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FROM THE EDITORS

At the turn of the century many Americans engaged in a search for order. Buffeted by winds of change that swept across the country as a result of industrialization and urbanization, people sought ways to bring stability into their own lives and the society around them. The means, and even the specific purposes, varied, but Americans organized as never before to bring order into a world coming apart at the seams. This issue of *Tampa Bay History* highlights several local efforts to assert control over disruptive forces.

In the lead article, "The Birth of an Infant Society," Cathy Bayless Slusser describes the conditions that led to the formation of the Hillsborough County Medical Association in 1895. This voluntary organization was typical of the response of many professionals, from teachers to lawyers, who joined their colleagues to enforce high standards and improve not only their profession but also society generally. Tampa physicians used their collective strength to battle a number of common problems, including patent medicine salesmen, in the 1890s.

While physicians relied largely on self-help, some private voluntary associations resorted to political action to advance their causes. Prohibitionists represented one of the best organized and most effective political action groups at the turn of the century, and they considered their cause basic to any improvement of modern society. In "The Spirits of St. Petersburg," Jack E. Davis traces the crusade for a local-option law to prohibit the sale of alcohol beverages in St. Petersburg. Although largely unsuccessful in Pinellas County, local dry forces gave momentum to the state and national movements during the years 1892-1919.

Progressive reformers also took up the cause of conservation at the turn of the century, but the uncontrolled exploitation of many remote areas continued. During the 1930s the New Deal adopted conservation and reclamation programs designed to restore the natural environment. In a photographic essay, "Withlacoochee, a New Deal Legacy," Lewis N. Wynne and Guy Porcher Harrison graphically show the transformation of a large area of west central Florida.

In addition to a document describing "Bradenton in 1904," this issue contains book reviews, announcements and information about the 1988 *Tampa Bay History* Essay Contest. We hope you enjoy the issue.
THE BIRTH OF AN INFANT SOCIETY:
THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 1895-1899

by Cathy Bayless Slusser

On the evening of September 3, 1895, twelve men made their way from various parts of Hillsborough County to downtown Tampa. Their methods of transportation varied. Some sailed on boats while others rode on streetcars or in horse-drawn carriages. Arriving singly or in small groups, they hurried past Cass and Tyler Streets towards a lighted second floor window at 218 Franklin Street and climbed a flight of stairs that carried them to a small office situated over the Bay Pharmacy. Led by Doctors B. G. Abernethy and W. P. Lawrence, they agreed to construct an organization of physicians with the purpose of promoting the advancement of medical science and unity among its members.¹

The men quickly formed a temporary organization to conduct the business at hand. Elected as interim president, Dr. Lawrence took charge of the meeting while Dr. Louis Sims Oppenheimer acted as secretary. The physicians named their organization the Hillsborough County Medical Society (HCMS) and declared it a permanent association. After holding a second election, Dr. Lawrence relinquished his short-lived presidency to Dr. Abernethy who, along with his fellow officers, accepted responsibility for governing the newly established organization until the end of the year.²

At their first meeting, the physicians realized that they needed a constitution and by-laws and a set of qualifications for prospective members. The written guidelines would give their society strength and establish its respectability. At the suggestion of Dr. Leslie W. Weedon, Dr. Abernethy appointed two committees designed to accomplish these objectives. The Committee on Constitution and By-laws consisted of Drs. Weedon, Lawrence, Beard and Jones. With Dr. Weedon serving as chairman, the committee members agreed to draft a constitution and by-laws before the next week’s meetings. Dr. Weedon also figured prominently on the Committee on Credentials. Along with Drs. Symmes and Lawrence, he formed a panel to establish admission standards and screen prospective members. The society’s president charged both committees to report on their efforts at a meeting scheduled for the following week.³

As Dr. Abernethy adjourned the inaugural meeting and the doctors returned to their homes, the founders of the HCMS congratulated themselves on a good beginning and reflected on the events that initiated this first meeting. Designed to meet the physicians’ needs on national, state, local and individual levels, the organizational meeting of the HCMS culminated several decades of medical professionalization and followed the establishment of the American Medical Association (AMA) in 1848, the Florida Medical Association in 1874 and the South Florida Medical Society in the 1870s.
Physicians in Hillsborough County had long tried to organize in an effort to solve the public health problems of disease and poor sanitation brought on by primitive conditions and rapid growth. Individually or in small groups, they had led the fight for public health officers, a
dependable water supply, indoor plumbing and paved streets. They also worked to establish a quarantine hospital for use in times of epidemic.

In addition, the physicians hoped to improve their own working conditions and standard of living. The Tampa physician’s practice was a demanding one. On call twenty-four hours a day, he never knew when a knock on his door would take him from his bed to serve a patient. Scheduled office hours varied. Dr. Louis S. Oppenheimer remained in his office from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., while Drs. B.G. Abernethy and W.P. Lawrence were available from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Doctors often worked around-the-clock during periods of epidemic which occurred regularly. Prevention and control of such diseases as malaria, yellow fever, measles, influenza and diphtheria occurred slowly and with a great deal of patience. During this period, although epidemics were a common event, they still caused panic among residents. Accidents were also routine, and physicians never knew when their skills might be needed to treat injuries caused by runaway horses, overturned railroad cars or gunshot wounds. To reach their patients, they frequently had to travel several miles on horseback or in a horse-drawn carriage, which was often made more uncomfortable by driving rain or hot, muggy weather. Tampa physicians complained that they did not receive adequate compensation for their work. As in many agricultural areas, payment was often in goods or services.

As early as 1859, Tampa physicians attempted to organize in an effort to solve this financial problem. On June 16 of that year, five Tampa doctors, S.B. Todd, John P. Crichton, W.A. Lively, Sheldon Stringer and Franklin Branch, met at Branch’s office to discuss establishing a minimum fee schedule. At that meeting, the doctors agreed to charge specific rates for their services. Only two excuses exempted physicians from asking for the set rate. They could reduce the bill if the patient could not pay or had been under their care for a long time. By restricting physicians to certain prices, the doctors hoped to reduce competition and raise their incomes.

However, some doctors still sought other means to augment their incomes. For example, Drs. Abernethy, Lawrence and Oppenheimer advertised in the newspapers, an approach also employed by salesmen of patent medicines. Restrained by their desire to make their occupation more respectable and professional, physicians rejected the flashy methods of the patent medicine industry and limited their ads to small blocks of space that merely stated their names, office hours and the location of their homes and offices. Nevertheless, these small announcements, which sometimes included a physician’s medical speciality, were found side-by-side with the flamboyant promises made by purveyors of patent medicines.

Physicians also relied on other sources of income to support themselves and their family. Dr. John P. Wall served as associate editor of the Sunland Tribune in 1878, and later became editor of the paper. Dr. Weedon owned the Ybor Drug Company, and Franklin Branch also operated a drug store. Drs. Abernathy and Lawrence owned a large orange grove in Lee County, sixty miles
south of Fort Myers.™ Tampa physicians learned that the practice of medicine did not automatically guarantee prosperity and the art of healing could occasionally bring conflict and discouragement.

To relieve some of these problems and enhance their profession, Hillsborough County physicians formed their medical association in 1895. They felt handicapped by a variety of difficulties. Patent medicine merchants competed with doctors for their business. Epidemics, low quality medical education and questionable procedures made sickness and death winners in many battles. While the city grew furiously and some sanitary improvements were made, medicine tried desperately to keep up with the expansion. Individual efforts had made small and unsteady progress, and the physicians labored to take charge of their profession.

Evidence of success lay all around them. Tampa, with a population of 10,000, was on the road towards advancement and modernization. The city had established a department of health and made a start in forming a public health system. The Florida Medical Association (FMA) had fought successfully for a State Board of Health and influenced legislators to fund it. The AMA had mounted a national campaign to raise professional standards and medical treatment. Scientific advances were curbing the fear of epidemics and enabled doctors to prevent and cure illnesses more effectively. Physicians such as Dr. John Wall showed what dedicated and civic-minded doctors could accomplish. After his death on April 18, 1895, while speaking to the annual meeting of the FMA, the physicians of Tampa were ready to carry on his work. Five months later, they founded the Hillsborough County Medical Society for the purpose of promoting medical science and harmony among medical men.8

The initial group consisted of eighteen members with Dr. B.G. Abernethy as president.9 However, the HCMS denied membership to two men, because they did not meet the standards of the group. From society minutes it is unclear why the committee rejected Dr. Hiram J. Hampton. Most likely, Dr. Hampton had graduated from an irregular institution and used unconventional healing practices. As a result, other doctors probably viewed Dr. Hampton’s later popularity among Tampa residents with dismay. In March 1898, the Tampa Weekly Tribune reported that Dr. Hampton’s sanitarium in Tampa Heights was so successful that he contemplated constructing an addition to his building that would increase its size by at least one-half.10

The second man rejected by the society, Dr. Frederick N. Weightnovel, had a reputation as a radical. Russian-born, he had been banished from his native country for advocating violent revolution. A large man with a massive chest and shoulder-length hair, Dr. Weightnovel sold patent medicines guaranteed to restore manhood or cure female complaints. His favorite advertising technique was to float on his back in the bay or the river while eating dinner from a plate placed on his chest or smoking cigarettes and reading a newspaper. When a crowd gathered to watch his performance, he took advantage of the opportunity to peddle his wares.11

Though these antics were fairly harmless, Dr. Weightnovel’s other activities resulted in three costly encounters with the law. In 1883, the War Department had abandoned the area known as Fort Brooke, once a military reservation, and opened the land adjacent to Tampa to homesteaders. Dr. Weightnovel recruited a group of squatters and attempted to form a utopian, socialist community there. Naming his settlement Moscow, Dr. Weightnovel claimed the
An advertisement for Dr. Hampton’s Sanatorium, from the *Tampa City Directory*, 1899.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
property for himself and his followers, but local police used force to remove them from the area. Later, Dr. Weightnovel founded the Tampa Free Love Society, a group of young Tampa men who met in secret supposedly to participate in orgies. The club decided to hold a parade and a banquet at the Hotel Habana. Unfortunately for Dr. Weightnovel, the windows of the Hotel Habana’s banquet room reached from ceiling to floor and offered a view of the waitresses serving in the nude. The police raided the banquet and took Dr. Weightnovel and his colleagues to jail. Finally, Dr. Weightnovel opened a hospital in a two-story building in the Fort Brooke area on Whiting Street between Franklin and Tampa Streets. He treated mainly Tampa prostitutes and performed abortions. When a girl died there after an illegal operation, Dr. Weightnovel once again went to jail. This time, he was indicted by the grand jury. Dr. Weightnovel died shortly after that, and most Tampans believed he poisoned himself. 

