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CONTENTS

From the Editors 3

Communications 4

ARTICLES

"I'm a Stranger Here:" Blues Music in Florida .................................................. By Kent Kaster 5

Transportation in Florida from Oxen to Airplanes: A Photographic Essay ............... By Hampton Dunn 24

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

War Comes to Tampa Bay: The Civil War Diary of Robert Watson ....................... By Ronald N. Prouty 36

BOOK REVIEWS

Dunn, Florida: A Pictorial History .................................................. By Edgar W. Hirshberg 66

McDonald and Woodward, Indian Mounds of the Atlantic Coast: A Guide to Sites from Maine to Florida ............................................................ By Nancy Marie White 68

Reaver, ed., Florida Folktales .............................................................. By Patricia H. Waterman 69

Rinhart and Rinhart, Victorian Florida: America’s Last Frontier .......................... By Ruth A. Banes 70

Wills and Morris, Seminole History: A Pictorial History of Florida State University .................................................. By Jana S. Futch 72

Proctor and Langley, Gator History: A Pictorial History of the University of Florida ................................................................. By Terry A. Smiljanich 73

Announcements .......................................................... 75

Notes on Contributors .......................................................... 76

Tampa Bay History Essay Contest .......................................................... 77
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FROM THE EDITORS

Much of American history has been told and remembered as the story of great men - explorers, generals, presidents, captains of industry. Over the past two decades, a new generation of historians has reminded us that ordinary men and women of various colors and ethnic backgrounds have helped shape American society. The difficulty, of course, is that most ordinary people do not leave written records, such as letters and diaries, from which historians can reconstruct their lives. However, young historians have shown remarkable ingenuity in locating sources that document the experiences of previously invisible people. The so-called "new social history" has uncovered long neglected areas of the American past and encouraged a rewriting of the history books to reflect the contributions of common people.

This issue of Tampa Bay History features two award-winning articles that look at the everyday lives of two groups of Floridians - Confederate soldiers and black musicians - who lived a world apart. The lead article, "I'm a Stranger Here: Blues Music in Florida," won first prize in the 1988 Tampa Bay History Essay Contest. The author, Kent Kaster, uses little-known studies from the 1930s, recent interviews and music lyrics to sketch the nature and role of blues music in black society.

Second prize in the essay contest went to Ronald N. Prouty for his annotated diary of a typical Confederate soldier. Written by a Key West resident who served in the Coast Guard around Tampa Bay during 1861-62, this document not only records the daily life of Confederate volunteers, but it also provides a rare glimpse of the experiences of Tampa Bay residents at a time of turmoil and uncertainty.

On a lighter note, Hampton Dunn draws from his extensive personal collection a selection of photographs portraying changes in "Transportation in Florida from Oxen to Airplanes." This issue also includes book reviews and announcements of interest to friends of history in the Tampa Bay area.

In preparation of the 1989 observance of the tenth anniversary of the publication of Tampa Bay History, the editors are planning a special anniversary issue for next June and a campaign to assure the financial viability of this nonprofit journal. Toward this end, renewal notices now offer subscribers the opportunity to contribute more than the subscription price of $15 annually. Everyone who contributes $25 or more will be listed by name in each issue. Through this means we hope to keep Tampa Bay History in operation without sacrificing quality or raising subscription prices. Needless to say, we appreciate your continued support, and we hope you enjoy this issue.
COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Editors,


Having been involved in organized medicine at the county, state, and national level for 40 years, I appreciate her article. Obviously she sought out information about the infant society in great detail and without partiality. I enjoyed it very much and hope that all of the members of the Hillsborough County Medical Society have an opportunity to see the excellent article. I am sure that you already know that the county medical associations, or societies, today still have all the problems that she discusses in the early years of the infant society. We probably have more problems today, but the early problems have changed very little.

I wish to express my appreciation and enjoyment of the article. It shows that Ms. Slusser did her homework well and developed a most interesting history.

Cordially Yours,

Charles K. Donegan, M.D., F.A.C.P.
“I’M A STRANGER HERE”:
BLUES MUSIC IN FLORIDA

by Kent Kaster

As much as any state in the American South, Florida evokes a variety of vivid images in the public imagination. In literature, books such as *The Yearling* convey a striking sense of time, place and atmosphere. In terms of the South’s enduring mystique and rich cultural heritage, the state of Florida occupies a prominent place. The abundant treasure of black culture and folk life found in the state has done much to ensure this. Through such works as *Dust Tracks on a Road* and *Mules and Men*, native Floridian Zora Neale Hurston revealed the rich traditions of the communities within which she had grown up. However, in comparison to other southern states, such as Mississippi or Texas, little is known about blues music in the lives of black Floridians. Histories of blues music in any area, such as the Mississippi Delta, rest largely on the extensive recordings of performers from that region. Very few commercial recordings emanated from the artistry of Floridian blues performers. As a result, knowledge of blues music in Florida remains minimal when compared to Mississippi, Alabama or Texas.

