had served on the Relief Committee until stricken, and the *Journal* praised him as a hero and true Christian. For seven long weeks he had helped the victims of the disease, giving “freely of his own funds” to those in need. The family gravestone at Oaklawn Cemetery touchingly identified him as “Willie Cline.”
On November 20, a light frost occurred. Most citizens took this as heralding the end of the epidemic, and refugees began to return. The *Journal*, however, warned on November 24 that “THIS WILL NOT DO.” Following the cautious path, the city council passed an ordinance the same week to prohibit the refugees’ return until the county board of health declared the city safe. Still, things were improving. The emergency hospital closed on December 1, and Dr. Porter made preparations to leave. On December 19, the city council repealed its ban on returning refugees, but without the concurrence of the county board of health, which by this time practically consisted of Dr. Wall alone. Wall stated later that it was too soon for refugees to return because cases still existed and fatalities were occurring on the outskirts of Tampa. He later recorded that there was a considerable number of cases among those who “came rushing back into town” in December. By the end of the month, the *Journal* declared that “Tampa is blooming again.” This opinion was not universal, however. A week later, Bartow established a quarantine against Tampa. “If true,” said the *Journal*, “our neighbor must be hard run for business, as such an action at this time is exceedingly small. Who wants to go to Bartow anyway?”

Early in January 1888, the Journal mentioned “three or four” cases of sickness in town, but the paper still tried to calm fears and advised refugees to come home. By the second week of the
month, immigrants were again coming from Havana and Key West. Over one hundred cigarmakers arrived on the Plant steamer Olivette on January 12, to work in a new factory in Ybor City. The Board of Trade also resumed its meetings by this date as did the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Schools reopened during January. The last fatality in the Relief Committee records occurred on January 11, 1888. In all, the committee recorded ninety-five deaths, but yellow fever had probably caused many other fatalities which were attributed to dengue in the first few weeks.

Dr. Wall made it clear that the epidemic was indeed over, but sporadic cases continued around Tampa throughout the late winter and early spring of 1888. He saw stricken patients throughout January, and Dr. Jackson confirmed a fatality on January 30. A case seen by Wall in April 1888 clearly reinforced his belief about the disease’s means of transmission. The patient lived on the outskirts of town and was a member of a family that had been stricken at the height of the epidemic. Wall reported that the family was poor, living in a house shaded from the sun, “and nothing had been done in the way of disinfecting after the epidemic.” Wall had mattresses destroyed and linens disinfected, and the inhabitants moved away temporarily. He regarded these actions as sufficient to prevent further spread of the disease. He emphasized disinfection and fumigation of clothing throughout his report.

If Wall had earlier thought that the disease was transmitted by mosquitoes, he had apparently abandoned that theory by 1887. Towards the end of his report, Wall noted that an 1888 article in the Journal of the American Medical Association “pretty fully express[es] my view” on the subject of the disease. The article reflected the standard medical position that miasma, or contingent contagion in the atmosphere, carried the disease in a certain locality. As it was atmospheric, non-intercourse could not work, and to attempt quarantine with its resultant disruption of commerce “would be a greater misfortune than yellow fever.” Wall had already declared that quarantine was “an absurdity,” because the disease was localized and to keep non-immunes in an infected area was to let them “die like dumb brutes.” Good sanitation was the only answer.

During 1888, Tampa was the source of epidemics in the neighboring communities of Seffner, Mango, Palmetto, Plant City and Manatee. Dr. Wall believed that Manatee’s outbreak was the source of Tampa’s 1888 cases, but that town had been first infected from Tampa. In October 1887, a six-year-old Manatee girl, Vera Tubbs, and her mother, “whose reputation was not of the best,” visited Tampa. On returning home, Vera became ill. She was regarded as the source of the Manatee outbreak. Wall believed that between October and Christmas, sixty cases with about eight deaths occurred in Manatee.

Adin E. Waterman, a commercial traveler, died at Tampa of yellow fever on July 21, 1888. He had previously visited Manatee, where Wall believed he had contracted the illness. Wall, convinced of the nature of the disease, put two acclimated nurses on the Waterman case and excluded everyone else from the house. On July 16, everyone in the immediate vicinity was removed, the area was disinfected, and guards were posted to keep people away from the area. After Waterman’s death, the body was hurriedly wrapped in a sheet doused with strong mercuric chloride, a disinfectant, and buried in a metal coffin. Residents in the house where he died were
watched for symptoms, but neither they, nor other known contacts, came down with the disease. 47

Plant City, a new town of around three hundred persons that had sprung up on the South Florida Railroad, was hard hit by yellow fever in 1887-88. It had been taken there in October 1887 by refugees from Tampa, which lay just twenty-two miles away. Ten cases occurred at a hotel where some refugees were staying. The attending physician called it dengue, and when Porter and Wall visited the city and diagnosed yellow fever, the response was one of outrage. According to Wall, “nothing was done to stamp out or prevent the spread of the disease.” The number of cases therefore increased steadily through December and January, while Tampa’s epidemic waned. Dr. Robert D. Murray of the U.S. Marine Hospital Service visited Plant city in March and confirmed Porter and Wall’s opinion. He then oversaw attempts to clean up the town, but the disease lingered on. On April 24, the county board of health met at Plant City, and, at last, actively tried to get rid of the disease. Over $1,500 worth of bedding and $500 worth of disinfectants were used in the thorough cleansing of the town. The number of cases seemed on the decline in March, but by July had assumed “an epidemic form.” The Board of Health then took stringent quarantine action. Plant City, to its displeasure, was totally cut off from the world. A camp was set up for unacclimated persons with the Marine Hospital Service placed in charge of operations. It fed the destitute, cared for the sick and paid the guards who were stationed around the town to prevent anyone from entering or leaving. From October 1887 to August 1888, there were almost two hundred cases in the area, with at least twenty-three deaths. 48

After Waterman’s death, Wall believed that all possible precautions had been taken to prevent the spread of the disease in Tampa. No further cases occurred in the city until August 6, 1888. However, a “man named McCormick, a saloonkeeper and otherwise disreputable person,” left Tampa on July 27 for Jacksonville. Just as Charlie Turk was held responsible for Tampa’s 1887 epidemic, Richard D. McCormick was blamed for the epidemic that savaged Jacksonville in 1888. Wall believed that McCormick contracted the disease in Plant City, where he had gone in violation of a quarantine. When McCormick became sick, he feared that Wall would deduce that he had breached quarantine lines. “That was the reason why he went to Jacksonville when he was taken sick,” Wall reported. 49

McCormick’s case was the first authenticated case of yellow fever in Jacksonville in 1888. He was reported sick on July 28. 50 On August 11, an article in the New York Times tried to “unravel” McCormick’s tale. It reported that he had “forced his way” into Plant City, was sick on his return to Tampa, and then had taken the sleeper to Jacksonville. He had checked into a hotel, and was later reported as a suspicious case of sickness to the president of the local board of health, Dr. Neall Mitchell. Once McCormick’s illness was diagnosed as yellow fever, “he was promptly sent to the pest house” at Sands Hills. The Times declared that “the man appears to have willfully endangered the whole state,” and the panic resulting from the news of McCormick’s illness led to the burning of the Mayflower Hotel where he had first spent the night in Jacksonville. 51

The city then declared that “all persons arriving here from Tampa, Plant City and Manatee, will be arrested at the depot and sent to Sand Hills.” 52 Even these actions did not curb the disease. As early as August 14, there were twenty-five cases and four deaths. Business was paralyzed, and editors added to the panic, reporting that out-of-work blacks “gather in knots in the streets and it
is feared will soon begin to plunder and pillage hundreds of unoccupied houses in the City." Though McCormick’s illness was declared to be the lone case by the board of health, by August 12, massive disinfecting efforts were under way, and the streets were covered with lime and bichloride of mercury. Ammunition was fired on the theory that this would knock out and kill, or “concuss,” the microbes; and every night, the air was filled with fumes as barrels of tar were burned. Before this epidemic ran its course, there were over five thousand cases and at least 427 deaths in the city of thirteen thousand. 54

The Tampa Journal’s initial reaction to the news that McCormick had taken yellow fever to Jacksonville was one of incredulity. McCormick resided next door to editor Harvey Cooper, “in which vicinity there has been no sickness of any kind.” Cooper stated categorically that there was not “a single case of the fever in Florida, let alone in Tampa.” There had been a fatal case at Manatee, the editor conceded, but no more signs of the disease after that. 55 By August 10, he reported that news from Jacksonville was “not encouraging,” but he lectured: “People here are too ready to believe mere rumors and reports that get into circulation in the counties and towns and cities, and especially those that may come from other places. Before believing be sure that your information is reliable.” 56

By August 15, the New York Times reported that “there are suspicious cases” in Tampa, three of them in the house where Waterman had died in July. 57 Wall’s report mentioned that cases occurred in the general vicinity after August 6, and that by August 12, it was “epidemic all over the city.” The first few cases were fatal, but those following were “a remarkably mild type,” so much so that some physicians maintained that they were all cases of dengue, not “yellow jack.” 58 Wall conceded that there were some cases of dengue; however, he noted that use of the drug antipyrin to aid fever victims often led to a rosy-colored rash resembling a symptom of dengue.