While the members of the HCMS rejected Hampton and Weightnovel, the group admitted some honorary members. “In recognition of their attainments in medicine and their services to the state,” the society voted to accept Dr. Joseph Yates Porter and Dr. John Guiteras as honorary HCMS members. Dr. Porter, a native of Key West, served as the state’s first health officer, while Dr. Guiteras was a professor of medicine in Philadelphia. Several months later, the group also awarded Dr. Robert D. Murray, a surgeon in the United States Army from Key West, with an honorary membership. Such appointments increased the visibility and influence of the association.

Not satisfied merely with swelling their ranks, the members of the society spent part of their second meeting adopting the organization’s constitution and by-laws. The original constitution and by-laws were hand written and included in the HCMS minute book, where they can be found today. According to the regulations, the group’s meetings were to be held on the first Tuesday of every month. The president could hold additional meetings as needed. In order for business to take place, a quorum of six had to be present. The program for each meeting included committee reports, election of new members and a scientific presentation followed by discussion. The president appointed speakers who agreed to talk for about ten minutes on a given subject. Election of officers occurred at the first meeting of every year, and they served for one year. If for any reason an officer did not finish his full term, the president appointed someone in his place. The president also had the right to establish ad hoc committees to handle society matters. These committees usually dissolved upon completion of their work, but the Committee on Credentials was appointed yearly.

Members of the society could recommend physicians for membership. The Committee on Credentials screened candidates and reported on them in a general meeting where members voted their approval or disapproval. New members paid an initiation fee of two dollars, and all members paid annual dues. Members promised to conduct themselves in a professional manner, and if they did not, charges could be brought against them before the general membership.

Backed by an organized medical society, the physicians struggled to improve their standing in the community. They spent most of the period from 1895 to 1897 advancing public health, vying for control of the Emergency Hospital, battling irregular practitioners and overseeing the professional conduct of fellow members.
Society efforts to gain control over Tampa’s Emergency Hospital began with an attempt to exclude homeopathic physicians who used treatments that regular physicians considered questionable and even dangerous. On September 18, 1895, medical society members met and passed a resolution pledging to refrain from practicing at the Emergency Hospital until its managers barred homeopathic physicians from working there. The organized physicians also demanded that a nurse trained in homeopathic medicine be dismissed from her job at the hospital. At a meeting on October 1, Dr. Weedon reported to his colleagues on his appearance before the county commissioners. He had explained to the officials the problem of allowing irregular practitioners to work at the hospital and asked the commissioners to give the HCMS control of the facility. They agreed, and the society accepted responsibility for the institution. President Abernethy appointed Drs. Weedon, Lawrence and Jones to the Hospital Board with the authority to manage the institution. Society members agreed to serve on the hospital staff on a monthly rotational basis. Drs. Douglass, Bird and Oppenheimer formed a committee to draft a letter to the Emergency Hospital’s Board of Lady Managers informing them of the change and requesting their continued services as volunteers but under a new name, the Ladies’ Auxiliary Hospital Board. The physicians invited the women to a meeting on October 3 to discuss the situation.

However, the women did not receive the news with pleasure. Angry over the usurpation of their power and upset that neither the county commissioners nor the HCMS had consulted them in the matter, they refused to cooperate with the medical society. In a letter published in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, the women answered the physicians’ request with a resounding “No!” The women responded that the action of the commissioners and the society had relieved them of any financial responsibilities and that they would turn over the entire operation of the Emergency Hospital to the HCMS. The women announced their intention to pay off immediately the nurses and matrons and dismiss them from their positions. In a sharp rebuke of previous county commissioners’ refusal to aid the Emergency Hospital, the women concluded, “We congratulate you on having succeeded in doing what we failed to do – namely in getting the commissioners to assume the financial responsibility of the institution.”

The physicians did not lose hope of winning the women's help. On October 4, the members of the HCMS hospital committee resolved to meet with the female managers and affirmed their desire to settle “the unhappy differences that had risen between the managers and the physicians.” A compromise was reached, and the women reorganized themselves as the Auxiliary Board of the Lady Managers. By the end of October, they had begun a fundraising campaign and appealed to Tampa residents for aid in caring for the indigent sick and carrying out the work of the Emergency Hospital. Mrs. Douglass, the wife of Dr. J.W. Douglass, served as president and Mrs. W.D. Lewis as treasurer. In December, Mrs. Lewis appeared before the medical society and asked it to specify the exact duties of the hospital employees. This action showed that the women had finally accepted the HCMS’s tight control over the Emergency Hospital. In January 1896, outgoing president Dr. B.G. Abernethy reported the progress made by the HCMS in managing the hospital. Though the society “received it full of sick and without funds,” Tampa’s poor and ill were being cared for, and every bed was occupied nearly all the time.
The medical society’s hard won prize did not come without its headaches. Mrs. Lewis’s request for guidelines did not go unheeded, and the society began a three-month effort to establish a set of procedures to govern the hospital. At a meeting in January 1896, the physicians discussed hospital laws and made suggestions for improving the operation of the facility. The Hospital Board of Directors reported on its efforts to manage the hospital and noted some personnel problems. Society members agreed that if employees needed to be fired, the situation would be handled by the attending physician and the matron. Any disagreement would be settled by the Hospital Board. Physicians also approved a decision that fees collected from paying patients would go into the hospital fund. The newly elected society president, Dr. Leslie Weedon, appointed Drs. Bird, Pettey and Oppenheimer to draft a set of laws for governing the hospital and to report at a special meeting the following week.20

The committee presented a set of rules at the next meeting and won the society’s approval. However, the new regulations did not completely solve the problem. At the regular meeting in February 1896, the doctors again discussed the code and generally believed that it was inadequate. A second committee of Drs. Abernethy and Oppenheimer agreed to remodel the rules. At a meeting the following evening, the society amended and adopted the second set of laws and decided to consult with the Auxiliary Board of Lady Managers. At the March meeting, the regulations were again adjusted. Finally, after three months of experimentation and discussion, the association achieved a set of workable guidelines for the hospital. Though physicians sometimes had to be reminded of their hospital responsibilities when they neglected their duties, the institution ran smoothly and continued to aid the needy. Evidence of the hospital's success can be seen in Dr. Abernethy's proposal in July 1896 to enlarge the charity wards of the facility and the board's agreement to visit the hospital and discuss the necessary alterations with the Auxiliary Board of Lady Managers.21

Members of the HCMS viewed their control of the Emergency Hospital as only one way to help improve public health. Another means of aid lay in offering assistance in time of epidemic. Their first opportunity to act as a group came in the summer of 1896 when an outbreak of smallpox threatened Tampa residents. Led by Dr. Weedon, the society agreed that its members would vaccinate free of charge anyone who visited a physician’s office during regular office hours and was unable to pay for the vaccinations. Published in the Tampa Weekly Tribune, the resolution stated that the physicians recognized their responsibilities as “guardians of public health and [that] the first duty of physicians [was] one of prevention.”22 Dr. Weedon even went one step further than the resolution required and announced his decision to vaccinate anyone for free. The Tampa Weekly Tribune complimented the doctor on his generosity and hoped the other physicians would “follow his commendable example.”23 Epidemics hit hardest in the summer, and in 1897 the physicians made plans to deal with an outbreak of typhoid by recommending that the city establish a pest-house to help contain the disease and improve sanitary conditions.24

The physicians learned how to deal with such situations through one of their organization’s efforts to advance medical science – the monthly scientific lecture. Every meeting did not include a presentation, due to a lengthy business session or the unavailability of a speaker, but a great deal of discussion usually followed when a physician did read a paper. One such lively interchange, in response to a paper entitled “Erysipelas: Its Causes, Diagnosis and Complications,” required two pages of minutes to be recorded. Other presentations covered diseases such
as typhoid, malaria, jaundice, dysentery, autotoxemia and tetanus. In addition to the formal scientific presentations, HCMS meetings allowed Tampa physicians to discuss their cases with their colleagues and share opinions and experiences.25

Although the HCMS generally fulfilled its goal of advancing medical science, the organization only partially succeeded in securing harmony among its members. While society meetings afforded time for medical men from different parts of the county to become acquainted, conflicting opinions concerning professional conduct frequently caused dissension within the group. In a few cases, members preferred charges of unprofessional conduct against a colleague. A committee was then formed to investigate the accusations and make a recommendation to the entire society. In the period between December 1896 and July 1897, three such incidents occurred.

The first conflict arose in November 1896 between Louis S. Oppenheimer and Dr. Laura Reading. The latter probably had come to Tampa in the fall of 1895, when the earliest advertisement of her office location and hours appeared. In July of the following summer, a proposal went to the Committee on Credentials that Dr. Reading be admitted to membership in the society. Because low attendance at several summer meetings prevented business from being conducted, the committee’s recommendation was not made known for several months. However, before Dr. Reading’s membership could be put to a vote, an angry confrontation occurred between Dr. Reading and Dr. Oppenheimer that clouded the issue of her qualifications.26

On November 17, 1896, the Tampa Morning Tribune reported that Oppenheimer conducted South Florida’s first laparotomy, the surgical section of the abdominal wall. This operation performed on a young woman at the Emergency Hospital earned elaborate praise for Dr. Oppenheimer from the newspaper. “The people of Tampa should feel proud to know that they have such a skilled physician as Dr. Oppenheimer,” the Tribune remarked.27

In Dr. Reading’s opinion, however, the newspaper’s praise of Oppenheimer was totally unjustified. In a letter to the Tribune, she claimed that two months earlier, on September 17, she had successfully performed a hysterectomy by both vaginal and abdominal section. As a result, Dr. Reading declared, the distinction of completing the first laparotomy in south Florida belonged to her. She further criticized Oppenheimer for seeking publicity. Insisting that since her arrival in Tampa she had performed many operations, Reading concluded that “no physician of any standing ever keeps Raring advertisements of all they do in the paper.”28 This attack stung Dr. Oppenheimer, whose surgical activities frequently appeared in the newspaper.

Despite this public outburst, the Committee on Credentials recommended that Dr. Reading be admitted to the society at the December meeting. Nevertheless, her disparaging comments about Dr. Oppenheimer angered some society members. One of them, Dr. G.H. Altree, requested that Dr. Reading leave the room while the group discussed her case and voted on her application. When this motion failed, Dr. Altree left the meeting in disgust and did not return that evening. Finally, the society agreed to admit Dr. Reading to the group.29

Secure in her new position, Dr. Reading immediately continued her attack on Dr. Oppenheimer and presented formal charges against him before the society. Drs. Jones, Bartlett and Lawrence
agreed to investigate the accusation before the next society meeting. After collecting and examining evidence in the case, the committee reported at the January 1897 meeting that Dr. Oppenheimer was guilty of unprofessional conduct. Dr. Reading was surprised when the group also found her guilty of the same charge. The committee, with only Dr. Lawrence dissenting, recommended that both physicians be expelled from the society.  

Drs. Oppenheimer and Reading were both afforded the opportunity to respond formally to the charges. Calling the incident a misunderstanding, Dr. Oppenheimer denied the accusation and asked for time to reply. The society agreed to give him one week to prepare a defense. At Dr. Altree’s insistence, a new committee of Drs. Westmoreland, Joses and Bize was formed to investigate further charges against Dr. Reading.  