However, “Tampa Bound Blues,” “Jacksonville Blues” and “Tallahassee Women” represent song titles which show a strong relationship between blues music and Florida. In fact, the lyrics to “Mobile Blues” indicate that black Carolinians, among other southerners, both recognized and reiterated this relationship.

Drop down in North Carolina, you don’t
find me there,
Ah, you go to South Carolina, and
check it out there,
Go down in Georgia, don’t find me there,
Just drop on down in Florida,
and find your loving Daddy somewhere.¹

Afro-American music, including the blues, has its roots in the slave experience. Rhythmic singing eased the burdens of slavery. This communal experience became more individualized after the Civil War when tenant farming replaced plantations. Work of a more solitary nature led to freely structured individualized songs, often embellished by falsetto and extended vocal phrases, known as field hollers because of where they were performed. When jobs required a more collective effort, work songs still provided the favorite type of accompaniment for southern blacks. Freed from slavery but still oppressed by economic, political and social restrictions, blacks developed a self-consciousness that musically transformed the field holler and the work song into the blues. Beginning in the Mississippi Delta, the new music spread throughout the South. Ever present in good times and bad, the blues functioned as an expression of black identity and provided an outlet for the communication of various feelings.²
Beginning in the 1920s, phonograph record companies successfully marketed their product to blacks through a variety of techniques, including mail orders and advertisements that ironically employed racist stereotypes. This selection of ads and clippings includes (upper left) an announcement by Paramount Records that the company had hired J. Mayor Williams as “Recording Manager of the Race Artists’ Series.” The advertisement to the right promises a free portable phonograph in exchange for coupons given with the purchase of records by Memphis Minnie.

Photograph from The Story of the Blues by Paul Oliver.

After the turn of the century, several factors assured the spread and perpetuation of this new American music. Itinerant blues musicians found temporary employment at so-called jook joints, where southern blacks gathered for low-cost entertainment. Black traveling shows, such as the Theater Owners’ Booking Agency, offered steady employment to male and female performers, and stars like Bessie Smith attained celebrity status. The arrival of the phonograph, coupled with the introduction of the “race record” produced by race labels, gave blacks a new medium for their own amusement. The recognition of a black buying public sparked the blues recording boom of the 1920s. The Depression brought new hardships for black communities and blues musicians, but some performers weathered economic distress in northern cities, especially Chicago, where “house rent parties” featured blues singers who raised money to pay the rent. The enthusiastic response heralded the increasing importance of urban centers to blues music.
The common association of blues with either the Mississippi Delta or Chicago overlooks the musical heritage of other areas such as Florida. However, despite significant obstacles, especially the scarcity of recordings to serve as guideposts to names, locations and personalities, the character of Florida blues can be unveiled by concentrating on three areas: nationally recognized individuals from the state, the jook joints hinted at in Zora Neale Hurston’s literary work and local musicians whose lives reveal the rich tradition of Florida blues.

The earliest recordings by a Florida bluesman to gain nationwide popularity debuted on the Paramount label via the talent of Blind Blake. Mystery clouds the origins of the famed guitarist whose fretboard skills left many listeners referring to the instrument in Blake’s hands as a talking guitar. While some sources cite Blake as a native Tampan, the majority agree that it was Arthur Blake, born around 1900 in Jacksonville, who had such a great influence on commercial recording prior to the Depression of the 1930s.

Like many black performers of the day, Blake departed from his home state to display his skills before appreciative crowds on the traveling medicine show circuit. Audiences offered enthusiastic responses to Blake’s stage antics, including some exciting behind-the-head guitar playing. Flashy techniques, however, neither overshadowed Blake’s renown on his instrument nor the respect his artistry received from audiences and musicians alike. Blending ragtime influences with an advanced finger picking style, Blake’s command over his instrument made recordings of “Early Morning Blues” and “West Coast Blues” seem to leap out at listeners. In more relaxed settings, live audiences experienced the subtleties and surprises of Blake’s improvisational skills, which he had earlier perfected in Florida.