By August 16, the New York Times had discovered that “it is quite probable that the case of McCormick...was not the first case in Jacksonville,” for Dr. Guiteras of the Marine Hospital Service believed that some of the cases of a strange disease diagnosed as “society fever” in the spring had actually been cases of yellow fever. 59 The disease spread to other cities in Florida in September. On September 17, Cooper warned his fellow Tampans that “there are some stubborn facts to face...business is prostrated...the world is quarantined against us and looks upon our city as a menace to the country. A bug bear though it is, and no doubt exists more in fancy than in reality, yet, for all practical effect, we have the yellow fever.” 60 Cooper believed the cause was insufficient sanitary precautions, and he continued to criticize the conduct of both Wall and the county board of health as a whole. Despite Cooper’s initial reluctance to admit yellow fever’s presence, by September 27, he stated: “We do not question the ability of Dr. Wall and the other physicians to diagnose and treat a case of yellow fever, but we do most emphatically charge that the conduct and action of the County Board of Health this summer has been conspicuous only in its display of vacillation, inaction, and a palpable inability to meet the emergency and intelligently handle the situation.” 61 Wall did not answer these claims directly, but on October 4, the Journal reprinted a letter Wall had sent to the West Hillsborough Times, in which he stated that “in spite of the inimical press of Tampa which appears to represent a selfish class...I shall continue to do my duty as an officer of the Board of Health as heretofore.” 62 This was the end of their fracas. By mid-December, the Journal declared that “Tampa is healthy and prosperous.” 63
The *New York Times* had reported a few days earlier that there were no cases of yellow fever within the limits of Tampa or Gainesville. 64

Wall estimated that around one thousand cases and one hundred deaths occurred in Tampa and the immediate vicinity in 1887. An additional three hundred cases and very few—perhaps ten—deaths were recorded in 1888. Altogether, Hillsborough and Manatee counties had over 1,700 cases and at least 150 deaths from yellow fever in 1887-88. 65

These yellow fever epidemics illustrate two responses from communities and individuals not directly involved in the horror of contagion. The first was the instinct for self-preservation, as communities within reach of fever centers often erected barriers manned by armed men to keep refugees away from their towns. In October 1887, the local *Tribune* lamented that “some of the places up the road seem to look at Tampa more in the light of a convict camp than in that of an afflicted sister.” 66 Such “shot-gun quarantine” was imposed by Leesburg and Callahan. Bartow’s actions led to a dispute with the federal government in August 1888 when armed men refused to let a mail train travel through the town because the mail had not been fumigated. These tactics may have worked, however, for Bartow had no cases of yellow fever in 1887 or in 1888. 67

The other response reflected a humanitarian impulse. Cities and individuals generously donated goods, money and even their time and services to aid the stricken. Despite the actions of community leaders, the “ladies of Bartow” contributed $30.25 to the Tampa Relief Committee in November 1887, and Jacksonville and Orlando also sent generous amounts. 68 Volunteer groups, such as the Red Cross, were active, and many individuals volunteered to go to stricken cities to nurse the sick. In addition to Dr. Porter’s nurses, seven others arrived from New Orleans in November 1887, and a physician from Orlando also responded to Tampa’s desperate need for doctors in October 1887, when five local physicians were sick. The Orlando physician himself was later stricken with the disease. 69

One of Dr. Wall’s endearing qualities was that he admitted the shortcomings of his profession. He concluded in 1889 that “the laws governing the origin and spread of yellow fever are no better understood now than they were in the early part of the century, and this is admitted by every man who has had anything practically to do with the disease.” 70 This situation remained unchanged throughout the final years of the century. 71 The disease had to be seen as a national danger before systematic, federally-sponsored research would solve the riddle of “yellow jack” and finally free southern cities of this menace.

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2 The disease has been known by many names, including “yellow jack” and “Bronze John.” George Augustin, *History of Yellow Fever* (New Orleans: Searcy and Pfaff, 1909), 71-82.

3 Other dates, including 1838, 1883 and 1886, have also been mentioned by local Tampa historians Karl Grismer and D.B. McKay, but this historian’s researches have uncovered no official or other kind of contemporary confirmation for those years.


7 *Tampa Weekly Journal*, June 9, 1887.

8 Ibid., June 16, 1887.

9 Wall Report, 61

10 *Florida Times-Union*, September 9, 1887. The local correspondent was Lamont Bailey, Tampa's city clerk.

11 Wall Report, 61.


13 Wall Report, 61.

14 Ibid. 63.

15 *Tampa Weekly Journal*, October 13, 1887; *Florida Times-Union*, October 4, 1887.

16 Roby H. McFarlan, *Diary, Tampa, Florida, January 1, 1887 to April 121, 1888* (Tallahassee: Historic Records Survey, W.P.A., 1937), 24-25, 40-42. McFarlan was a relatively uneducated woman, whose spelling and punctuation are reproduced here.

17 Metcalf diary quoted in *Tampa Tribune*, October 8, 1983.

18 *Tampa Weekly Journal*, October 6, 1887.

19 Ibid., October 11, 1887.

20 *New York Times*, October 8, 1887.

21 *Florida Times-Union*, October 8, 1887, 4.


23 Minutes of the Mayor’s Court, City of Tampa, Vol. 2, p. 23, Tampa City Clerk’s Office.

24 *Tampa Tribune*, October 13, 1887, 3.

25 Minutes of the Citizens Relief Committee, Hillsborough County Historic Commission, Tampa.

26 *Florida Times-Union*, October 13, 1887.

27 Ibid., October 15, 1887.

28 Ibid., October 21, 25, 29, 1887: *Tampa Journal*, November 17, 1887, mentions that Sparkman managed to contract yellow fever, but recovered.
29 *Tampa Tribune*, October 20, 1887; *Fort Myers Press*, October 20, 1887.

30 *Tampa Journal*, October 20, December 22, 1887.

31 Ibid., October 20, 1887.


34 McFarlan, *Diary*, 48, 53; *Tampa Journal*, October 27, 1887.

35 Citizens Committee minutes, October 24, 1887.

36 *Tampa Journal*, November 3, 1887.

37 Ibid., December 1, 1887.

38 Ibid., November 24, 1887; Wall Report, 64-65.

39 *Tampa Journal*, December 22, 1887.

40 Ibid., December 29, 1887.

41 Ibid., January 12, 19, 1888.

42 Wall Report, 65.

43 Ibid., 71, 75, 76.

44 *Florida Times-Union*, December 16, 1887.


46 Wall Report, 73.

47 Ibid., 65-6. the *Tampa Journal* reported that Waterman was a “man of weak constitution,” and did not mention that he had died of yellow fever at this point.

48 Wall Report, 70-73.

49 Ibid., 66-67; however, the *Times-Union* reported that “McCormick, wife and son,” arrived from Tampa July 30, 1888.


52 *Florida Times-Union*, July 30, 1888.


55 *Tampa tribune*, August 3, 1888.

56 Ibid., August 10, 1888.


58 Wall Report, 67-68.


60 *Tampa Journal*, August 17, 1888.

61 Ibid., August 23, 1888; September 22, 1888.

62 Ibid., October 4, 1888.

63 Ibid., December 13, 1888.


65 Wall Report, 69.

66 *Tampa Tribune*, October 1887, clipping from the Pizzo Collection.


68 *Tampa Journal*, November 10, 27, 1887.

69 *Times-Union*, November 3, 11, 1887.

70 Wall Report, 74.

71 After 1888, despite several scares, Tampa’s only real encounter with the fever occurred in 1905, with one non-fatal case. It was easily contained, once the patient was located, by using mosquito control techniques.
OPEN-RANGE CATTLE-RANCHING IN SOUTH FLORIDA: AN ORAL HISTORY

by John S. Otto

From 1842 to 1949, south Florida was the scene of an open-range cattle industry, which supplied beef steers for the Florida and Cuban markets. Cattleowners, or “cowmen,” purchased small homesteads, but they grazed their cattle on the unfenced public lands, or “open-range,” at no cost. Once or twice a year, cowmen gathered up their cattle on the open-range, branded the young calves, and selected beef steers for market. Between the 1850s and the 1940s, they drove steers on the hoof to Florida cities for local butchering or for shipment to Cuba. But in 1949, the State of Florida required stockowners to fence in cattle on their own property, thus ending over a century of open-range ranching in south Florida.¹

Open-range cattle-ranching was more than an industry, it was also a way of life for its practitioners. Yet surprisingly little is known about the cattle-ranching techniques, the working conditions, and the lifeways of the open-range cowmen.² The south Florida cowmen lacked the time or inclination to describe their lives in personal documents such as diaries, letters, or daybooks.³ Though a handful of cowmen did write autobiographies and reminiscences, their recollections of cattle-herding techniques tended to be superficial and incomplete.⁴ Numbers of travelers also described cattle-ranching practices in south Florida, but these biased outsiders often misinterpreted what they saw.⁵

Given these inadequacies in the written record of cattle-ranching life, it is necessary to turn to oral history. Open-range cattle-ranching ended almost forty years ago, but it still exists within the memories of those who once participated in the system. By interviewing older men who worked in open-range cattle-ranching as children, youths, and young adults, it is possible to recover first-hand oral testimonies which describe working and living conditions as far back as the early 1900s. If carefully collected, these oral histories can provide the most detailed and most reliable evidence about cattle-ranching life in south Florida.⁶

During the course of an historical study of cattle-ranching in south Florida, the writer met J.P. Platt, a resident of Hardee County, whose family has been involved in cattle-raising for over a century.⁷ Born in 1921, Mr. Platt worked with his father, Marion Platt (1881-1949), on their open-range cattle operation during the 1930s. Relating his first-hand experiences to the writer in a taped interview, Mr. Platt’s oral history included detailed accounts of cattle-ranching techniques, working conditions, and lifeways during the last years of the open-range in South Florida.⁸

The Platt family owned a 160-acre homestead, but they treated the surrounding public lands as their open-range. On their customary range, the Platts grazed about 1,500 head of “scrub” cattle—the diminutive descendants of stock introduced by the Spanish and British colonists of Florida:⁹
Well, they [scrubs] were. . . not very big. Cows weighed about 400 pounds. The bulls [weighed] about 600 pounds. . . The steers would weigh about 500 pounds. . . Most of them had long horns. They were fairly wild cattle.