At a meeting held the next week, the society disposed of the matter. Dr. Reading did not attend the meeting but sent a note stating her refusal to remain in the society. The doctors agreed to drop the charges against her. The hearing on Dr. Oppenheimer’s case addressed the original charges brought against him. The newspaper article had claimed that Dr. Oppenheimer
performed the operation with Drs. Bize, Snavely, Bartlett, Bird and Cuervo assisting. Apparently, these physicians resented being relegated to a subordinate position. Despite Dr. Oppenheimer’s presentation of a witness and certified affidavits in his attempt to prove his innocence, the group found him guilty of unprofessional and unethical conduct. After apologizing to his colleagues, Dr. Oppenheimer escaped with a light punishment, receiving only a reprimand.\(^32\)

However, the matter did not remain closed for long. Though Dr. Reading continued to boycott society meetings, her name remained on its rolls. At the July 1897 meeting, a committee recommended that she be expelled from the society. A problem arose when the physicians realized that the two-thirds membership needed to vote for expulsion was not present, so they settled for indefinite suspension.\(^33\)

At the same meeting, the physicians questioned Dr. Oppenheimer about a recent article in the paper naming him as physician for an accident victim. Dr. Oppenheimer apologized to the group for quotes made by him about the accident and asserted that he had not known he was talking to a reporter until the conversation ended. At that time, Dr. Oppenheimer asked that his name not appear in print, but the reporter refused. Though some physicians, including Dr. Abernethy, believed the explanation adequate, others, led by Dr. Weedon, continued to object to the public statements. Dr. Oppenheimer agreed to hand in his resignation from the society on the condition that the group would not file formal charges against him. Upon agreement, he broke ties with the association.\(^34\)

In both these cases, the two controversial physicians dropped from the HCMS but remained in the public limelight. The following year, the *Tampa Weekly Tribune* commented that Dr. Reading won “new laurels every day. As a practitioner she [was] a big success and her. . . successful treatment of a daughter of a Cuban general [would] forever stamp her as a most skilled physician.”\(^35\) Stories of Dr. Oppenheimer’s skills also appeared frequently in the local papers.

With the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Tampa physicians shifted away from internal divisions and concentrated on military activities. As one historian noted, “During the mid-1890s, Tampa people paid little attention to ordinary events. What really captured their attention was the gallant fight being waged by Cuban insurgents to win their freedom from their Spanish rulers.”\(^36\) Tampans had good reasons to be interested in the war. Since the 1880s, a large number of Cubans had flocked to the cigar city, and they actively supported the struggle for independence of their homeland.

From an economic standpoint, Tampa residents foresaw the benefits that the war could bring to whatever Florida city the government chose to serve as an embarkation port for troops and supplies. A campaign began to convince the War Department that Tampa offered the best facilities in the state. Dr. Oppenheimer participated in this effort by writing a pamphlet, entitled “The West Coast of Florida as a Health Resort.” Using figures to show that for its size Tampa was the healthiest city in the United states, Dr. Oppenheimer praised the city’s climate and superb drinking water. The public relations campaign succeeded, and soon government agents arrived in the area to sound the harbor, organize transportation facilities and order supplies.\(^37\)
With the declaration of war on April 24, 1989, troops soon began flooding into the area. Housed in camps at Port Tampa, DeSoto Park, Tampa Heights, Palmetto Beach and Ybor City, more than 30,000 soldiers called Tampa home for approximately two months. On pay days, Tampa merchants earned large profits, as did the owners of gambling parlors, saloons and houses of prostitution. Along with millions of dollars spent by the army for supplies, the war also brought new residents. Some of the troops found Tampa so inviting that they remained after the war along with merchants and businessmen who had been attracted to the area by the lure of riches. Though the war in Cuba lasted only a few months, it continued to benefit Tampa for many years.38

The war affected Tampa physicians as well. A few doctors, mostly Cubans such as Dr. B.S. Leonardi, joined the volunteers bound for the fighting in Cuba. Most of their colleagues remained in Tampa to battle medical problems on the homefront. With the influx of so many people, all the physicians were needed to treat the diseases brought by the arrivals or caused by overcrowding. Improper planning caused much of the sickness. When troops disembarked from the railroad cars at Ybor City, they found no food or drink to relieve them after a long train ride. They marched to camps at Tampa Heights before finding relief. Hungry and dehydrated and wearing wool uniforms, half of the soldiers suffered from heat stroke. Poor sanitation in the camps contaminated water supplies and caused dysentery and other diseases which spread to civilians. Heavy summer rains produced outbreaks of malaria. Though the army brought its own physicians to deal with the troops’ medical needs, civilian doctors helped when they could.39

Although the society minutes from September 1897 to 1901 are lost, newspaper articles make it clear that despite disruptions caused by the war, the HCMS physicians did hold some meetings. The doctors could not elect new officers until April 1899, however. Probably the lack of a quorum at meetings caused the delay. Finally, when elections did take place, the group chose Dr. J.T. Green as president, Dr. U.S. Bird as vice-president, and Dr. L.A. Bize as secretary.

During 1899, life returned to normal, disease abated and the physicians were able to concentrate on routine matters. On April 11, 1899, a successful benefit concert was held for the Emergency Hospital. Dr. Abernethy traveled to British Honduras where he bought 300 acres and planned to organize a colony for the purpose of raising bananas. Dr. Oppenheimer entertained his brother who visited the area from Boston, and Dr. J.H. Mills made one of the first two purchases of an automobile in Tampa, paying $1,800 for the latest improved model.40 Times were improving for the Tampa physicians. Five years after creation of their organization, HCMS members could look with pleasure on their first steps at improving both their standing in the community and the health of county residents. Reflecting on their recent accomplishments, Tampa physicians faced a new century with enthusiasm.

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1 The men at this first meeting were Doctors Beard, Jones, Pettey, Snively, Symmes, U.S. Bird, Hiram Hampton, Louis Sims Oppenheimer, Leslie Weedon and Frederick N. Weightnovel. Minutes of the Hillsborough Medical Society and the Hillsborough County Medical Association (hereafter referred to as HCMA Minutes), September 3, 1895; Tampa Morning Tribune, September 4, 1895; Tampa Weekly Tribune, November 28, 1895.

2 Weedon served as vice-president, Oppenheimer as secretary-treasurer, and Bird as corresponding secretary. HCMA Minutes, September 3, 1895. The Hillsborough County Medical Society later changed its name to the Hillsborough County Medical Association, the name it still carries.
3 Ibid.

4 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 10, 1895, November 29, 1895.


6 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 10, 1895, November 28, 1895; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, October 31, 1895.


8 Ingram, “John Perry Wall,” 716.

9 The HCMS members were Doctors Abernethy, Bird, Beard, Jones, Lawrence, Oppenheimer, Petey, Snavely, Symmes, Weedon, W.E. Narton, Mendoza, Douglass, Barnett, Bartlett, Nafeno, and Olin S. White. HCMA Minutes, September 10, 1895.

10 Ibid.; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, March 31, 1898.


12 Ibid.

13 HCMA Minutes, September 10, 1895; March 3, 1896.

14 This quorum was not rigidly upheld, however, because the smallest group ever present at the meeting convened on May 5, 1896, when five of the twenty-four members attended that meeting. HCMA Minutes, May 5, 1896.

15 *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, September 19, 1895.

16 HCMA Minutes, October 1, 1895; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 3, 1895.

17 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 3, 1895.

18 Ibid., October 4, 1895.

19 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, January 8, 1895; HCMA Minutes, December 2, 1895.

20 HCMA Minutes, January 7, 1896.

21 Ibid., January 14, February 4, February 5, March 3, July 14, 1896.


23 Ibid.

24 *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, July 16, 1896.

25 Ibid., September 16, 1897; HCMA Minutes, September 7, 1897.

26 HCMA Minutes, November 21, 1895, July 7, 1896.

27 *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 17, 1896.

28 Ibid., November 18, 1896.
HCMA Minutes, December 2, 1896.

Ibid., December 2, 1896, January 5, 1897.

Ibid., January 5, 1897.

Ibid.

Ibid., July 1897.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Tampa Weekly Tribune, August 17, 1899.


Wright, “Medicine in Florida Camps,” 25-26; *Tampa Weekly Tribune*, November 17, 1898.

*Tampa Weekly Tribune*, November 17, December 15, 1898, April 6, April 13, June 8, August 17, September 14, November 23, 1899.
As St. Petersburg, Florida, basked in typical summer weather in 1913, county voters prepared to go to the polls to determine the fate of the local saloons. For years anti-liquor forces had waited for a chance to win prohibition by a local-option election. In many ways, the dry movement in St. Petersburg mirrored the national campaign for prohibition. The night before the county election, drys ended a long and energetic campaign with street parades, temperance songs and fiery public speeches. When the polls opened on July 2, members of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), with white ribbons pinned to their blouses, served cake and lemonade to the male voters. Other women, in a time before equal suffrage rights, conducted all-day prayer metings as the men cast their ballots. Believing that the moral force of public opinion would prevail over the wet interests, anti-liquor forces abounded in confidence. However, St. Petersburg merchants voiced their objections to local prohibition, and the politics of morality went down to defeat in 1913 and in subsequent campaigns. The long anticipated dry victory turned into a continual struggle over “Demon Rum” and its intoxicating evils.

Before the first national temperance campaigns in the early nineteenth century, consumption of intoxicating liquors was considered proper and expected behavior in colonial America. Only disorderly drunkards were promptly fined and locked up in pillories to dry out in public scorn. By the early nineteenth century, indulgence was on the rise, and public drinking had become associated with iniquitous behavior. The national consumption of alcohol per person nearly tripled over a twenty year period. Each American drank an average of 2.5 gallons in 1790, and by 1810 annual per capita consumption had reached about seven gallons. Public drunkenness was no longer considered an individual failing; it was a societal problem.¹

As a result, temperance agitators emerged throughout the country and formed an evangelical movement. Many early crusaders were Quaker and Presbyterian leaders who were determined to restore social discipline and curb drunkenness. Itinerant temperance agitators swept across the country, and through Christian persuasion they urged their fellowman to abstain from the evil habit before destroying his family and his soul. Beer and wine, thought to be innocuous and sometimes antidotal, were tolerated, but “Demon Rum” was a curse on the nation, in the view of many Protestants.²

The root of the drinking problem was found in the increasing number of saloons owned and operated by European immigrants. According to one historian, moral stewards of American society looked upon the foreign-born saloon-keepers as “ignorant and brutal individuals, and their trade policy resembled that pursued by criminal bands.” The saloon became a breeding ground for prostitution, crime and gambling and a haven of debauchery that threatened the sanctity of the family and American middle-class values. To eliminate these dens of iniquity, the
movement shifted from restriction to complete prohibition. In the late nineteenth century prohibitionists formed the Anti-Saloon League, which quickly gained national prominence and achieved unprecedented success in pressure politics.