During the thirties Blind Blake arrived in Chicago and became a crowd pleaser at house parties throughout the urban area. The welcome mat was always extended to all musicians at Blake’s apartment at 31st and Grove Avenue, and a steady flow of blues and good times heightened Blake’s performances which included appearances by Blind Lemon Jefferson, Little Brother Montgomery and Barbeque Bob. As with his beginnings in Florida, details concerning Blake’s last days are shrouded in mystery. In all likelihood the Florida bluesman recorded up to the time of his death with his last recording appearing in the 1940s. A compilation of testimonials regarding his demise describes Blake’s end in a violent context, perhaps in an unfortunate streetcar accident. Blind Blake honed the elements of his style in Florida but displayed them before a national audience.

So too did Tampa Red, another nationally famous rural blues player. Hudson Whittaker took his professional name from the city in which he developed his identity as a blues musician. Born in Smithville, Georgia, on January 8, 1903, Whittaker migrated to Florida following the death of his parents. While growing up, the reddish haired youth toted his guitar around Tampa’s streets, sharpening his abilities at every opportunity. Eventually, nearly everyone associated the name Tampa Red with the tag “Guitar Wizard,” as he was sometimes billed. He developed a unique finger-picking style combined with a deft use of slide on one of the earliest electric guitars. Eager to perform, the traveling bluesman honed his rhythm and blues stylings in night spots along Tampa’s Nebraska and Central Avenues, as well as in the Sulphur Springs area. Tampa Red also spent time in the rough jook joints of neighboring Polk County both as a performer and patron.
Tampa Red departed Florida in the mid-twenties to travel with the Theater Owners’ Booking Agency, through which he met Georgia Tom Dorsey. The duo successfully combined their talents on such hit recordings as “Tight Like That.” In the thirties the itinerant musician traveled the same path as Blind Blake by becoming a part of the Chicago house-rent-party entourage. Close friendships developed among all the musicians, and one of Tampa Red’s closest friends was Big Bill Broonzy, one of the great country blues guitarists who later drew high compliments from artists as diverse as Muddy Waters and the Beatles.

Broonzy’s description of his blues playing friend sketches Tampa Red as a quiet and kind individual, who for the most part possessed an even temper which at times could flare into heated confrontations. Any violent outbursts, however, were overshadowed by a friendly and humorous disposition. Big Bill Broonzy recalled one event which, although not seeming humorous at the time, elicited laughter from both Broonzy and Tampa Red once the whole affair was over. After returning empty handed from a fishing excursion, Tampa Red tried to fool his wife with a store-bought fish. Broonzy expressed his own apprehension by recalling: “I stayed at the door so I wouldn’t have far to go when she got mad, because she was a strong woman. He knew it and I did too, because she had thrown us out before.” As the fuse of Tampa Red’s wife’s temper shortened, the fearful duo made a hasty retreat down the stairs and out the door, laughing about their narrow escape over drinks.

Florida’s Tampa Red experienced the unfortunate yet similar fate of other bluesmen across the country. Song agents and promoters cheated and double-crossed the trusting guitarist leaving him little of his royalties. Like his friend Big Bill Broonzy, Tampa Red rode the crest of blues popularity in Europe during the 1960s, but again financial rewards failed to equal his popularity. Also like fellow Floridian Blind Blake, Tampa Red passed away in obscurity, reportedly in a Texas nursing home during the seventies.

The names Blind Blake and Tampa Red represent the only two Florida bluesmen on nationally selling commercial records of the pre-World War II era. However, a lack of recordings on the part of Floridian blues artists does not make the music an unknowable entity. Other southern areas, rich in black music traditions, were similarly bypassed by talent scouts on recording expeditions.

Fortunately, the work and life of Zora Neale Hurston, the black author who grew up in the all-black community of Eatonville near Orlando, captured the essence of black Florida communities. Hurston’s work celebrated the social lives of blacks, largely unwritten about at the time, revealing the intimate relationship blues music had with the community. Nowhere did the blues have a greater or more prominent voice than in the jook joints of rural Florida.

Zora Neale Hurston translated her experiences amidst local black communities like Eatonville into the 1942 work *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Hurston ably reconstructed her experiences into vivid images of sweaty jook nights.

Polk County. After dark, the jooks. Songs are born out of feelings with an old beat up piano, or a guitar for a midwife. Love made and unmade... Dancing the square dance. Dancing the scronch. Dancing the belly-rub. Knocking the right hat off the wrong head,
and backing it up with a switch-blade. . . And the night, the pay night rocks on with music and gambling and laughter and dancing and fights.  