Although they were small and skittish, scrub cattle subsisted on forage so sparse that heavier blooded cattle literally walked themselves to death trying to find enough to eat. During the brief winters, when blooded stock required supplemental fodder in order to survive, scrub cattle browsed in the hardwood stands, or “hammocks,” which dotted the South Florida landscape:

Cows loved the hammocks in the winter. Cows would go in the hammocks on windy days to get out of the wind. In winter-time, a cow browses rather than grazes. They’d have to browse on oak leaves. They’d eat [live-oak] acorns. . . A lot of people don’t think cows eat acorns, but they do eat acorns. And, of course, they ate the [Spanish] moss and air plants and things like that.

Hammocks offered browse and shelter, but most of the south Florida range was pine flatwoods—tracts of leached, sandy soils which supported little more than pine trees, saw palmettos, and seasonal grasses. The flatwoods soils were so leached, and the grasses contained
so few minerals, that cattle suffered mineral deficiencies, or “salt sick,” if they grazed too long in the flatwoods. But if burned in late winter, the flatwoods offered nutritious spring grasses for cattle:

You could burn [the flatwoods] and use it. . . . When the grass was real small and fresh, it had a lot of protein in it, and it didn't seem to hurt them. . . . February was best [for burning]. This was because winter was pretty well over by February. You wouldn’t be burning up the protection that you had. The old dead grass [was] protecting what green was down under. . . . But in February, winter would be about over, and it would be a good time to burn. And in the spring, the grass would grow real fast.

In spring, when grass was most abundant, about half of the cows dropped calves. At this time, the Platts gathered up the new-born calves and mother cows and penned them in a fenced field, or “cow-pen,” for protection. The practice of “cow-penning” also fertilized the sandy soils for food crops:

If you wanted to grow a sweet potato patch, you’d fence up three or four acres of land, and then you’d put the cows on that. You separated the calves in the cowpens, so the cows would come back [after grazing in the flatwoods]. . . . They’d come back there
every night, then they’d sleep there at night, and that's the way you got a lot of droppings from the cows [on] the next morning, when they got up. . . .

You’d keep them about two months [in the spring]. It would take about that long [to fertilize the field]. The cows tromping down the dirt would help stamp down the grass and make it easier to plow. . . . Usually, you planted sweet potatoes on the new land, and then after you had that crop, you could plant corn the next year.

The Platts placed these cow-pens on their homestead, “because they owned this land, and they wanted to keep all their possessions. . . .on their land.” In addition to cow-pens, the Platt homestead contained a pine-log house, a log barn, a smokehouse, storage cribs, and an orange grove which they fertilized with cows:

A lot of times, we used to put the cows on the groves. . . .It would be a small grove—a ten-acre grove or something like that. . . .The problem was taking care of it. There wasn’t much equipment. . . . If you could plow out a ten-acre grove with horses, you done pretty good.
By raising oranges as well as cattle, the Platts guarded against price fluctuations in the citrus and beef markets. “Usually, when the oranges were high, the cows were cheap, and then vice versa.” In spite of their orange grove, however, the Platts’ income was derived largely from the scrub cattle which they raised on the open-range.

To aid them in raising cattle for market, the Platts employed five to seven cowboys, or “cow-hunters:”

They called them their cowboys. They didn’t call them ranchhands. . . . But ‘cow-hunter’ was used more than anything else. They’d say he’s a ‘cow-hunter’. . . [Cow-hunters received] their board and thirty dollars a month. . . . [They ate] mostly beans. . . sweet potatoes, biscuits, and white bacon.

Each fall, the Platts and their hired cow-hunters gathered up the range cattle for market. Since these round-ups, or “cattle-hunts,” lasted several weeks, they packed provisions:

On cattle-hunts, where you’d go and hunt cattle, you’d carry saddlebags. In the saddlebags. . . you’d have your white bacon. . . . You’d cook it with a stick—usually a
A tomato can was your coffee boiler, and you’d put some wire in that for bails. You’d hang that on your saddle. . . . [Also], you’d bake up a lot of sweet potatoes. You’d have your sweet potatoes and biscuits and white bacon. . . . And usually you took along some syrup in a . . . whiskey bottle. . . . This was about the diet you’d have, and this would last for about three weeks.

Meeting on the open-range, the cowmen and cow-hunters gathered up the herds, or “bunches,” which ranged within a known territory:

We’d have the bunches named. . . . Like if they were down on ‘Three Mile Gulley,’ you’d call it the ‘Three Mile Gulley Bunch.’ Or, if there was a bunch that ran a lot, you might call them the ‘Running Bunch.’ That was the way we identified the bunches.

Mounted on “Florida cow-ponies,” armed with rawhide “cow-whips,” and accompanied by “cow-dogs,” the herders drove wary range cattle into pens:

They just drove them. . . . You’d run your horses around them. When you’d ride to get a bunch of cows, you wouldn’t point your horses’s head at them, because they’d run. You’d go kind of sideways and ease around them. Somebody else would be going the other way, coming around a bunch. Then you’d just gather them in. . . . Usually, you had a bunch of good cow-dogs [with you], and if a cow ever left the bunch, these dogs would put her back, and she wouldn't want to leave no more.

The Platts penned their stock within wire enclosures on the open-range:

I’ve seen some old-time pole corrals, where they cut these cypress poles and put them up. But what we had [in the 1930s] was hog wire [pens]. Then you’d have what they called a ‘crevice’. . . . Well, a crevice would be a holding pen. They’d put the cows in the crevice the night before, and this [crevice] would probably be a hundred acres. Then, the next morning, you’d get up and drive the cattle out of the crevice into the pen—a few at a time. As you drove them into the crevice, you’d work that bunch out—a hundred cows at a time. You’d work that bunch out, then go back and get you another bunch out of the crevice, bring them into cowpen, and work that bunch out.

At this time, they “worked out” the new calves for marking and branding:

This was the time when the calves got big enough. . . .so everybody could identify them. . . . They done what they called ‘mammying calves’. . . . Usually, there was one man that was better at it than anybody else. He would just call them in the pen. He’d call them out, ‘This calf belongs to so-and so cow!’ [He identified] them from the markings of the mama and the color markings on the calf. . . . They was all colors. There would be one cow that would be black down both sides and have a white stripe down her body. Or, maybe she’d be red on both sides with a white stripe down her back. And some of them would be what we called a ‘frosty’ cow—mingled white and red together.
Because of cattle-stealing, cowmen carefully marked the calves’ ears and branded their flanks:

Now, most of the old-timers branded on the sides—on the ribs. In later years, they started branding on what they called the ‘cushion’—back on the rump. . . . The brand was for two reasons: one reason is pride of ownership to have your name or your initials on the cows; and then it was helpful for identification too. The ear marks was so you could see. You couldn’t see the brand in the winter, because a lot of hair would grow over in winter. . . . But you could read that ear mark way on out there—maybe 150 yards.

As they marked and branded calves, owners neutered most males, creating the next generation of beef steers, but they spared a few to serve as replacement bulls:

They castrated the male calves, except they’d keep some of the male calves from the best cows you had. A few big strong cows. A lot of the old-timers would say, ‘If this cow can pull out of a bog, I’m going to save the bull calf from it.’

Turning out the calves on the open-range, the Platts selected the “beef” for market:

That was a steer—about a four-year old steer. He was grown and as big as he was going to get then—about 500 pounds. A big calf weighs that now. . . . They dressed out about half—about 250 pounds [of beef]. . . It wasn’t too tender.

Using cow-whips to control the steers, the Platts and neighboring cowmen drove beeves to market. These cracking whips may have earned the cowmen their nickname of “Crackers”.

A lot of people would just say, ‘I’m a Florida Cracker.’ And he was proud of it. . . . I think it comes from cracking cow-whips. Whenever the people drove their cattle into market, they’d come in cracking their cow-whips, and somebody would say, ‘Here comes those Crackers!’

Finding a ready market for their scrub steers, the “Cracker” cowmen felt little need to change their open-range cattle operation. They retained ranching practices and lifeways which differed little from those of their antebellum ancestors. Yet in the 1930’s, change arrived suddenly in the form of the Florida tick-eradication program.

The ticks which infested the Florida flatwoods were vectors for bovine piroplasmosis, a debilitating stock disease. Attaching themselves to cattle, the ticks gorged on blood, dropped to the ground, and laid their eggs. As they fed on cattle, ticks transmitted a protozoan pathogen, which invaded the cows’ bloodstream and destroyed red blood cells. The infected cattle suffered raging fevers and often died. Although scrub cattle developed a high degree of immunity to tick-borne fever, the presence of fever ticks in Florida prevented the introduction of blooded bulls from tick-free areas to improve the beef quality of local cattle.
The only means of eliminating tick fever was to destroy the ticks which carried the protozoan pathogens. Researchers found that repeated dipping of cattle in vats of arsenic solution killed the attached ticks before they dropped to the ground and laid eggs. By frequently dipping cattle to disrupt the tick life cycle, it was possible to gradually eliminate the ticks within a given area.¹⁷

 Seeking to eliminate the fever tick and thus remove an obstacle to livestock improvement, the Florida legislature enacted a compulsory tick-eradication program in 1923. In cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, the state legislature divided Florida into a series of quarantine zones. Using barbed wire fences to isolate the zones, state and federal agents established local dipping vats, where range cattle were periodically dipped in arsenic solution to kill the attached ticks. After a year of two of dipping, the quarantine zone was declared tick-free.¹⁸

 Beginning on the Georgia-Florida border in 1923, the dipping programs and quarantine zones progressed steadily southward. In the 1930s, the dipping program reached south Florida. By 1944, south Florida was finally declared tick-free.¹⁸

 With the eradication of the fever tick, cowmen introduced blooded bulls to improve their scrub cattle herds. Brahman bulls were most favored, since they showed the greatest resistance to the

“Cracker Cowboys of Florida,” depicted by artist Frederic Remington in 1895.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.
heat and humidity of south Florida. After breeding Brahman bulls with scrub cows, cattle-owners then mated the mixed-breed cows with Hereford and Angus bulls to further improve the beef quality.19

Such mixed-breed cattle could survive on native forage, but they prospered on improved pastures. As early as the 1920s, some south Florida cowmen were experimenting with artificial pastures, clearing flatwoods land and sowing Bermuda, Bahia, and other exotic grasses. Grazing on these artificial pastures, cattle recorded substantial weight gains.20 In spite of these successful experiments with artificial pastures, little could be done to improve the south Florida range as long as most of the land was owned by the state or by private timber companies.