Women too adopted the principles of moral stewardship. When the first mass movement of women in America was formed in the winter of 1873-74, its members gathered in city streets and demanded that saloonkeepers close their businesses, and they did in many places. This fervor led women to organize the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the Home Protection Party, which later joined with prohibitionists to form the National Prohibition Party.³

Prohibitionists became a relentless political force. They embraced a mutual resolve to legislate their moral standards and legally intervene into what opponents considered a matter of individual choice. They started at the local level by seeking exorbitant saloon licenses and restrictive laws. Next, they lobbied for local-option laws and then moved on to statewide prohibition. They expanded their crusade to the remotest corners of the country, even reaching deep into an isolated little fishing village on the west coast of Florida.

When the “Gay Nineties” arrived, a mere 274 people lived along the reticulated dirt streets of St. Petersburg, Florida. Sitting on the end of a peninsula between the Gulf of Mexico and Tampa Bay, the town was connected to the rest of the world by a single track of the Orange Belt Railway. Commercial fishing was the principal industry, and as evidenced by only two hotels, tourism was still in its infancy. The town had no jail and virtually no law enforcement, with the exception of the Hillsborough County sheriff who wandered over from the other side of Tampa

St. Petersburg’s Central Avenue in 1897.

Photograph from The Story of St. Petersburg by Karl H. Grismer.
Bay from time to time. But there were two white-owned saloons in the segregated community, and an increasing number of boatmen and fishermen passed through to wet their lips. This lure for undesirables, combined with the lack of police authority, prompted some high-minded citizens to take action.4

On February 29, 1892, thirty-one residents, ten percent of the population, gathered together to incorporate the town of St. Petersburg. After a successful vote of fifteen to eleven, with six abstaining, the town moved to elect a mayor and council. Citizens divided into open-saloon and anti-saloon factions. David Moffett, a fifty-year-old local citrus grower, lined up on the side of the anti-salooners as their candidate for mayor. The wets were represented by John Constatine Williams, a controversial old man of seventy-five who wore a long white beard. The “General,” an honorary title given to Williams by the townsfolk, had less than ten years before donated half of his 1,700 acres of land on the peninsula to found St. Petersburg. In a one-sided election he and the open-saloon ticket lost by a margin of more than two to one. Whether the loss was due to personal ingratitude toward the General or to principled opposition to the ticket he represented, an embittered Williams died two months later.5

Even with the anti-salooners, in their new positions of authority, St. Petersburg did not go dry. An 1885 state constitutional provision allowed voters at the county level to establish their own local prohibition laws. However, until the early twentieth century St. Petersburg was still a part of Hillsborough County, and Tampa with its Latin immigrant population represented one of the wettest communities in the state. Nevertheless, the St. Petersburg town council took steps to restrain public drinking by passing an ordinance that allowed only one saloon for every one thousand residents and set a license fee of $100. As a result, the community managed to have but two saloons as late as 1910.

In that same year, the Sunshine City was home to 4,127 people who faced the possibility of more saloons opening. In November, an alarmed city council passed a new ordinance to limit further the number of saloons to one for every two thousand residents. In typical temperance fashion the law also disallowed free lunches, music, private rooms and card rooms. The restriction on the number of saloons violated a state law that required municipalities to grant licenses when proper application was made, regardless the number of saloons. However, St. Petersburg city officials successfully turned away additional applicants and eschewed lawsuits by threatening to precipitate a local-option election, which might outlaw saloons altogether.6
Before 1910 ended, anti-liquor forces were encouraged when statewide prohibition became a possibility through a public referendum. In their first vote directly on the liquor issue, St. Petersburg citizens decisively supported a prohibition amendment to the state constitution by a vote of 303 to 148. But the statewide returns were disappointing to anti-liquor forces, and Florida and St. Petersburg remained wet.7

Fortune took a turn for St. Petersburg drys in the spring of 1911 when state lawmakers passed a bill to divide Hillsborough County into two separate political entities. On November 14 voters ratified the bill, which created Pinellas County. With its own independent jurisdiction sprawling from the waters of Tampa Bay in the south to Tarpon Springs in the north, the new county gave dry forces a better chance to bring about a local-option election and win prohibition.

Don C. McMullen, a forty-year-old state senator and dedicated anti-salooner who resided in Tampa, was one of the leaders in the fight for Pinellas County’s independence. He had grown up on the peninsula and was from an old and distinguished family that was among the first settlers in the area. As an attorney and respected citizen, McMullen continued to play a significant role in Pinellas County politics.8

By 1913, a progressive St. Petersburg boasted twenty-five miles of paved streets, twenty-five miles of street car lines, one hundred miles of sidewalks and the closest harbor to the Panama Canal. It also claimed to be the most popular tourist city in the South. That summer prohibitionists welcomed the opportunity to rid the city of its only blemish – two white-owned saloons. After collecting the legal number of signatures, dry forces petitioned the county to call an election to decide the liquor issue. The county commission obliged, and a vote was scheduled for July 2. Under article nineteen of the state constitution, if voters supported local prohibition, saloons that dotted Pinellas County from Tarpon Springs to St. Petersburg would be put out of business for a period of two years. Yet even in the case of a countywide wet victory, the sale of “intoxicating liquors, either spirituous, vinous, or malt,” would be prohibited in precincts that voted dry.9

The anti-liquor forces immediately set in motion a vigorous campaign of revivals, parades, newspaper advertisements and circulars. The well-organized movement combined the forces of the WCTU, the Temperance League of St. Petersburg, the Temperance Campaign Committee and later the Anti-Saloon League and the Pinellas County Civic League. Drys focused their efforts on St. Petersburg, the county’s largest city.

Arguments for a dry community centered around preserving the family and the home. For years the WCTU had published a propaganda column in every issue of the St. Petersburg Times, and the Temperance Campaign Committee followed suit just before the election. One advertisement included the claim that prohibition would enable girls and boys to return to school because they no longer had to “assist drinking fathers to earn a living.” A letter to the editor of the Times pleaded with each male voter, “in the sacredness of your home, [to] go to the trundle bed where that little fellow sleeps, push back the curls from his baby cheeks, look at that temple as it pulsates with your own blood and decide if you are willing to take the chance – and God help you to make Pinellas a clean county for your boy and mine.” Other pleas for prohibition appealed to the people’s economic interests. A dry winter playground, it was argued, would
attract more tourists who would bring more revenue. Some of the more tenuous prohibitionist arguments claimed that taxes would decline, property values would appreciate, churches would spring up, bank deposits would swell, the “white” population would grow and living conditions for the “colored people” would improve.  

To enhance campaign exposure, the county’s most widely read newspaper lent a tremendous amount of support and editorial space to the anti-liquor movement. In a time before radio and television, the local newspaper exercised a powerful voice in the community. The St. Petersburg Times gave such influence to Paul Poynter and William L. Straub. A staunch prohibitionist and a devout Christian Scientist, Poynter at thirty-eight was owner and publisher of several papers, including the Times. While a teenager in Cloverdale, Indiana, Poynter had contributed to the purchase and subsequent closing of the town’s only saloon. Later as owner of one of his first papers in an Indiana coal-mining town, he was instrumental in gaining public support for a local-option vote that closed the saloons. A short, portly man of “bulldog countenance,” Poynter continued to promulgate his principles through the editorial pages of his papers.  

The man who wielded the editorial pen for the Times needed no guidance from Poynter on the saloon issue. Seven years older than his boss, William Straub had devoted himself to improving
his adopted community. In 1911 he had successfully led the fight for political independence from Hillsborough County. Straub had a reputation for his forceful opinions and his provocative editorial cartoons, which frequently headed the front page of the Times. Like Poynter, Straub had earlier success as a newspaperman in helping run saloons out of his native state, North Dakota. Together, they were committed to repeat their triumphs in St. Petersburg.11

Unlike the drys, the wets had practically no organized movement. The only salient action taken was by the so-called Pinellas Business Boosters which circulated a letter to convince the public that prohibition did not aid business. The broadside warned that men would go to Tampa to quench their thirst and merchants in St. Petersburg would consequently suffer. It also argued that prohibition would not boost the tourist trade but destroy it. Whether the general silence of anti-prohibition forces was due to confidence of a wet victory or the lack of enthusiasm is open for speculation. In any case, the economic issue was the principal argument for wets in local-option elections.

On the evening before the 1913 election, St. Petersburg townspeople gathered in Williams Park to listen to Reverend W.J. Carpenter, a Jacksonville minister, give a vehement speech on the virtues of prohibition. Ironically, the park’s namesake was General J.C. Williams, who had headed the first open-saloon ticket. From there, Carpenter left to address blacks on Ninth Street. In Clearwater to the north, Boy Scouts led several hundred children in a parade. Temperance songs filled the air, and the words of a national WCTU speaker rang the ears of listeners.

On election day, drys continued the pressure. Voters in the city hall could hear prayers and singing coming from across the street where an all-day vigil was held in the Grace Baptist Temple. Prohibition forces had hired detectives to prevent any illegal voter actions. Despite alleged complaints from wets, the WCTU ladies stood by devotedly with their lemonade and cake. Moreover, the county sheriff and the St. Petersburg police chief were preparing to enforce the new law in case of a dry victory.12

The next day, residents were treated to one of Straub’s cartoons on the front page of the Times. Entitled “The Expulsion,” it depicted the Pinellas County voter booting a bottle of booze off the peninsula into the mouth of a hungry shark. With a vote of 796 to 696, prohibition had prevailed by a mere one hundred votes countywide. The county recorded the smallest turnout in a general election in its brief history, with only 1,492 votes polled. Two years before in the county ratification vote, 1,900 men had participated. Even the Democratic primary the year before brought nearly 1,400 men to the polls. Of the 1,429 eligible voters in St. Petersburg, only 718 bothered to cast ballots, splitting the vote evenly at 359 for each side.13

Nevertheless, the city was now legally dry, as a result of county vote. Celebrations were held at each end of the county as members of the Campaign Committee met at the Southern Methodist Church in St. Petersburg, and drys from the northern part of the county gathered at the Baptist Temple in Clearwater. At both locations there was talk of forming a citizens’ vigilance committee, and a few days later drys organized the Pinellas Civic League to aid the police in enforcing the new law. In one of Straub’s editorials the Times enthusiastically supported the enforcement league and warned that without its assistance, many “blind-tigers” – an early term for speakeasies – would go undetected by the local authorities. Despite the fact that licenses for
the two saloons were good until October of that year, the sheriff ordered them closed on July 4, two days after the election.\textsuperscript{14}
While some wets accepted the decision of the voters and the action of the sheriff, others fought back. Shortly after the election Charles Powell, a saloonkeeper from Tarpon Springs, filed a writ for an injunction against the closing of the saloons. Powell’s attorney argued that the election had not been legally advertised, and therefore, the saloons should not be forced to close. According to law, notice of an election had to be published in all county newspapers, but an advertisement had only appeared in the Times.\footnote{15}