In an effort to raise revenues, the State of Florida had sold much of its public land to timber companies. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, these timber companies folded, leaving many thousands of acres of tax-delinquent lands. In 1937, the Florida legislature passed the Murphy Act, empowering the state to claim all tax-delinquent lands. Under the terms of the act, Florida could sell these confiscated lands to the highest bidder. Since most of the land could be bought for the price of delinquent taxes, the Murphy Act permitted cowmen to acquire large tracts of land at relatively little cost.21
Among the south Florida cowmen who took advantage of the Murphy Act was Marion Platt, who purchased tax-delinquent lands in Hardee County:

During the Depression, it was still ‘open-range.’ About 1937, people started buying land. . . . We first bought 800 acres of land, and we paid $5.00 an acre for the land. The cattle that was on it was $25.00 a head. So you can see the difference. . . . Now, cattle are probably $400.00 a head, and land is $1,500.00 [an acre]. . . . But then. . . . land was cheap. You could borrow money on cows, but you couldn’t on land.

The Murphy Act had a great impact on traditional cattle-ranching life. In 1930, seven years before the act, the average cowman owned only 88 acres of land. By 1944, seven years after the act, the average cowman owned 870 acres of land.\(^22\)

After World War II, the wealthier cowmen bought additional acreage, reducing the amount of open-range which was available to poorer cattlemen. In addition, truck farms expanded their acreage at the expense of the remaining open-range. And finally, urban areas impinged on the range, as thousands of retired northerners settled in the housing developments and trailer parks of south Florida.
A steer wandering the open-range near Moore Haven in 1939.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.
Open-range ranching was not compatible with city life and agribusiness. Range cattle trampled valuable fields of vegetables and sugar cane. Equally important, range cattle strayed onto public highways and streets, where they collided with cars and trucks.\textsuperscript{23}

Complaints about traffic accidents and stray cattle prompted the Florida legislature to pass a law in 1949, requiring all stock owners to fence in their cattle. Owners who negligently allowed their stock to wander onto highways were fined or imprisoned. This law effectively ended the open-range era in south Florida.\textsuperscript{24}

Since 1949, open-range cattle-ranching has given way to intensive cattleranching in south Florida. During the past three decades, investors have acquired thousands of acres, planted artificial pastures, and purchased blooded cattle. Cattle-ranching, which had once been a family enterprise utilizing the open-range, had become a capital-intensive agribusiness by the 1980s.

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Kissimmee, for their aid and cooperation. Research funds were provided by an NEH “State, Local, and Regional Studies” grant.


4 For example, see F.C.M. Boggess, A Veteran of Four Wars (Arcadia: Champion Job Rooms, 1900), 66, 74, 76, 82; John A. Bethell, Pinellas; A Brief History of the Lower Point by the Oldest Living Settler (St. Petersburg: Independent Job Department, 1914), 56-57; Elam J. Bryant, “Early History of Lithia, Hillsborough County” (Lithia: privately printed, 1981), 5.


8 Interview with J.P. Platt, August 26, 1982.


10 Stetson Kennedy, Palmetto Country (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942), 216.


14 The word “Cracker” has become something of a pejorative; but during the early twentieth century, the term simply meant a rural, native Floridian. See Lucille Ayers and others, “Expressions from Rural Florida,” Publications of the American Dialect Society No. 14 (Greensboro: Woman’s College of University of North Carolina, 1950), 75.


20 Ibid, 74.


23 Ibid, 92, 96.

The P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History is a special research collection of the University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville. The Yonge Library originated as the private collection of Julien Chandler Yonge (1879-1962) of Pensacola, historian and editor of the Florida Historical Quarterly, and of his father, Philip Keyes Yonge (1850-1934). In 1944, Dr. Rembert W. Patrick of the history faculty persuaded Julien Yonge to donate his unique collection of Floridiana to the University of Florida and to accept the responsibility of becoming the initial director of the library. In giving his valuable materials to the people of Florida without recompense, Julien Yonge did stipulate that the library should be named for his late father, a staunch advocate of quality public education and a multi-term member of the Board of Control, the supervising body
for the state universities. In accepting the gift, the Board pledged that the Yonge Library would remain distinct and separate from the remainder of the library and that the goal of the collection would be to encourage and assist in the writing of Florida’s history.

At first, the Yonge Library was “temporarily” housed in the Law College Building (now Nathan P. Bryan Hall) in the northeast corner of the historic University of Florida campus. There it remained until the post-World War II building boom at the university resulted in the expansion of the structure now known as Library East. The Yonge Library was relocated into larger quarters in this building in 1950. Another relocation, this to new and adequate facilities, took place in 1967 when the Library West building was opened. The Yonge Library remains today on the fourth floor of Library West, which is situated on the northern edge of the campus, facing the Plaza of the Americas quadrangle.

The P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History holds both primary and secondary historical source materials pertaining to all eras and aspects of Florida’s past. The standard chronological periods are well-documented. Information about Florida’s two Spanish epochs is available in the
photostats of the Stetson Collection and in microfilm of the residencias of the First Spanish Period governors (Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Sevilla); the East Florida Papers (Library of Congress); the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba (AGI); the Papers of Vicente Sebastian Pintado (LC; and the Justicia and Patronato sections of the AGI. This body of documentation is the largest, richest, and most diverse collection of Southeastern Spanish borderlands materials to be found in the United States. Detailed finding guides and calendars to these documents have been created in recent years by the staff of the Yonge Library, but knowledge of Spanish and paleography is still mandatory for efficient use by researchers.

During the 1920s, John Batterson Stetson, Jr. (1884-1952), the moving force in the Florida State Historical Society, commissioned historian Irene Wright to make photostatic copies of key colonial Florida documents in the AGI. Before a change in Spanish archival policy brought a premature end to the project, Wright succeeded in procuring tens of thousands of photostats. The Stetson Collection remains, in effect, a sampling of the Florida materials in the AGI.

More comprehensive documentation is to be found among the residencias or reports of the investigations of the Florida governors held upon the completion of their terms of service. The term comprehensive may also be applied to the East Florida Papers. These are the archives of the Spanish administration in that province from 1784 to 1821. The comparable records pertaining to the province of West Florida have been microfilmed from among the Papeles Procedentes de Cuba section of the AGI. Additional film of Florida documents has been obtained from the AGI’s Patronato section (records of judicial appeal cases before the Council of the Indies). The Pintado Papers are the private as well as the public correspondence of the deputy land surveyor of Louisiana, surveyor general of West Florida, and administrator of royal lands in Cuba, circa 1793-1831.

For the two decades of British domination in the Floridas, xerox and microfilm copies of many documents from the Public Records Office are available in the Yonge Library. Charles Andrews’s classic Guide to the Materials for American History, to 1783, in the Public Records Office of Great Britain serves as a basic index to these categories of documents. Moreover, microfilm has been acquired of the Thomas Gage Papers (Clements Library, University of Michigan; also from the British Library); the Sir Guy Carleton Papers (PRO); the Sir Frederick
The military, administrative, and diplomatic information contained in the papers of these two British commanders-in-chief in North America (Gage, 1763-1775; Carleton, 1782-1783), and the papers of Haldimand (Gage’s brigadier for the southern department, 1765-1773), is supplemented by the religious information in the Fulham Papers. These last comprise the general correspondence and other communications directed to the Bishops of London from North America and the West Indies during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.

The evolution of a popular press in colonial British North America meant that events in frontier Florida would be reported and commented upon. In particular, newspapers of South Carolina and Georgia port cities described events in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Florida. The Yonge Library has obtained microfilm of many such Southern newspapers. The following Charleston, South Carolina papers are among them: *South Carolina Gazette* (1732-1775); *Times* (1800-1821); *Courier* (1803-1873); *Columbian Herald* (1787-1790); and *Mercury* (1822-1868). Accounts of Florida occurrences are likewise found in film of these Savannah, Georgia, newspapers: *Georgia Gazette* (1763-1770, 1774--1776, 1778-1796); *Gazette of Georgia* (1783-1788); *Georgia Republican and State Intelligence* (1802-1808); *Republican and Savannah Evening Ledger* (1808-1815); *Savannah Republican* (1817-1849); and *Morning News* (1850-1863; 1866-1910). Among the Milledgeville, Georgia, papers held are the: *Georgia Journal* (1809-1840); *Southern Recorder* (1820-1861); and *Federal Union* (1830-1862). While very few issues of newspapers published in the British Floridas have survived, newspapers did emerge on the scene early in territorial Florida. The Yonge Library is fortunate in having many such issues on microfilm.

In fact, the Florida newspaper holdings of the P.K. Yonge Library are quite extensive for the American period. Julien Yonge searched for and obtained microfilm of many nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Florida papers from the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and other major repositories. In addition to buying film from others, Julien Yonge initiated the Florida Newspaper Project by arranging for the services of a staff microphotographer. Through a network of family and professional contacts, Yonge arranged to borrow original issues of Florida papers from publishers and collectors and to have them microfilmed in Gainesville. In addition,
he initiated continuing subscriptions to papers throughout the state and he had these subscription issues filmed on a regular basis. His goal in the latter instance was to make certain that at least one newspaper from each of Florida’s sixty-seven counties would be preserved on microfilm, for he regarded newspapers as the key primary source for the history of Florida’s American period.

Although today most major metropolitan dailies are filmed and marketed by Bell & Howell, the Florida Newspaper Project continues to flourish. Currently, papers from fifty-two cities are filmed. When a major microform supplier begins to film and to market a Florida paper, the Yonge Library discontinues its own filming. Among the papers now being preserved are two of the state’s leading black newspapers—the Miami Times and the Jacksonville Florida Star. Thanks to the combination of the purchase of film from other libraries, the activities of the Florida Newspaper Project, and the acquisition of current subscription film from Bell & Howell and other sources, the premier collection of extant Florida newspapers is to be found at the Yonge Library.

Some of the periodicals held by the Yonge Library are also kept in the microfilm format. Among these are the Florida Catholic, Florida Baptist Witness, Florida Methodist Reporter, and Florida Food and Grocery News. More numerous, however, are actual bound volumes of periodicals

Spessard Lindsey Holland (1892-1971).
Photograph courtesy of the P.K. Yonge Library.

Park M. Trammell (1876-1936), c.1913.
Photograph courtesy of the P.K. Yonge Library.

Source materials in the Yonge Library for the study of government and politics since 1821 include both original volumes and microfilm of the *Laws of Florida*, the various compilations and the *Statutes*, and the legislative *Journals*. The activities of state agencies are recorded in the official reports of the Secretary of State, Treasurer, Commissioner of Agriculture, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and other cabinet and senior officers. The selection of state documents in the Yonge Library is not intended to be definitive, since reports of all state agencies are maintained by the documents department of the University Libraries.

For the same reason, many but not all federal documents pertaining to Florida are located in the Yonge Library. A number of census publications and the *Territorial Papers* are available, as are several series of the *American State Papers*, and a variety of separately-catalogued U.S. House and U.S. Senate documents. Microfilm editions of federal documents are also held. Among these are National Archives-produced microfilm of the compiled service records of Florida Union and Confederate soldiers and Indian wars soldiers; of Freedmen’s Bureau records; and of census population schedules (1830-1910). Land records on microfilm include materials from the U.S. General Land Office; the complete Florida tract books from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management; and the archives of the U.S. Commissioners for Ascertaining Claims and Titles to Lands in East Florida (Spanish land grants confirmed or denied at the time of acquisition by the United States). Agricultural data is included in the U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service Reports (1909-1944).
The map collection of the Yonge Library relates to the Southeastern United States and the Caribbean, as well as to the geographical area of the present-day state. The collection consists of over 1,900 originals and copies, which are shelved by date and accession (PKY) number. Two card indexes provide analysis of the map collection. One index is arranged in chronological order; the second is organized according to the subject of each individual map. The collection includes maps dating from circa 1500 through 1945.

Among the major manuscripts held by the P.K. Yonge Library are the papers of politician and railroad entrepreneur David Levy Yulee; Governor William Sherman Jennings and civic/environmental activist May Mann Jennings; Governor Napoleon B. Broward; Democratic Party chairman James Hodges of Lake City; Senator Charles Andrews; Governor and Senator Spessard Holland; Governor Millard Caldwell; legislator and dairy farmer Ernest Graham; Congressman Paul Rogers and his father, Congressman Dwight Rogers. Here, too, are the papers of historian/archivists Jeannette Thurbur Connor and Elizabeth Howard West; the Chase family (Sanford, Florida; citrus); the Florida section, American Chemical Society; the Florida Society of American Foresters; archaeologist John Goggin; Jacksonville historian T. Frederick Davis; the Stephens-Bryant families (Civil War; St. Johns River); and the Florida District Land Office Records of the U.S. General Land Office. A large assortment of miscellaneous manuscripts, diaries, and ledgers supplements the major manuscript collections.

The secondary source materials in the Yonge Library include county and community histories; M.A. theses and Ph.D. dissertations; and thematic and chronological studies focusing upon an assortment of eras, events, and individuals. In this last category, research carried out in the Yonge Library has resulted recently in dissertation/biographies of Nathan Mayo, May Mann Jennings, and Park Trammell. A substantial number of archaeological studies has been assembled, too. Fittingly, the editorial functions of the Florida Historical Quarterly, which is based at the university, still rely upon the materials in the Yonge Library. These materials include other historical journals, such as Tequesta, Tampa Bay History, Escribano, New River News, Apalachee, plus Southern state journals and the Journal of Southern History.

Researchers considering a visit to the library are advised to consult the published Catalog of the P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, four volumes (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1977), which gives a much more complete listing of holdings than this brief summary. For a discussion of Julien C. Yonge, his collection, and his career as editor of the Quarterly, see: Rembert W. Patrick, “Julien Chandler Yonge,” Florida Historical Quarterly, 41 (October 1962), pages 102-115.
The old school house, a favorite teacher, the school play, or one’s first paddling, these are memories synonymous with childhood and with school days. The right to a free, public education has become entrenched in American society, expected by parents and accepted by children. It is, indeed, hard to imagine life before the public school. Yet the public school system was well established in the rest of the United States long before it flourished in Florida.

Prior to the passage of the 1868 constitution, Florida had no established public school system. Children fortunate enough to receive an education did so in either private or “public/private” schools—a system common in the early frontier regions of America. An example of the “public/private” system was Tampa’s first school, established in 1848, and located in the county courthouse. The teacher, W.P. Wilson, began with fourteen pupils and was paid from fees collected from their parents.

Several factors contributed to the slow development of a uniform public school system, including a lack of funds, suitable facilities, supplies, and a teaching force. In addition, there was no clearly defined course of study or set of educational regulations. Other obstacles included Florida’s wilderness environment, a poor transportation system, the sparseness of settlement, widespread fear of integrated schools and apathy among state residents.

The establishment of schools remained the responsibility of the local community with little or no interference or support from state officials. And while the 1868 Constitution provided for a public school system and the 1869 school law called for a uniform educational system, neither had much effect on southwestern Florida. In the Tampa Bay area, education remained the responsibility of individuals or communities.

It was not until the late 1800s that this region saw an improvement in the educational system. The coming of the railroad opened up the frontier section of Florida, and soon a steady wave of transplanted northerners poured into the area. By 1900, towns were popping up all along the southwest coast and as the railroad stretched into the interior of the state, so did the settlements. The region became a haven for would-be entrepreneurs and for those seeking a respite from the cold northern winters. South Florida entered a boom period that ebbed and flowed but never died.

As more and more people settled in the area, they brought with them many of their native cultural institutions. One of the most important was the public school. New residents transported hometown ideas which they readily adapted to fit regional demands, often lending their educational institutions a uniqueness not found in other localities.
In the 1880s and 1890s, schools were rough in appearance with few amenities. On occasion, if funds were low and supplies limited, students and teachers might find themselves forced to attend class in a natural setting such as a sandy field, hopefully in the shade of a large oak tree. These “open air” classrooms were established, at first, out of necessity; later they became popular among founders of private schools who hoped to capitalize on Florida’s growing seasonal clientele and the state’s reputation for a healthy climate.

As cities grew, community leaders and concerned citizens established increasing numbers of public schools, though they often relied on donations from local businesses and philanthropists for buildings and educational supplies. The first schools were usually built of wood and followed the early pattern of the one room schoolhouse. These schools, however, were very susceptible to fire and many were destroyed. When towns could afford the cost, they build school houses of brick or stone which were more long-lasting. As towns built new high schools, older facilities were sometimes converted into elementary or junior high schools.

Community schools were intended to provide residents with a common bond and a local identity, and they often functioned this way for white citizens. However, racial differences were reinforced. Florida schools followed a segregated system prevalent throughout the South. If black children received any education, they were usually separated from white students. While this was the norm, there were reports of integrated classrooms in the more remote sections of the region. The influx of white settlers into the area changed this relaxed attitude, and by 1900, the towns had created separate facilities for their black students. Despite the improved educational system, the Works Progress Administration reported in 1938 that a high proportion of Florida blacks were illiterate.

As the black community grew, it was increasingly isolated from the white community. The so-called “separate but equal” doctrine of education allowed parallel but not necessarily equivalent systems of education to develop. Most black schools had many of the same traditions, clubs and courses found in the white schools, but funding was never equal and black school facilities were often inadequate. Nonetheless, school pride and local support among blacks equalled that found in the white community.

For those students who lived in the rural sections of southwest Florida, an improvised educational system was developed to fit the agricultural needs of the residents. Children who worked in the strawberry fields or picked citrus found themselves attending school on a seasonal basis, often at times when the normal school term had ended. And although Florida touted her climate, this “migrant” system of education died a slow death.

As the population grew and Florida became an increasingly urban state, the public schools finally developed into the uniform system called for in the 1869 school law. The post-World War II era, brought more young families to Florida, who came as permanent residents rather than tourists. The southwestern region of the state experienced a population boom which found many towns unprepared for the increased financial burden of public education. Nevertheless, by 1950, local and state advertising campaigns never failed to boast of Florida’s educational system. Public schools were now recognized as an important element in Florida’s overall development.
A Clearwater scene, (c. 1880) taken from South Ft. Harrison Avenue looking north. To the left is the old South Ward School with the Methodist Church in the background.

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
A teacher poses with her students in front of their makeshift classroom in the 1890’s. While this thatched hut is primitive by today’s standards, children of rural Florida were fortunate to receive any educational training in this frontier era of Florida's past.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.

Florida’s temperate climate made open-air schools a feasible alternative before more substantial facilities were available. (c. 1900)

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Largo’s Pinehurst School students, looking as though they stepped out of a Mark Twain novel, may be starting a school outing or ending a school term. Incidentally, the teacher looks as happy as the students. (c. 1905)

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.

Domestic science, the forerunner of Home Economics, was a very popular class for girls. Shown here is the class from Tomlinson School in St. Petersburg. (c. 1905)

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
As this 1908 picture of Plant High School’s chemistry class shows, science courses were becoming an increasingly important part of the school curriculum. Interestingly, this class appears to be composed entirely of girls. Principal Robert M. Ray is on the left, with Professor D.F. Pattinshall in the center.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.