Calling this action by the wets a “chicanery,” the Times argued that “the will of the people has been clearly and fairly and decisively expressed.” Judge J.D. Bell, a member of the Temperance Campaign Committee, acted as the county’s attorney and successfully beat back the request for an injunction. The Tarpon Springs saloonkeeper appealed this decision in late July, and Don C. McMullen, the former state senator and then state president of the Anti-Saloon League, stepped in to lend his services as legal counsel for the drys. After the third appeal, district Supreme Court Judge F.M. Robles of Tampa upheld the lower court’s ruling that an injunction could not be issued since the law had already been enacted. The saloons remained closed, but the battle was not over.\footnote{16}

As autumn shuffled in, wets opted for another approach in the courts. Still arguing that the election was illegal because it had not been advertised according to law, H.A. Farmer, a St. Petersburg businessman, filed a suit against the county commissioners rather than asking for an
injunction. In supporting the wet interests, Farmer asserted that prohibition had adversely affected the Pinellas merchant trade because customers were traveling to Tampa to buy liquor, as well as other goods. Farmer maintained that he did not support public drunkenness and would vote dry in a statewide election, but as long as Pinellas bordered the wettest county in the state and business was lost to Tampa merchants, he would not support local prohibition. This time, on October 13, 1913, Judge Robles accorded wets a favorable verdict and found the election to have been illegal and irregular.17

The Times reacted angrily to Judge Robles’ decision. “Technical rigidity is the curse of our courts and the fetish of our lawyers and we will never have an adequate system of justice in our court houses until we have substituted for it as near as practicable the elasticity of common sense,” an editorial declared. In another article published two days after Judge Robles’ finding, the Times warned that the unfavorable decision would bring about a flood of new saloons and that applications for licenses had already been filed in all of Pinellas County’s twenty-five precincts. In truth, not a single application had been filed in any of St. Petersburg’s seven precincts.18

Drys found a friend in E. B. McMullen, the county tax collector. A member of the same prominent pioneer family as the state president of the Anti-Saloon League, E. B. McMullen refused to issue county licenses until each saloonkeeper presented petitions signed by the majority of residents within the applicant’s precinct. Temperance agitators in St. Petersburg took advantage of McMullen’s clever but illegal actions and went to work. Civic League members met with the city’s new three-man commission government to propose saloon restrictions. Initially, the league pushed for prohibitory licenses. But the commissioners, fearing a recall election and feeling saloons would relocate just outside the city limits, rejected this proposal.

In late November, the city commission finally passed an ordinance with most of the league’s recommendations. Club and distillery licenses were set at $500 each, and saloon licenses were increased to $2,500, $1,000 over the standard occupation tax. Additionally, saloonkeepers were required to be city residents, and only Negroes of good character and reputation would be granted licenses. The commission, however, did not limit the number of saloons that would be allowed to operate in the city.19

In the meantime, drys became more committed in their efforts to win prohibition. A leading spokesman for the Civic League stressed that his organization would “not stop a minute until the liquor traffic is effectually banished from Pinellas County.”20 On the advice of Judge Bell to start from scratch, the Civic League and the WCTU joined forces to expand their membership and circulate petitions for a new election. Legally required to have signatures from twenty-five percent of the registered voters, the optimistic drys vowed to overwhelm county commissioners with popular sentiment. Irrepressible anti-salooners adopted the slogan, “A hundred more majority than before.”21

The Times, which had labeled the recent events a “struggle – a contest – a war,” called for an early election before the “poor losers” had time to recruit unregistered voters. By mid-November, 1913, the petitions were presented to the county commissioners. After careful review, officials threw out 150 signatures for redundancy, incompleteness or lack of
Stunned but undaunted, the prohibitionists brought in their big gun. The day after the county commission invalidated the new petition, an unrelenting Don C. McMullen, acting on behalf of the Civic League, filed a writ of mandamus in circuit court. The writ asked that the county commission be required to call another election based on the original petition for the July election. The commission countered by arguing that the first petition was not valid under the law because it had been originally submitted over sixty days before. Judge Robles, however, ruled that it had not been the fault of petitioners that the July election was not conducted according to law, and therefore, the first petition was still legally valid. This time, the commissioners considered an appeal to the state Supreme Court, but they soon acquiesced to a new election, which was scheduled for February 2, 1914.

Determined as ever to keep the saloonkeepers out of business, the drys recruited Reverend C. W. Crook, superintendent of the Florida Anti-Saloon League, to organize and lead their new campaign. Crook set up his headquarters in the First Baptist Church in St. Petersburg, and from there he traveled around the county to organize dry forces. Under his leadership prohibitionists used their influence to make sure that only trustworthy officials handled the election and that it was advertised properly. The campaign continued as vigorously as before with voter registration drives, daily public rallies, newspaper advertisements and circulars. To further advance their cause, drys boasted that local conditions had improved as a result of prohibition because during the one hundred days prior to the July election there were fifty-one percent more arrests for drunkenness than during the same subsequent period of time.

The wet forces intensified their own campaign. Although people opposed to prohibition were not formally organized, H. A. Farmer was their most conspicuous spokesman. He claimed that ninety percent of the St. Petersburg businessmen supported saloons because they boosted the local economy. However, in fear of offending those who favored a dry community, the businessmen preferred to remain anonymous. A wet advertisement published at the end of January concurred: “Our merchants in St. Petersburg can, if they dared, tell a different story.” The advertisement argued that since the county had gone dry, St. Petersburg merchants had lost about $4,000 in weekly sales. While the business was lost to the wet and “wicked city of Tampa,” this was “not so apparent to members of the Civic League, as not a great many of them are in business,” the advertisement noted. Moreover, it refuted claims by drys that other cities had seen remarkable improvements since abolishing saloons.

On election day in February 1914, each side provided transportation to carry voters, even the sick and elderly, to the polls. There they were greeted by the WCTU ladies, and sometimes last-minute campaigners for both wet and dry interests. All day, huge crowds gathered downtown in front of the Times’ office to check the latest precinct reports. As in the previous July, the election on February 2 was conducted peacefully and without complications.

The next morning, St. Petersburg was “as wet as the middle of Tampa Bay in a rainstorm.” The countywide turnout of 1,700 voters was slightly better than the first election, and it gave a win to wets by 104 votes, four more than the margin of victory for drys in July. H. A. Farmer and the
wets apparently presented convincing arguments because St. Petersburg drys suffered a humiliating defeat. Not only did they lose in every precinct except one, their support dropped twenty-three votes from the first election. Of 815 ballots cast in St. Petersburg, wets received 477 to gain 118 new votes, and 336 went to the anti-salooners, with two ballots mutilated.26

Their spirits dampened once again, members of the Civic League decided not to contest the election, but to fight for tougher restrictions on saloons. Already successful in getting high license laws, the league persuaded city commissioners to draw up an ordinance that disallowed saloons from having covered windows and that required the fronts to be clear so that the interior was visible from the outside. The law was clearly fashioned to expose those indulging in “Demon Rum.” Additionally, at the league’s urging, Negro applicants were refused licenses because they were considered irresponsible and improper in character. Blacks had never had a saloon of their own, and because St. Petersburg was a segregated community, they were effectively barred from drinking in white saloons. Under the city commission’s new decision, blacks would presumably continue the common practice of buying liquor at the back door of white saloons to drink elsewhere – a practice that had frequently been the subject of dry propaganda.27

In both elections, wet and dry forces had actively solicited the black vote, but the poll tax and the white primary obstructed the voting rights and limited the political power of blacks. Instead, drys used blacks in a different way by appealing to white racism. One dry advertisement published in the Times on election day in July proclaimed: “How is this for regulating the whiskey business? In less than ten minutes last Saturday 100 colored men were counted going in and out the back doors of our bar rooms, and most of these were young men.” An article following the initial dry victory reported that St. Petersburg residents were pleased by the election results because about “200 negroes that used to hang around the back of the saloons were now absent.”28

On March 4, 1914, the Sunshine City could again wet its lips. Three white saloonkeepers paid $2,500 each for liquor licenses, and with no ceremony nor any disturbances they opened their saloons for business. St. Petersburg would never have more than three saloons within its city limits before national prohibition, and dry campaigns would never again be as intensive. In fact, it would be over three years before another attempt at local prohibition. In the meantime, the state came to the aid of dry forces.

In 1915 St. Petersburg’s population climbed to 7,186. The city had fourteen white churches, six black churches and three white-owned saloons. That summer anti-salooners throughout Florida won a major victory when the state legislature passed the Davis Package Law. Filled with temperance restrictions, it proved to be the demise of many saloons throughout the state, including those in St. Petersburg. The law prohibited the sale of intoxicating liquors, beer or wine in quantities of less than one-half pint. Saloons could operate only between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., and they were not allowed to serve food or have window blinds, chairs, stools, benches or tables. Furthermore, anyone whose wife, brother, father, mother or sister furnished a written protest was not allowed to be served liquor. In the same session, the state legislature also passed a law that required public schools to teach children about the evils of alcoholic beverages.29
By the spring of 1917 the effects of the Davis Package Law left St. Petersburg with only one saloon. Nevertheless, on June 1, drys presented a petition to the county commissioners asking for another local prohibition election. The petition was accepted, and an election was subsequently set for July 28, 1917. However, the United States had recently taken up arms in the Great War in Europe, and St. Petersburg townspeople were preoccupied with the fate of their boys who were called up for the first draft. Consequently, the prohibition campaign was not as energetic as four years earlier, with only a few advertisements, rallies and editorials. To further aggravate matters, wets contested the election in court after 206 people asked to have their names removed from the petition. A court ruled in their favor the day before the scheduled election, and the issue never came to vote. By this time, however, it mattered little to St. Petersburg prohibitionists because the city's last saloon had closed.30

In April 1918 the Florida legislature further tightened its grip on liquor by considering a bill that prohibited the sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages by state constitutional amendment. With a few wet counties still left in Florida, including Hillsborough and Pinellas, the bill was designed to make the entire state legally dry on January 1, 1919. It passed in both houses with ease, and then went to the voters in a statewide referendum in the fall general election.31

On November 5, 1918, Florida voters supported the prohibition referendum with a decisive majority. The state amendment easily passed in Pinellas County, but the people had shown little interest. Less than one-half of the eligible voters participated countywide, and they gave a lopsided 557-to-146 endorsement to prohibition. The enthusiasm was greatest in St. Petersburg, but it also represented a meager turnout with a vote of 266 to sixty-four. Like all cities around the country, St. Petersburg was immersed in the intensities of the war, and normal community affairs took a back seat to beating the Germans. Prohibition, which once received paramount attention from the city’s leading newspaper, was now overshadowed by news from Europe.32

Before the month ended Florida Governor Sidney J. Catts called the state legislature into special session to enact new enforcement laws for state prohibition and for the state senate to ratify the federal prohibition amendment. On December 3 the federal prohibition resolution sailed through the senate, and Florida became the fifteenth state to ratify the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.33

The following day, Catts signed an emergency prohibition measure designed to replace the highly effective Davis Package Law, which had been recently ruled unconstitutional. The emergency measure became operative December 9 for a period of thirty days until the enforcement law for the state amendment became effective in January. St. Petersburg drys who had once been frustrated at the local level could now sit back and enjoy a long thirst.34

Despite several years of hard fought battles, the only threat St. Petersburg citizens had faced during wet times was largely symbolic. To prohibitionists the presence of the city’s few saloons represented primarily a stain on the moral complexion of the city rather than a real danger to the family and society. In statewide prohibition elections, when local business interests were not a factor, except for the saloonkeeper, morality prevailed. But when St. Petersburg merchants rattled their cash registers and argued that local businessmen would suffer in a dry community as
long as Tampa continued to sell liquor, wets attracted enough support to beat their moral opponents in local-option elections. To many people in the Sunshine City, the politics of profit ruled in local-option elections. British lexicographer Samuel Johnson captured the essence of this attitude when he observed, “Go into the street and give one man a lecture on morality and another a shilling, and see which will respect you most.”