With their friends gathered about them, Gert and Edna Lealman of St. Petersburg have their picture taken in front of an unidentified school building. (c. 1910)

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
The 1910 St. Petersburg High School girls’ basketball team consisted of Susie Loveland, Ira Hilliard, Frances Johnston, Mary White, Elizabeth Thracher, Mae Odom (?), Betty Johnstone, Elsie Lutz, Elizabeth Ferguson, Adene Gregory, and coach, Miss M. Nelson. Although appearing cumbersome, their uniforms were less restrictive than everyday clothing.

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
Before the implementation of mandatory physical education classes, recess provided children with a recreational period combining fun with physical exercise. Here, a Manatee County kindergarten class enjoys a circle game under the supervision of their teacher, Mrs. Woodward. (c. 1912)

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Compared to modern-day classes, the first graduating class of Largo High School (1915) seems tiny. Its six students included, from left to right, Charles Saunders, May Dieffenwierth, Robert C. McMullen, Louise McMullen, Frank Saunders, and Clara Kech.

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.

An early photograph of the original St. Petersburg High School shows a group of young girls in uniform performing in parade, possibly for the town’s annual Washington Day celebration. (c. 1916)

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
A 1916 school “bus” loaded with students at Atwood Groves in Manatee County. This early air-conditioned vehicle was a decided improvement over the horse and buggy.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.

The W.B. Henderson School at the corner of Jefferson Street and Henderson Avenue was named after one of Tampa’s most prominent citizens. (1919)

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Bringing an apple for the teacher may have been the intention of this young scholar. His instructor, Mrs. Frances Howze, taught at the Palmetto School. (c. 1920)

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.

This c. 1920 photograph shows St. Petersburg’s Harris Elementary School which was located near present-day Northeast High School. Pinellas County’s Heritage Park staff is planning to build a replica of the original school to be dedicated next year.

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
The school yard served as a meeting place year round. Here four young boys meet up at the V.M. Ybor School at 1409 East Michigan Avenue in Tampa. (c. 1921)

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library System.

This photograph of a Fort Meade school, taken in 1922, shows the students during their play period. Whether taking a turn on the slide or just chatting with friends, this time provided children with a break from studies.

Photograph courtesy of Florida State Archives.
Tampa’s Philip Shore Elementary School’s playground allowed teachers as well as students to enjoy the fresh air. Games and exercises were supervised but were much less structured than today’s physical education classes.

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library System.

Poor transportation kept many students from attending school regularly. Imagine the excitement then as schoolchildren rode in Pinellas County’s first bus, driven by Norma Mohr. (c. 1923)

Photograph courtesy of Pinellas County Historical Museum.
This youthful faculty taught at Sarasota High School in 1924. The teachers themselves, as indicated by the citations after their names, had not always completed their college degrees.

Photograph courtesy of Sarasota County Historical Archives.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


In 1985, the Grace Allen Reading Room, in the Special Collections section of the University of South Florida Library, was dedicated to honor the contributions of Mrs. Grace Allen to the university community. Mrs. Allen, wife of USF’s founding president John Allen, was interviewed in the summer of 1985 as part of an oral history project commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the University of South Florida. That conversation is excerpted here.

Q: What was your first knowledge that there was going to be a University of South Florida?

Allen: There was a commission appointed by the Board of Control and the governor and it was determined that, because of the growth of the state, there were needs for new colleges. The Tampa/St. Petersburg area was one of the places that was obviously in need of a new university. When the first thought of having a new university came into being, the members of what was then called the Board of Control approached John and asked him to save himself for the University. At that time we were considering two or three other prospects, but the idea of building a new university outweighed any other considerations. When the formal offer came to move to the Tampa area, John was ready to accept and, of course, I was too.

Q: What year did you actually move to Tampa?

Allen: We moved here in 1957 and we were here for three years in the planning stage until the University opened in September of 1960. For quite sometime Mr. Allen was all by himself, but for a secretary officed in the Court House. The county made available two rooms and a supply house supplied desks and chairs. So that is where we opened. Immediately, the first appointment that was made was the librarian (Elliot Hardaway). He arrived on the scene immediately. He came from Gainesville. Those three people were busy with the original planning, and immediately books came in for the library so that soon books grew in such large numbers that the people were crowded out and they had to make provisions for more space. They moved to a house that was on Plant Avenue that had one time been a clinic. So that was taken over for the offices. That house soon became crowded as more people came on the staff: deans, business managers, and so on. Mary Lou Harkness, who is the present librarian, was of that early group. The house also became so crowded that one desk touched the other, and if anyone was going to move or pick up something, you had to give a signal. Everybody moved chairs, and it was a wonderful arrangement for inner office communications. It was a little difficult to work. They stayed there then until the Administration building and others were ready on the campus in 1960.

Q: Was the Administration Building the first building that was actually completed on the campus?
Allen: There were five architects who worked on the buildings simultaneously. So buildings were under construction and going up at the same time. The Administration Building was ready in the sense that we moved in, but the air conditioning didn’t work. When we opened, the buildings were ready. We had an opening convocation, and it was announced that as soon as it was completed classes were in session. The campus was planned so that the library would be the tallest building, the most conspicuous building, to symbolize that the library was the heart of the University. And the library symbolized the scholarly research that was to go on here because John kept saying, over and over again, “A university is a combination of scholars searching for the truth, and that includes students and faculty.”

Q: How did the library develop its collection?

Allen: Universities often get excess copies of books, and when the announcement was made of the establishment of the University, other universities were willing to send us excess copies. Mr. Hardaway, the librarian, set about a diligent search for books and also for journals. It was easy enough to subscribe for current journals, but he set up a diligent search for back copies of journals, especially scientific ones. So that on the day that we opened, we had a collection of books. It was a modest collection, but it was a very workable collection. And it was announced, in the community, that we were anxious for gifts, but we would not accept just any title. We would accept books whose title was on the list of the Harvard-Widener Library. And that has proved, over the years, to be a very workable collection for a liberal arts college. So if a title was on that list, we accepted it very gratefully.

Q: Did the community get very involved?

Allen: Oh yes! The community was very supportive. Of course, John came here by himself, so he had to be his own publicity agent. People were anxious to know about the University, and the speaking invitations just came in right and left. So he was busy informing the community and they were very supportive. They did respond to the collection of books and journals and that kind of thing. And they have continued to do so.

Q: How did the University get the name University of South Florida? If you look on the map, it looks a bit more like we are on the west coast of Florida than on the southern tip.
Allen: The name was something that intrigued everybody—the community, the newspapers, and everyone. The newspaper, in fact, had a contest and, as you might guess with that kind of thing, all sorts of names came in. The idea of the name was of much concern to John because he felt that the name should express to the community what type of an institution this was to be. It was to be an institution for learning. It was to be an institution for research and an institution of liberal arts and the professional schools, but not a trade school. So finally the name University of South Florida was accepted by the Board of Regents and the Governor. And the Governor hesitated a little bit, but then he was reminded, being an Episcopal communicant, that this was in the District of South Florida and so he said it was alright to name it the University of South Florida. We were very happy with that because it does express that this is a true university in every sense of the word.

Q: You already lived in Gainesville which, of course, is very much a college town. What were your first impressions when you came here and there was not only no school, but no university community?

Allen: No school, no name, no students, no anything! For so long John and I were it. When we first came, John said he wanted to take me out and show me the campus. So we came out and turned on to Fowler Road, which was then a sand road. And it was very heavily rutted, and we didn’t dare stop for being mired in the sand. We got out in the general area of the campus; John waved his hand to the empty acres and he said that this was it. He always claimed that my response was “Holy Sam, what are we coming to!” And so for a time, I was stunned by the vast nothingness. But we hired a campus planner, Jefferson Hemmle from the University of Florida, and he came here and worked with John. They sketched out the layout of the campus with the plan now as it was laid out then: sections for the medical school, areas for the liberal arts, areas for the administration, the library, and then social sciences were collected in one area, and also the plan for engineering which we knew was coming. Those sections were laid out and they were marked on a big sheet of paper in greens, blues, and yellows and so on. With that the place really came alive for me. It got exciting from then on to think we were going to have a building in this spot and to help plan and to show people what was to be out here. We had models made of the buildings and that helped a great deal. Much to our surprise, the buildings turned out to look just like the models.

Q: In those early offices at the Court House and Plant Avenue, did the people start to form a sort of university community?

Allen: They did spend time together, but there were some people that moved into the Temple Terrace area and that created a community. Others moved into the Carrollwood area and they formed a nucleus. But the rapport among the faculty was amazing. One of the first things that I was interested in was the establishment of the Women’s Club. It filled a very important function and it still does because it is a place where all people get to know one another. The department lines are crossed and women come together regardless of what their husbands are doing. So they formed very close friendships that lasted throughout the years. Then there was this feeling that everybody was new. We all had to work to make
our place in the community. We all had to work to get to know friends, and it created a very friendly atmosphere and a good *esprit de corps* that was prevalent on the campus. Everybody felt it. It was a very precious thing. And people worked very hard because here was this new institution, no name and no students, and practically all those that came as administrators, as deans and so on, had left very good positions. And here they came and their careers were on the line. So everybody worked very hard to make this thing go. And it did.

**Q:** What was so unique about this university?

**Allen:** It was the first university in this century to be planned from the ground up as a full-fledged university with liberal arts, professional schools, and so on. Other institutions had broken off from agricultural colleges or they were branches and so on, but not the University of South Florida. We were a full-fledged institution.

**Q:** Now you mentioned that consultants had to be brought in to help lay out the buildings and to lay out the programs. How did you and your husband go about deciding who should be brought from all over the country as consultants?

**Allen:** Faculty know faculty people. Deans know deans. One of the interesting things was that John and I were given a Ford Foundation Grant to travel all over the country for a year. We used that year to visit universities, to talk to faculty members, to speak to deans, to employ prospective faculty, and to invite consultants to come here. We looked at buildings, we looked at programs, and we even looked at medical schools. Consultants came here in large groups. They met, laid out plans, and as a result we had the program for the basic studies, liberal arts, education, basic engineering and others. Those plans were laid out and as time went on staff was hired. One interesting thing developed. John was at a meeting at the University of New Hampshire, and they asked the very same question. They asked the very same question on how to get faculties. Faculty don’t really apply for jobs, and so John replied saying that we have so many applications coming in that we are overwhelmed. They are anxious to come because they are thrilled with the prospect of building a university from the ground up where you can put in new ideas, new concepts and really make something that is distinctive. So when the word got out—there were announcements all over the country in newspapers everywhere—people responded and we were able to pick and choose. As a result, on the day that we opened, we had a staff that marched in academic procession and were ready to receive the students at the close of the convocation.

**Q:** What do you think were some of the most distinctive ideas that were put into effect as a result of this being a brand new university?

**Allen:** Basic Studies was one thing, and cooperative education was introduced. That was not a new idea, but it was one very good for this community because we were obviously a commuter college.
Q: One of the things that seemed distinctive early on was that there were no intercollegiate sports planned for the University of South Florida.

Allen: There were intercollegiate sports. They were planned. This was the thing that was considered important, but there was no plan for a football team with the expense of a stadium and all of the things that would be entailed in a football program. But right from the beginning there were plans for intercollegiate sports. The golf course was laid out, tennis courts were laid out, swimming pools, soccer, basketball, and all of those things were taken into consideration so that athletics were not overlooked. But the idea was to have some form of athletic activity that the majority could participate in, not the eleven men alone with all the rest of the people sitting on the bench. Of course, the primary reason was the expense and as the first bulletin said, the “Accent was on Learning.”

Q: When was the official ground breaking at the University of South Florida?

Allen: The ground breaking, I recall, was in September, 1958, and we had several juniors from the high schools participating in wielding the shovels. They were to represent the prospective class that would be ready to enter the University when we opened in 1960. Then in 1960, September, we had the opening ceremony with the governor here. I think that was the time when I really felt married to the University, when they placed a silver medallion around John’s neck and the governor announced “I declare the University of South Florida officially open.”

Q: Were there any resident students that first year who actually lived on campus?

Allen: There were not. We did not have any dormitories in the beginning. It was obvious that we were a commuter institution, and it was announced to the first students that that was one of the things that they would have to do, would be to find their own living arrangements. Later on, we had a campaign that became known as “Dollars for Dorms” and the newspaper helped support this. Contributions came in and the county made a sizeable contribution. With that money we built the dormitories. Then we got federal loans.

Q: How did your role as the wife of the president of USF change when the school actually opened?

Allen: I never was aware of any change except for greater contact with students and increased contact with faculty. I was sort of a catalyst that could help people to know one another. We had quite a campaign of having dinners, receptions, and that kind of thing to acquaint the community with the university. I had a reception in every building that opened. And the townspeople were interested and they came. So I don’t think that my role changed greatly. It was just that I reached out and touched more people.

Q: What kind of things did you do to help give people greater contact with each other and greater contact with the University?
Allen: I think, as I mentioned before, the university’s Women’s Club was a very important one. I had the good fortune to belong to various groups in the town and they responded and were helpful in many, many ways. My garden club was always on hand when I needed them, to help with the receptions, for instance. So the community responded in anyway that they were asked. They were very helpful.

Q: Thinking of the garden club, how did you grow grass on the sands surrounding USF?

Allen: Well, as you know this campus was just a big Sahara Desert. The wind blew and you emptied your shoes when you walked across a campus and when you entered a building you had to take off your shoes and pour out the sand. Everybody carried a whisk broom
in their car to brush out the sand that had collected during the day. It looked sort of hopeless, but they discovered that there was a peat bog on campus and we were able to scrape up $500 to go to Blanding and buy a bulldozer from surplus. We over the campus which stabilized that sand. Then we were able to plant grass. Right from the very beginning, we also had gardens where we grew azaleas from slips so when the buildings were completed we had shrubs to use for the landscaping.

Q: How long did it take to actually have the campus look like a campus with grass, trees, sidewalks, and lights?

Allen: When you see it now with its trees, shrubs, buildings, and so on I think back on the way it looked then. I really don’t know. It looked so much better when we got grass. We did have some trees so that was a help. People gave us trees and shrubs. So as those things came in we had a more stable, settled in look. The architects, as a matter of fact, were so pleased with their buildings that they didn't want shrubbery in front of them.

Q: Many faculty members who were here in the early years have mentioned the fact that Dr. Allen would come into their classes, watch them teach, and really have a sense of what was actually happening among the faculty in the University. Did he make a concerted effort to try and keep in touch with all of the faculty in those early years?

Allen: He would have liked to have done more of that sort of thing than he was able to do. He was a teacher. He started out as a teacher. Teaching was his first love. One of things that he kept emphasizing always was that we would recognize good teaching. We were anxious that the best teacher on the staff teach freshmen. As I said, he was a teacher and so he very much loved the classroom and would have liked to have done more of that. But administrative duties became very heavy as we added more buildings, more programs. You always had to have what they called “lead time.” The planning, the budget, and all of this sort of thing that you would present to the legislature to meet your needs in the future. So this was a very busy time and he didn't get into the classroom as much as he would have wanted to.

Q: In the first decade that USF was open, what do you think were some of the biggest changes in the University?

Allen: Yes. There was a great demand for the University in this area. I remember when we first came, John made speeches and he predicted that in ten years we would have ten thousand or more students. Everyone in the community thought he was just daydreaming. The need was here and obviously meeting that need was his goal. And the demand continues. The growth of the University did not surprise him. He fully expected it. It surprised the community.

Q: Did the University seem to be growing at an astonishing rate in those early years?

Allen: Yes. There was great demand for the University in this area. I remember when we first came, John made speeches and he predicted that in ten years we would have ten thousand
or more students. Everyone in the community thought he was just daydreaming. The need was here and obviously meeting that need was his goal. And the demand continues. The growth of the University did not surprise him. He fully expected it. It surprised the community.

**Q:** Were programs like Fine Arts and the Medical School actually implemented while Dr. Allen was still president?

**Allen:** Yes. The Fine Arts program was very active. When I think back on the Fine Arts program, I am amazed that we were able to draw such outstanding figures. We had Carl Sandberg, Archibald McLeish, and a number of outstanding people like that and they were anxious and willing to come. We had music before we had any auditorium or theatre to have it in. We had concerts in the lecture room in the Chemistry building so that Fine Arts functioned right away. And in the plan, areas were laid out for the medical school because it was also obvious that this was an area where growth existed and that a medical school would have to come as part of the growth. So before we left the University, the first dean of the Medical School was hired and the first staff member.

**Q:** After you retired from the University of South Florida, did you keep in contact with programs and people there?

**Allen:** When we retired, we went to Jacksonville. We went to the University of North Florida. That was planned as a two-year university with graduate work where they have juniors, seniors and master’s degree programs. So John was invited to go to the University of North Florida as a consultant. He stayed there for two years while they did the planning and the staffing and that kind of thing. When they opened and took their first classes, we moved back to Tampa.

**Q:** When we think back on the years that you were here planning and the years you were here after the University was open, what are your most pleasant memories of the University of South Florida? What things do you think back on with particular fondness?
Allen: The University, of course, was like a child and so it was a case of giving birth to this, and as a child you love it and feel continued pride just as if your child has grown up and married and was successful all on his own. That is the way I feel about the University now, just with a great pride and love for the place and a delight in being able to participate in the things that it offers. I have been delighted with the programs for senior citizens and it’s a real joy to be able to go to concerts and plays and partake in the things that the University continues to offer. So as I say, I feel like it is a child that has grown to successful maturity.
BOOK REVIEWS


In Stephen B. Oates’s biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., Let the Trumpet Sound (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), a Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C.) Official remarked, “St. Augustine. . .was the toughest nut I have ever seen in all my days of working in cities in direct-action campaigns.” King himself called the town the “most lawless” in which he had ever campaigned for civil rights (Oates, 301). How “America’s oldest city” won this distinction is the subject of David R. Colburn’s clearly written, well organized, and illuminating book. It was not the purpose of Colburn, a Professor of History at the University of Florida, to apportion degrees of shame to the individuals and organizations who participated in the evolution of racism in one of America’s most familiar tourist towns, nor to award badges of merit to those who fought the institutionalized and yet personally-maintained bigotry that so infested St. Augustine, yet he has performed this service while fulfilling his stated task of writing a local history of the civil rights movement. The book summarizes background information from 1877 to 1963, but its main focus is the events occurring from 1963 to the late 1960’s. In the conclusion and in less detail, he tracks the aftermath of the momentous confrontations of this era up to 1980.

Colburn’s account benefits not only from his ability to channel a multitude of print and archival records concerning St. Augustine (and reaching at times into Lyndon Johnson’s office and J. Edgar Hoover’s) into a coherent and compact narrative, but also from his long and close familiarity with the social and political terrain he investigates. Some of his oral histories were taped over a decade ago, and he operates from a Florida native’s astute awareness of the day-to-day life in this strange state where the further north you go the more southern you get. He makes use of interviews with both integrationist and segregationist leaders, and attempts briefly to analyze the not always simple motives of each. It would have strengthened an already good book had he been able to collect first-hand evidence from rank-and-file segregationists, though admittedly, it is not easy—particularly after the passage of time—to interview members of a mob.