2 Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil*, 13-32.

3 Ibid., 35-96.


6 *St. Petersburg Times*, September 13, 1910.

7 Ibid., November 11, 1910.


9 *Florida Constitution* (1885), art. 19, see. 1.

10 *St. Petersburg Times*, July 2, 1913.

11 Ibid., July 25, 1913, special section.

12 Ibid., July 2, 3, 1913.

13 Ibid., July 3, 4 (quotation), 1913.

14 Ibid., July 4, 11, 1913.

15 Ibid., July 5, 9, 1913.

16 Ibid., July 10, 1913.

17 Ibid., October 21, 1913.

18 Ibid., October 22, 1913.


20 *St. Petersburg Times*, October 15, 1913.

21 Ibid., October 17, 1913.

22 Ibid., November 19, 1913.

23 Ibid., December 30, October 25 (quotation), 1913.

24 Ibid., October 18, December 30, 1913.
25 Ibid., January 6, 30 (quotation), 1914.

26 Ibid., February 3, 1914.

27 Ibid., March 5, 1914.

28 Ibid., July 2, 9, 1913.

29 Fuller, *St. Petersburg and Its People*, 254; *St. Petersburg Times*, June 30, 1915.


32 *St. Petersburg Times*, November 6, 11, 1918.

33 Ibid., November 28, 1918.

34 Flynt, *Cracker Messiah*, 184.

35 Evan Esar, *20,000 Quips and Quotes* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 531.
The Depression created many difficulties for all Americans, but no single group experienced the depths of poverty reached by rural populations in the South and Southwest. For most of the people in these areas, the difficulties of the 1930s were merely continuations of the problems of the previous decade. Overproduction, drought, erosion, falling farm prices and the boll weevil produced a stagnant farm economy and an impoverished rural population. South Florida, like the rest of the South, experienced the Depression early and with devastating ferocity.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, elected to the presidency in 1932, described the South as “the nation's number one economic problem” and moved quickly to relieve the region’s distress. Among the first relief measures passed by Congress was the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which created the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture. Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, a firm believer in government action in economic and social matters, was as concerned about the rural poor as FDR. Within the administrative framework of the AAA was the Division of Program Planning, which included a Land Policy Section (LPS). The LPS sought to create programs that would upgrade land use, and it worked closely with the National Resources Committee (NRC), a privately funded organization with the same goals.

In 1934, after surveying sites in several southern states, the LPS-NRC selected south Florida as a prime area for the creation of a land management pilot program. John Wallace, brother of Secretary Wallace, was among the survey group, and on January 9, 1935, he was named the project manager for what would ultimately become the Withlacoochee Land Use Project. After establishing his headquarters in Brooksville, Wallace and his team of engineers, surveyors, foresters and lawyers began the task of acquiring land for the program, which became part of the Department of Agriculture’s Resettlement Administration. Initial plans called for the purchase of 250,000 acres in Pasco, Hernando, Citrus and Sumter counties in west central Florida, but two congressional budget revisions reduced the amount of money available so Wallace was able to secure only 113,000 acres.

The selection of south Florida as the site of a Land Use Project was based on three factors. First, the area had a high rate of unemployment and economic distress. Within the four county area that constituted the Withlacoochee area, more than fifty percent of the population was on some form of relief, while within the actual project area, the rate was even higher. Of the land purchased for the project, ninety-five percent was in the process of being foreclosed by state and county authorities for nonpayment of taxes. Federal purchase of the land would provide at least a modicum of financial relief for individuals and regional governments.

The second determinant in selecting the Withlacoochee tract was the perceived opportunity for federal land use planners to develop and refine new techniques for land management. The
previous use of the land by private owners had dramatically altered the environment of the area. Phosphate mining, truck farming and heavy timber cutting had depleted the soil fertility and had largely eliminated the habitats of wild animals, which resulted in the disruption of the whole ecology of the area.

The third factor considered in the selection process was the proximity of Withlacoochee to the heavily populated areas of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Gainesville-Ocala. The proposed project would involve hiring hundreds of individuals from the local area and would pour thousands of dollars into the local community in wages. A large urban population would also be able to take advantage of the area when restoration was completed.

The three factors which focused federal attention on Withlacoochee also determined the direction and scope of corrective programs. In order to achieve the greatest results in the area, a comprehensive land use program was developed. This plan, which stressed rehabilitation and restoration of the environment, also provided for the relocation of displaced families, the creation of hundreds of new jobs for area residents, the restocking of depleted or extinct wild animal populations and the development of public access areas for recreation and hunting.

Within weeks of the establishment of the Withlacoochee Land Use Project, Manager Wallace and his staff started to put parts of their program into operation. In January 1936, a temporary tree nursery was established. By the beginning of winter that year, over 330,000 slash and longleaf pine seedlings were planted, and an additional 913,000 were planted by March 1937. To ensure that the seedlings would have every chance of surviving, 23,000 acres of land were cleared of competing oak and brush stands. Wallace also supervised the construction of 357 miles of fire breaks and the erection of four fire towers, each 100 feet high.

New Deal planners at Withlacoochee sought to improve land uses in various other ways as well. In keeping with their plan of integrated land usage, Wallace and his subordinates seeded hundreds of acres of range land with carpet and dallis grasses. Although improved seeds were used in this effort, no attempt was made to disrupt the natural environment of Withlacoochee, and local cattlemen were authorized to continue their practice of open-range grazing. Cattle grazing produced secondary benefits of importance to the Withlacoochee experiment. First, cattle feeding on open ranges tended to reduce the hazards of forest fires by consuming patches of high grass and underbrush, and second, fattened cattle provided a source of revenue for their owners.

Critical to all the efforts of the Withlacoochee planners was the restoration and maintenance of the ecology of the project area. In order to rebuild the natural food chain, a separate wildlife and game management program was established. A herd of twenty white-tailed deer, protected by law, was introduced to replace the deer population depleted by extensive hunting. Food areas, seeded with grain crops, were established and fenced to keep out predators. Quail, wild turkeys, ducks and other game birds were counted in 1936 and each year afterward to ensure a constantly increasing population. Annual censuses of fur-bearing animals – raccoons, squirrels and otters – were also conducted. To support the growing population of these animals, over 3,000 cuttings of wild blackberries, wild plums and mulberry trees were planted in protected nesting areas created.
by project workers. Finally, game fish fingerlings were introduced into the numerous ponds, sink holes and phosphate pits in the area. In 1936 alone, over 75,000 bass fingerlings were released.

Public recreation was also an important part of the Withlacoochee project. Labor from the Works Progress Administration and the local Civilian Conservation Corps camp was utilized to construct several recreation areas. McKethan Lake, named after a prominent Brooksville native, was the centerpiece of the area, and picnic shelters, camping facilities and swimming and boating areas were constructed. The architecture used was similar to the “national park” style of log cabins and pole shelters. This genre of construction was adopted by federal agencies because of the simplicity of design, easily erected by unskilled labor, and the use of materials available from the project area. The result was a durable, low cost and highly practical building.

One of the major attractions of the Withlacoochee recreational area was an enormous magnolia tree. This tree, approximately 110 feet in height and 58 inches in diameter, was reported by many forestry experts to be the largest known.

Keenly aware of the racist attitudes of white southerners in the 1930s, Withlacoochee planners constructed separate recreational facilities for blacks. John Wallace’s 1937 report on the progress of the Withlacoochee project noted the capitulation of the federal government to local folkways without a single comment. “As there is a large negro population in some portions of the project area, one recreational development will be assigned to negroes for their use. This area will include picnic shelters and a baseball diamond.”

The development of Withlacoochee had an enormous impact on the economy of Pasco, Hernando, Citrus and Sumter counties. During the first two years of the project’s existence, hundreds of men found employment with the various programs. In December 1935, 166 men were employed, and by March 1936, the number had risen to 899. One year later, the figure had fallen to an average of 500 a month, but federal employment brought a total of $261,307 in wages into the local economy.

The involvement of the United States in World War II changed the strictly conservation and restoration functions of Withlacoochee. The vast open areas of grazing land and relative isolation of much of the project provided an excellent location for gunnery practice for pilots of the Army Air Force. A firing range was established in the area near Dade City in Pasco County, and pilots from nearby airbases made regular runs to improve their combat proficiency. A control tower and makeshift tarpaper barracks for troops were constructed on the Dade City range.

Troops from the Army’s Chemical Warfare branch found another use for Withlacoochie. The heavy growth of some of the more remote parts of the project approximated the jungle growth of combat areas in the Pacific theater of operations, and chemical defoliants were tested before their actual use in combat. With the end of World War II, Withlacoochee returned to its primary mission.

After passing through the hands of several federal agencies, Withlacoochee finally came under the control of the state of Florida. In 1954, it was placed under the administrative umbrella of the U.S. Forestry Service. In 1958, the United States Forestry Service sold Withlacoochee to the
state of Florida. Appraisers estimated the value of an average acre of land in the Withlacoochee project at $77.92, a far cry from the average price of $4.20 an acre paid for it in the 1930s. Withlacoochee State Forest, once made up of almost worthless land about to revert to the state for nonpayment of taxes, had come full circle. The interim quarter century had seen, however, major changes in land use and value. During the quarter century of federal control the forest returned in wages, pleasure and a healthier environment more than can be reduced to figures. Withlacoochee remains a living legacy from the New Deal.
Headquarters for the Withlacoochee Resettlement Project on Highway 41 north of Brooksville. This building, constructed with WPA labor, currently serves as the headquarters building for the Withlacoochee State Forest.
WPA and CCC workers who developed the Withlacoochee Project. Such projects provided work for thousands of unemployed workers during the depression.

A group of New Deal planners, led by John Wallace (back row, far right), waiting to board a Ford Tri-Motor for an aerial survey of the proposed Withlacoochee Project.
One of the major purposes of the Withlacoochee Project was to revitalize the land. Erosion was a major problem, and New Deal planners imported the “miracle” plant, kudzu, from Korea to halt the problem. Here an unidentified worker stands in the middle of a patch of kudzu, deliberately grown for the purpose of transplanting on eroded land.

Unemployment in the Withlacoochee Project area approached 95 percent, and individuals took whatever work they could find. Here two older individuals “rive” cedar and cypress shingles.
The Withlacoochee Resettlement Project encompassed thousands of acres. Within its boundaries, hundreds of families were moved off their farms and relocated elsewhere. As a result, the project area was temporarily dotted with abandoned houses.

Despite the general poverty of the farm families in the area of the Resettlement Project, some families maintained neat homesteads. The lack of electricity and money precluded luxuries, such as running water and lights. Yards were kept free of grass by “sweeping” them with bundles of gallberry bushes.
The poorest families in the area lived in crude log cabins, with few windows and only the rudest amenities. Sometimes families would convert these early log cabins to smokehouses for curing and storing meat, once they were able to build a better house.

The principal livelihoods of residents of the Withlacoochee Project area were farming and logging. Here a fairly affluent farmer operates a peanut thrasher.
Small sawmills dotted the area, and loggers relentlessly cut the virgin pines and hardwoods with little thought to the environmental consequences.

Like the pyramids of Egypt, sawdust piles, rusty pieces of wornout machinery and warping lumber marked the brief existence of a center of activity. Such sights were, and still are, common in the isolated forests of Florida.
Loggers and their families followed the sawmills. Small one- or two-room cabins were built in clearings in the woods and occupied by workers until the timber was exhausted. “Skidding” trails – rough trails for moving trees – often passed within feet of the cabin doors. Here, oxen are being used to “skid” trees to the mill.

Small phosphate mining operations were also part of the economy of the Withlacoochee area. Today, hundreds of pits dot the area – mute testimony to the exploitation of the land in past generations.
Following the acquisition of the Withlacochee property by the federal government, WPA workers constructed public recreation areas. This shed is typical of the log-and-rock style of WPA architecture for parks.

A young deer, part of a larger herd, being released. In addition to opening areas to the public for recreation, the federal government sought to restore wildlife populations, depleted by hunters and a destroyed natural environment. Forests were replanted, environmental restoration projects undertaken and wildlife reintroduced.
During World War II, the U. S. Army used parts of the Withlacoochee Project Area as a bombing gunnery range and as an area to test chemical weapons. Because of the thick jungle-like growth in the area, defoliants were tested for possible use in the Pacific theater of operations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[Editor's Note: The authors wish to express their appreciation to Roy Clardy and the staff of the Withlacoochee State Forest Headquarters in Brooksville for their cooperation in preparation of this photographic essay.]


Editor’s Note: During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading newspapers engaged in the now familiar practice of boosting both their own sales and Florida development by printing expansive special editions. Handsomely illustrated, these editions featured portraits of prominent Floridians and colorful descriptions of far-flung cities and towns. The following article describing “Bradentown,” as Bradenton was then known, appeared in a special “World’s Fair Edition” of Jacksonville’s Florida Times-Union, published in 1904. One of the original issues is preserved in the Special Collections Department of the University of South Florida Library.

Bradentown, the county seat of Manatee County, Florida, and the chief commercial town of that county, occupies a most commanding bluff on the south bank of the picturesque Manatee River, only five miles from the point at which this beautiful sheet of water empties into Tampa Bay. The approach to the town from the bay, through the serpentine channel of the river, presents a most attractive picture of semi-tropical loveliness. Here and there at intervals along the river’s banks are cozy cottages and handsome homes peeping through vistas of lofty palmetto trees, towering pines and wide-spreading live oaks, which form a bright green border for the deeper hued foliage of the orange groves extending into the adjacent country.

The situation of Bradenton, protected as it is by the broad waters of Tampa Bay and the more than a mile wide river which forms its water front, makes it an ideal location for the safe cultivation of all the fruits of the citrus family, besides all other semi-tropical productions of Southern Florida. In the great Florida freeze of 1895 the orange groves in the vicinity of Bradenton were practically uninjured and the major part of the oranges in Florida which in that year survived the freeze were shipped from this town and the Manatee country adjacent to it. The town from its high bluff position above the river derives unsurpassed healthfulness, which is still further promoted through an abundant supply of artesian water from numerous flowing wells.

The present population of the town proper is about 1,500. Several villages in its immediate vicinity augment this number between 2,500 and 3,000 people, who do their trading and have direct business relations with its merchants.

The inhabitants of the town are composed of the best elements from all sections, no town of its size in the State having a more cosmopolitan citizenship or a more orderly, peaceable and honorable class of citizens. To the fact that the sale of liquor is prohibited in the town and country is attributed the settling of so many good people here and the general peacefulness and good order which prevails.

Socially, the town compares very favorably with much older and larger communities, many of its citizens being people of literary and musical attainments of a high order, embracing elocutionists, writers of ability and expert vocal and instrumental musicians.

In the matter of educational facilities Bradenton is far ahead of the average community of its size. A county high school and a primary school with a half dozen or more progressive, capable teachers provide accommodations for nearly 400 pupils in an eight-months term of systematic and up-to-date educational work.
Five church denominations have substantial houses of worship and a goodly membership, namely: Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal and Roman Catholic.

In its liberal and progressive business men and substantial business enterprises Bradentown has one of its most promising features of future growth. Two extensive wharves furnish adequate facilities for the shopping of the large and continually increasing fruit and vegetable productions of the surrounding country. From these wharves two commodious bay and river steamers land and take on passengers, receive and discharge tons and tons of incoming and outgoing freight and numerous and coastwise sailing craft do a lively trade.

A number of substantial brick business blocks line the main street, among them the Henry L. Coe Block, containing four commodious stores on the first floor, and above a conveniently arranged hotel. The Operahouse Block, on the ground floor of which is the Bank of Manatee, postoffice and a drug store, and in its second story one of the most commodious and best equipped operahouses in the State, with a seating capacity of 800. Another substantial business structure is the handsome brick block erected by Dr. S. M. Anderson, which accommodates a hardware store and harness and wagon establishment, both occupying two floors. The most
prominent brick block of the town is the three-story building owned by Messrs. G. and A. B. Murphy and W. M. Alderman, extensive cattle owners.

This building contains four stores, an armory, telephone exchange, newspaper office, electric light and traction company’s offices and a hall for the Masonic and Knights of Pythias lodges.

Many substantial frame blocks and store houses supplement these brick structures and conveniently house the various business enterprises of the town.

The Peninsular Telephone Company operates over 400 Phones in Manatee County directly connected with the Bradentown Central office. No locality is provided with a more efficient or cheaper telephone service. A long distance system of the same company connects Bradentown with Tampa, Plant City, Bartow, etc.

The Manatee Electric Light and Traction Company is operating an electric power plant in Bradentown second to none in the State. It is supplying this town and others on this side of the Manatee River with an efficient lighting service, besides operating a trolley car line between Fogartyville, Bradentown and Manatee, three miles in length. The trolley service consists of convenient up-to-date convertible passenger cars and combination freight and baggage cars, all of which handle in a most expeditious and satisfactory manner the freight and passenger business from the steamer wharves and the Seaboard Air Line depot. Extensions of the lines are contemplated in the near future, which will reach the adjacent orange groves and vegetable sections, affording easy access and quick delivery to the steamer wharves and the trunk line railroad depot.

The enterprise was established and is being conducted with great success by Mr. John A. Graham, one of Bradentown’s most progressive citizens and extensive property owners. While the mercantile interests are well provided for by the large and varied stocks which the business men carry, there is an urgent need for more hotel accommodations and the erection of a first-class hotel of moderate size and modern equipment would provide a most profitable investment.

Another need which is becoming more felt each succeeding year is the supplying of moderate sized cottages and residences for renters. Investors in eligible town lots who will improve them by the erection thereon of houses for good tenants would be sure of most satisfactory financial returns.

The transportation facilities of Bradentown are excellent. The Seaboard Air Line, which is part of one of the great trunk line systems to the north, crosses the Manatee River, just east of town a half mile, and commodious steamers ply the bay and river between Tampa and Bradentown, connecting twice a day with the Atlantic Coast Line at that city for the north and west, and a good freight steamer connects with Mobile, Alabama, and accommodates the cattle trade to Cuba.

No place in the world offers more facilities for convenient, profitable, comfortable or healthful residence and sojourn than Bradentown. No community on earth extends a heartier welcome or
more hospitable greeting to incoming settlers or health-seeking visitors. A cordial invitation is extended to all good people from every section to come to the town and become convinced that this description of its attractions and advantages is not an overdrawn picture, but a truthful statement of the conditions as they actually exist.
BOOK REVIEWS


During the period of the Second Spanish occupation of Florida lasting from 1783 to 1821, the Florida-based trading firm of Panton, Leslie and Company (later John Forbes and Company) dominated the fur trading activities of the Indians in the southeastern portion of the present United States. The business was founded by Scots who had been traders in the region, and when the American Revolution blazed forth, the five “founding father” merchants fled from Georgia and South Carolina to St. Augustine where they made a fresh start. When Spain regained control of Florida, William Panton, with the help of Alexander McGillivray, was able to gain ascendancy over other competing firms in the competition to supply goods to the Creek and Seminole Indians.

Moving from this opening wedge, the firm established warehouses at St. Marks, Pensacola, Mobile and Chickasaw Bluffs. Soon Pensacola became the headquarters from which pack horse trains carried various articles into the interior to be traded for deerskins, furs and other forest products obtained by the Indians. In addition, the firm sold food supplies and goods to the civilian population and military outposts in Florida and acquired large tracts of land from the Indians. When competition arose in the form of William Bowles during the 1790-1800 period and Robert Ambrister and Alexander Arbuthnot in 1817-1818, the company was able to by-pass such obstacles with ease.

Research for writing of Indian Traders of the Southeastern Spanish Borderlands has been extensive. Two hundred thousand pages of documents copied from collections throughout the world have been assembled to form the papers of Panton, Leslie and Company at the University of West Florida Library. With the availability of this fine collection the two authors have written an excellent account of the company which became a frontier Sears and Roebuck. The index and maps are thorough and exact. In summary, this is a definitive work that will be a standard reference for scholars and lay readers for many years.

James W. Covington


This study is a welcome and important overview of immigrant life in Tampa, which treats the material at two levels. First, and foremost, the work focuses on Italians in Ybor City. But it also examines their experience within the context of their neighbors: Cubans and Spaniards. Through
a skillfully executed comparative approach, the authors attempt to understand to what extent a “Latin” community with shared values, aspirations, and identities evolved in Ybor City.

The work’s primary focus dictated an initial chapter on Italy and the reasons for Italian migration to the United States. The next three chapters trace the foundation of Ybor City in the mid-1880s by Italians, Cubans and Spaniards. This is followed by six chapters that focus on the political and socioeconomic development of Ybor City Italians, and their neighbors, from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s. Chapter themes include labor, ideology, institutional growth, religious climate, social relations and economic adjustment. A final chapter considers post-World War II developments and the decline of Ybor City as a “Latin” community.