Particularly in 1963 and 1964, St. Augustine was a focal point of civil rights activism. At first, local blacks and, then, “outside agitators” sought just and fair treatment in a town, whose leaders and major institutions fought sometimes with apathy and sometimes with rifles and clubs to deny black people their proper treatment as Americans and human beings. Why the fuss at St. Augustine when the conditions being attacked were constant throughout most of the South and much of the North? The site was handy as a symbol, since it was presumably America’s first and therefore oldest racist city. St. Augustine was also peculiarly vulnerable since it was relatively small though well-known, relied heavily on an easily disruptable tourist trade, and sought federal aid for its quadricentennial celebration.
St. Augustine traveled the civil rights path kicking and screaming and with its (white) heels dug in. Why was the town’s response worse than that of some other cities of the South? Colburn describes a maddening, widening, infernal circle of people and agencies who fought or impeded civil justice in St. Augustine: the local mayor and white politicians; the local police; the local white clergy; local business leaders (the chapter on them is skimpy but damning); local judges; Florida’s governors during the period; the F.B.I. (who bugged King’s rooms and supplied local agitators with S.C.L.C. strategy). Colburn clearly shows the most culpable group to have been St. Augustine’s white leadership, the “best people,” whose shameful insensitivity, rancor, and intransigence permitted violent whites from inside and outside the community to control white responses for too long.

Colburn presents the S.C.L.C. as a pragmatic, opportunistic, and ultimately morally right, if not always morally commendable, organization whose necessary intrusion into St. Augustine escalated the conflict. Inevitably, perhaps, they had to leave—abandon is perhaps too strong a term—local black activists to fight a war of attrition once the symbolic value of St. Augustine in achieving nationwide objectives had been exhausted. Martin Luther King, Jr. is viewed essentially as is the S.C.L.C.: brave and idealistic, but anxious to extricate himself once trench warfare remained to be fought. Judge Bryan J. Simpson, the federal judge for the Middle District of Florida emerges as the book’s surprising hero. He consistently forced segregationists to obey the laws that were finally being imposed to curb racial bigotry and brutality.

The reform achieved in St. Augustine—which Colburn insists is only partial and still resisted—was made possible by tenacious local activists aided at critical junctures by organized, outside forces and finally supported by a lone, but strong judge who insisted that the law of the land be obeyed. This is a precarious model for change. Martin Luther King, Jr. said of St. Augustine that “some communities, like this one, had to bear the cross” (210). He did not say for how long. Professor Colburn’s book suggests that it is still true that those who deny the carriers of the cross in our time, are ordinary people.

Jack B. Moore


Key West today subsists mainly on winter tourists and the durable renown of Ernest Hemingway. There are few visible traces of its once mighty cigar industry, or of the passionate endeavors of thousands of cigarmaker/revolutionists living there during the war for Cuban independence. Glenn Westfall’s book, which is aimed at a popular audience, helps recover this important part of Key West’s history and thus, will make tourists more aware of a past they might have overlooked. Published by the local historic preservation board, it represents a most welcome addition to the T-shirts and plastic flamingos marketed to visitors in this unique Florida city.

The text and photos focus on the period between 1868 (the beginning of the Ten Years War in Cuba) and the 1930s when Key West’s cigar industry finally collapsed. The book begins with two short chapters describing the early development of Cuba’s cigar industry and the political
forces that inspired the establishment of an emigre colony on Key West. The remaining five chapters proceed chronologically to detail the growth and demise of Key West’s cigar industry.

Only ninety miles separate Cuba from the Keys, a distance that is politically important but climatically trivial. Both places have the same subtropical conditions valued in the production of fine handmade cigars. In the late 19th century political unrest and burdensome tariffs prompted cigar manufacturers in Cuba to develop factories inside U.S. borders, initially on Key West. The large colony that resulted became a major base of operations for exiled independence supporters, whose ranks included both owners and workers in this vital Cuban industry.

Patriotic solidarity temporarily defused prior conflicts over wages and working conditions in the Key West factories. When the war ended, workers resurrected their demands, and owners were still loathe to yield. Although the cigar industry was booming, prosperity was thwarted by a string of costly strikes and lockouts. There were other problems. Key West’s location was convenient to Cuba but remote from U.S. markets, and especially vulnerable to hurricanes. Ybor City and West Tampa were better situated and grew rapidly at Key West’s expense. During the 1920s, demand for handmade cigars plummeted with the introduction of cheaper machine-made cigars and the growing popularity of cigarettes. These problems greatly worsened during the depression of the ’30s, which dealt the clear Havana cigar industry a disastrous blow from which there would be no recovery. Key West was fortunately blessed with beaches, a balmy climate, and a legacy of interesting architecture. The place survived pretty well, but the cigarmakers and their descendants have been scattered in all directions. Books such as this one help ensure that they won’t be entirely forgotten.

Susan Greenbaum

Ben Green blends “living histories,” newspaper stories, and personal insights to describe Cortez, a fishing village of 500 people located on Sarasota Bay. In the unique position of being an informed native and an academician, Green takes readers into the hearts and minds, the work and family lives of these fisher folk; then steps back to analyze the history of the community, its current state, and its future prospects. His goal is three-fold: to leave a verbal and pictorial record of the joys and sorrows, memories and dreams, values and ideas of these people and their community over the last century; to document the struggles between Cortez and those drug smugglers, sport fishermen, law makers, and developers, who have and still want to change it for their own self interest; and to raise moral and political questions about whether our nation or the state of Florida can afford to lose the traditions still embodied in the few communities, like Cortez, that remain.

If Cortez residents and others are moved by this book to do something to protect Cortez, so much the better. Green writes with “unashamed subjectivity” about his love for Cortez people and his passion for preserving Cortez from those who would want to change it. Do not read this book and then visit Cortez as a tourist, Green implores his readers. For if Cortez does not disappear under blacktop and high-rise condominiums at the hands of developers, the next battle will be with tourists who will want to turn Cortez into a quaint museum community for their own pleasure.

Green’s light, lively prose acquaints readers with the lives of each of the twenty extended families in Cortez. He introduces his legendary grandfather, “Tink” Fulford, who lived to fish. He describes a young woman who risked her life fighting drug smugglers. In between these two, we meet the women in charge of domestic chores, decision-making, and child rearing. We go out on mullet catches with the men. We view the community through the eyes of the children and watch as they discover automobiles, dating, and “going to town.”

Through these lives and voices, Green describes the changes in the last century: the hurricane of 1921 and the disappearance of mullet; the internal combustion engine which allowed for expanded markets with long-haul trucking and fishing from outboard motor boats; increased competition, price cutting by the shippers and packers, and eventually the introduction of union organization; the automobile which pulled young people into Bradenton and had a lasting influence on the isolation and solitude of Cortez; and drug smuggling operations some years later which dramatically transformed the quiet and cohesive community Cortez had once been. Add more Northern retirees, developers’ control of local politicians and the passage of anti-netting legislation, increasing numbers of bulldozers and condominiums, and the destruction was almost complete. By the early 1980s, the combined effects of sport fishing, dredge-and-fill operations, sewage and industrial waste pollution, seawalls, and the violent destruction of wetlands almost eliminated the town’s critical resource—fish.

Ben Green believes that Cortez is a microcosm of Florida’s future. He seems pessimistic that the Florida legislature or Manatee County commissioners will limit growth or that Cortez residents will develop a plan for saving their village. If he is right, then he and like-minded
residents are hoping for another great hurricane to convince the condo dwellers that this is not a good place to live. Quite a drastic solution, with drastic effects for even the Cortez residents.

Ben Green is a wonderful interviewer and story teller. I share his passion for the preservation of isolated enclaves in America. As a social scientist, I missed an attempt at objectivity, documented sources, and a bibliography suggesting other communities with similar conflicts. But, then, that was not what Ben Green set out to do.

*Carolyn Ellis*
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Florida Historical Society annually awards three literary prizes for original work done in Florida history. These awards were announced at the 1986 meeting held in Bradenton on May 2-3. The Arthur W. Thompson Memorial Prize in Florida History for 1985-1986 went to Dr. John H. Hann of the San Luis Archaeological and Historic Site, Tallahassee, for his article, "Demographic Patterns and Changes in Mid-Seventeenth Century Timucua and Apalachee," which appeared in the April 1986 number of the Florida Historical Quarterly. The Rembert W. Patrick Memorial Book Award was presented to Dr. David Colburn of the University of Florida, Gainesville, for his book Racial Change and Community Crisis: St. Augustine, Florida, 1877-1980. This volume was published by Columbia University Press. The Charlton W. Tebeau Junior Book Award went to A Land Remembered written by Patrick D. Smith, Merritt Island, Florida. His book was published by Pineapple Press, Englewood, Florida.

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The Southwest Florida Branch of the American Public Works Association and the Fort Myers Historical Museum are making a videotape of public works projects of the depression era. Photos of the early years of the following projects are being sought: Ft. Myers Yacht Basin; Edison Bridge; Federal Building (the former post office); Page Field runway paving; Lee Memorial Hospital on Cleveland; and Water Plant at Evans and Anderson Avenues.

Individuals with photos to lend or with information on any of these projects are requested to call Patti Bartlett at the Historical Museum, 332-5955, or Ben Pratt at Wilson Miller Barton Soil & Peek Engineers, 337-4611.

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The Fort Myers Historical Museum will present the following exhibits: "Antique Dolls" (December 2, 1986-January 31, 1987); "Old Model Trains" (January 2-February 28,1987); "Edison and the People of Ft. Myers" (February 1-March 31,1987); and "Old Maps" (March 1-April 30,1987).
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"For while the tobacco habit is enslaving the men of America, we find with alarm the growing tendency of our people, especially our women, toward the formation of drug habits, morphine, chloral, chloroform and cocaine.

"While alcohol has filled our land with woe by enslaving our men, opium has reaped its harvest of devastation among our women and has wrought a weight of woe and desecration unknown to the demon of alcohol." From a WCTU column, St. Petersburg Times, November 9, 1901.
"PRESIDENT OF ALL AMERICANS"

"Booker Washington dined with Roosevelt and a lot of us editors down this way proceeded to have a series of fits. The other day J.J. Hill, the greatest railroad magnate of all Christendom dined with him; now look out for more fits - the Populists this time. In the meantime Roosevelt continues to be President - of all Americans - millionaires, farmers, cowboys and - blackmen."

St. Petersburg Times, November 9, 1901.