“Unity amid diversity emerges as a principal theme of this community’s experience,” according to the authors (p. 319). They argue that in the case of each group “old world cultures” adapted to “new world structures” sufficiently to provide some commonality, but not enough to negate differences, which remained and changed in character. While in the early years Italians shared much with Cubans and Spaniards as they all attempted to find their place in the “new world structures,” their differences ultimately led to “divergent conceptions of group behavior,
career orientation, and upward mobility. . .that produced enduring internal sources of ethnic variation” (p. 319).

This overall generalization is very persuasive, but some of the specific conclusions drawn from the comparative perspective are problematic. While the political and socioeconomic trajectory of Italians is thoroughly documented, the research on Cubans and Spaniards is more limited, and thus some conclusions are necessarily tenuous. One example appears in the chapter on economic adjustments. The authors conclude that Italians outstripped Cubans and Spaniards economically because their strategies were more conducive to that end. “The evidence does not suggest that Cubans and Spaniards worked less hard. . .but rather that their economic goals drew upon different values, producing contrasting results” (p. 267). The problem is that while Italian adjustment strategies are analyzed in considerable detail, the condition, values and aspirations of Cubans and Spaniards are insufficiently developed to explain their economic experience. Thus, the argument, for example, that “Cuban American life-styles mitigated against the accumulation of savings or property,” is not entirely convincing (p. 268).

Despite this imbalance in the research, the study’s conceptualization and organization are solid, and it is an excellent case study of an immigrant community's formation and evolution. Furthermore, it raises issues and questions regarding immigrant group adaptation and interaction that should spark additional research by immigration and ethnic historians in general and students of the Latin community of Ybor City in particular.

Gerald E. Poyo


Fort Myers in the twenties was a small town, its population being just under 4,000. It had no industry to speak of. Its main sources of revenue were agriculture and tourism. Yet this insignificant dot on the map was the winter home of the inventor, Thomas Alva Edison, and the automobile manufacturer, Henry Ford. Tiremaker and corporate wizard, Harvey Firestone, was a frequent winter visitor. These three men, plus scientist Alexis Carrel and flier extraordinaire Charles A. Lindbergh, were the “uncommon friends” of James Newton.

The young Newton came to Fort Myers in the early 1920s to go into real estate. He acquired some raw land across McGregor Blvd. from Edison’s home and began to develop it. That proximity brought on contacts between the Edisons and Newton. These contacts grew into a deep and abiding friendship.

That friendship broadened to include Ford, Firestone, Carrel and Lindbergh, and those friendships are what *Uncommon Friends* is all about. Newton does not dwell on the well-known accomplishments of these men, but rather takes his readers behind the scenes. We see them in their shirt sleeves and hear them discussing their philosophies, their business policies and their ideas for a better world. We also read about their strength which was the result of their faith in a
Signed by Henry Ford, Thomas A. Edison and Harvey Firestone (left to right), this photograph was inscribed “To Jimmie Newton.”
Supreme Power, not necessarily following the teachings of an organized religion. We find this, strength and faith influencing their business decisions. Theirs was not just a Sunday religion.

Another fascinating facet of this book is the view of national and international politics and problems as seen by these uncommon friends. They not only saw the problems, but they also put their expertise to work to find solutions. Sometimes they were misunderstood or their motives were they questioned, but never did they compromise their consciences.

Entwined in the lives of these famous men was James Newton. He downplays his role, but the thread of his strong philosophy, upon which his life was anchored, runs through the book as a steady undercurrent. When he had to make difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions, he stood firmly on the side of his principles and let the chips fall where they would.

His steadfastness was a major contribution to these friendships. They could ask him questions and know they would not receive yes-man answers. Also, from time to time he was able to ask the key questions that could help them unscramble knotty problems. Newton was a friend with whom they could relax and be themselves. That was no small gift for men who were frequently in the glare of the publicity spotlight. He was there to give moral support when stress and burdens became too heavy to bear. Equally important, he was there on some memorable fun-filled vacations.

He was indeed an uncommon friend of these five men on whom the spotlight fell, just as they were his uncommon friends. Friendship, after all, is a two-way street. In this case it resulted in a book well worth reading.

Albert Rawchuck


In 1982, Joe and Libby Warner set out to write a history of the Manatee River and the towns and the cities around it. Five years later, the Warners realized their goal and published The Singing River. This book not only fulfills the Warners’ original intent, but goes one step further. Using original newspapers, letters, maps and diaries, as well as over one hundred interviews of Manatee County’s earliest settlers and their descendants, they have painted a picture of the people who settled along the river’s banks and their lifestyle, mannerisms and folklore.

Through The Singing River, the Warners take readers on a trip not only up the Manatee River, but through time. They detail the history of twenty-nine settlements, many of which no longer exist except in the memories of Manatee County’s earliest settlers and a few of their descendants. Beginning at the river’s mouth in western Manatee County, Florida, the authors recapture life in such communities as Snead Island, Manatee, Rye and Bethany. Following their guide, the reader travels a total of fifty-five miles inland to the community of Four Corners at the intersection of Manatee, Hillsborough, Hardee and Polk counties.
The tale that Joe and Libby Warner weave is one of Indians, Spanish explorers and fishermen, boat builders, steamboat captains, shopkeepers, sugar planters, soldiers, school teachers and cattlemen. While their characters came to Manatee County from all over the United States, one common thread, their dependence on the Manatee River, bound them together. In *The Singing River*, the authors return again and again to the theme of the river’s importance to the area. It has served as a line of communication and transportation and as a source of energy and water. The river has affected the county’s population and economic growth and recreational activities. Although they point out that the reasons for each settlement varied, the importance of the Manatee River to each of its inhabitants remains foremost.

Stories of these inhabitants are laced throughout the book. Drawing on an extensive oral history collection, the Warners recreate many of Manatee County’s most exciting moments. The day the first automobile arrived in Bradenton is described with great hilarity, as is a scene during Prohibition when the Sheriff’s Department flushed such large quantities of bootleg liquor down the sewers that a massive fish kill occurred in the river. The authors also recount the Indian legend that gave the Manatee River its nickname, “the singing river,” and recite some modern day explanations for this eerie musical sound that once could be heard at Rocky Bluff along the river’s edge. To illustrate these stories, they richly embellish the text with hundreds of historical photographs.

For those interested not only in the history of Manatee County, but the history of pioneer Florida, *The Singing River* is a worthwhile investment. Scholars, history buffs and the general public will all enjoy reading this history of the Manatee River area.

*Cathy Bayless Slusser*
ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Yesterday’s Fort Myers*, a history book featuring numerous photographs, is back in print. This paperback book, by Marian Godown and Alberta Rawchuck, is available for $9.95 from the Fort Myers Historical Museum or from local booksellers.

Florida’s Division of Parks and Recreation has reconstructed Fort Foster on the site along the Hillsborough River where it was originally built in 1836. Located in the Hillsborough River State Park, the reconstructed fort features a living history program, in which volunteers recreate the lives of soldiers with replicas of uniforms and equipment from the time of the Second Seminole War of the 1830s. The programs begin on the hour from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (excluding noon) on Saturdays and Sundays, weather permitting. Hillsborough River State Park is located on highway U.S. 301, northeast of Tampa. The park is open daily from 8 a.m. to dusk.

The Henry B. Plant Museum, located in the former Tampa Bay Hotel at the University of Tampa, is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Guided tours of the former hotel are conducted on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1-030 p.m., followed by a guided tour of the museum. The Henry B. Plant Museum is located at 401 West Kennedy Boulevard in Tampa. For more information, call 254-1891.
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COVER: "Hunting alligators in cypress swamp." A stereoscopic photograph of the 1880s, from the Tony Pizzo Collection, USF Special Collections.
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"I was afflicted for three years with rheumatism of the ankle and joints to such an extent that locomotion was difficult, and I suffered great pain. I was induced to try a bottle of B.B.B. and before I had completed the second bottle I experienced relief, and four bottles effected an entire cure. Six months have passed since the swelling and pain disappeared and I will state that B.B.B. has effected a permanent cure, for which I am very grateful. W.G. Whidby, Atlanta, Ga. For sale by Druggists." Advertisement in the *Tampa Daily Tribune*, July 28, 1897.
"GUARANTEED TO CURE"

"The length of life may be increased by lessening its dangers. It’s easier to keep well than to get well; easier to prevent sickness than to cure it. We never lapse at once from perfect health into sickness - we have warnings. Chill’s and Fever undermine the constitution, weaken and debilitate the body: Febri-Cura (Sweet Chill Tonic with Iron) is more effective than Quinine and being combined with Iron, is an excellent Tonic and Blood Purifier. It is a remedy with skill, care and knowledge back of it. It has all the good of other remedies with none of the bad. Exceedingly palatable and GUARANTEED TO CURE. Try a bottle. For sale by Maximo M. Diaz Pharmacy, Central Pharmacy, Bay Pharmacy and Tampa Drug Co." Advertisement in the *Tampa Daily Tribune*, July 28, 1897.
"THE STREETS"

"There is but one disadvantage or objection to Tampa’s wide streets and that is their capacity for holding rubbish. We believe there is an ordinance against throwing trash into the streets, but it is certainly not enforced. Of all seasons, now is the one for our city to present an attractive and neat appearance, and the Journal hopes that our honorable Mayor will impress this fact upon the scavenger, also upon the policemen, who might remedy this evil by reporting violations of the ordinance." Tampa Journal, January 5, 1887.
"DON'T DIE DAILY"

"Somebody asked City Clerk Givens yesterday if he had 'anything new.'

"'New?' replied the urbane official.

"'No - unless it is a novelty to describe the weather as hot and the times are dull. Why, people haven't even energy enough to go out and die nowadays. Look here at this record of death certificates issued this year and last.'

"An examination of the record showed that in July of last year thirty-two burial permits were issued, while up to date in the present month but three have been given out. This shows one of two things. Either the people of Tampa have fallen out of the habit of dying, or they are being buried outside the city limits. As a matter of fact, Woodlawn cemetery is the only one for which a permit is required, and the burying grounds outside the corporation may still be receiving daily accessions to their silent population." *Tampa Daily Tribune*, July 28, 1897.
"KING OF BLOOD PURIFIERS"

"The old way of delivering messages by post boys compared with the modern telephone, illustrates the old fashioned treatment and "blood medicines" compared with the quick and positive action of the "King of Blood Purifiers" - Parker's Sarsaparilla. It drives out and keeps out all impurities and disease germs, and keeps the blood pure and plentiful. Ask for Parker's Sarsaparilla and use no other. For sale by Maximo M. Diaz Pharmacy, Central Pharmacy, Bay Pharmacy and Tampa Drug Co." Advertisement in the *Tampa Daily Tribune*, July 28, 1897.