Untangling the origins of the word “jook” (or “juke”) presents a difficult task, but descriptions and definitions appear vividly and readily. In *Mules and Men*, Zora Neale Hurston described a jook as “a fun house, where they sing, dance, gamble, love, and compose ‘blues’ songs incidentally.” Usually no bigger than a small room, the jook appealed to workers in rural areas, such as sawmill camps, who regarded the jook as an oasis in the middle of vast toil and monotony. Patrons might crowd onto a dance floor made of wooden planks or perhaps bare ground, moving against the other bodies as the aroma of fried fish, beer and barbeque whetted appetites and the sound of a beat up, boogie woogie piano moved the dancers around the floor.

Free flowing liquor did little to advance Florida jooks as centers of wholesome virtue, and many activities under their roofs accented their less than spotless reputations. Often jooks hired girls to dance with customers, and after a few drinks and a dance or two, the girl might lead the customer to a nearby car or cottage. Jooks of this nature were known as “Long Houses,” which Zora Neale Hurston described as “A long low building cut into rooms that all open on a common porch. A woman lives in each of the rooms.” Obviously, blues music was not the featured attraction at a long house jook. The lure of sexual liaisons and the comfort of cold beer and strong whiskey invited some blacks while others avoided the bluesy refuges. A group of blacks from Cross City, calling themselves the Dixie Harmony Four, assured Stetson Kennedy in 1939 that “don’t nobody go there but outlaw people.” Nevertheless, Zora Neale Hurston confessed in 1934, “Musically speaking, the jook is the most important place in America. For in its smelly, shoddy confines has been born the secular music known as blues, and on blues has been founded jazz.”
In the late thirties jook patrons crowded the piano as the first rumblings of favorites such as “Pine-Top’s Boogie-Woogie” livened up the evening. Many customers joined in at their favorite parts, encouraging the performer to play all night. Crowd-drawing piano players might make enough money putting in all nighters at camps, such as Barker’s near Lakeland, that day jobs would be unnecessary. Beating his feet on the piano pedals for a percussive effect, the accomplished jook musician could keep couples dancing the belly-rub all night, thereby guaranteeing more food ordered, more liquor purchased and more blues wailing throughout the evening.\footnote{13}

Live entertainment lured crowds to jooks for nightly dancing, but the phonograph proved equally popular. Benny’s Place, a jook in Hernando County, located four and a half miles northeast of Brooksville at the Camp Concrete Company Settlement, offered a nickel phonograph to its patrons with a selection of twelve recordings. Among the selections in May 1937, a customer could choose “The Nashville Blues,” “Kind Hearted Women,” “The Kidnapper Blues,” “Blue and Evil,” “Rattlesnake Daddy” or “Drinking My Blues Away.”\footnote{14} Patrons arriving in front of Benny’s Place were notified by a sign which announced, “Every Tuesday nite is Ball Nite – Everybody come.” Such invitations promised a special evening of moonshine, fish and barbequed meats, mixed with dancing favorites such as Tampa Red on the phonograph machine.

The nickel phonograph had a big impact on the blues music of Florida, and recordings such as “Pine-Top’s Boogie-Woogie” and “Mistreating Blues” achieved incredible popularity. Vocal recordings, as opposed to instrumental compositions, found a particularly enthusiastic response in rural areas, where jooks enlivened the surroundings. Whether the location was in Tampa, Orlando, Sanford or Perry, many of the most popular songs were lyrically changed to satisfy local tastes. One example came in a version of “Troubled in Mind,” sung by some tie-choppers in a jook near Palatka:
I’m gonna lay my head
Out yonder on that railroad line,
Just to feel that Special
Running ’cross my mind.
My yeller gal done quit me,
And my mind is in a mess;
I try to sleep at night
But my heart won’t let me rest.  

Such revisions underscore the link between blues music and the personal lives of blacks throughout Florida. The altered lyrics, molded by the details of black Floridian lives, voiced the emotions and concerns of those within the community.

The notoriety of a good many reoccurring songs in jook joints throughout the state illustrates the relevance of their subject matter to daily situations. Under the auspices of the Federal Writer’s Project in 1939, folklorist Stetson Kennedy questioned members of the Dixie Harmony Four about jook joint numbers. In an office in Cross City in Dixie County, the quartet, made up of black males ranging in age from twenty to thirty, mentioned a jook song known as “Poor Stranger Blues.” While the quartet mainly performed at churches and parties, they were familiar enough with the composition to recall a few lines from it.

I’m a stranger here,
Jus blowed in-to town ...
I’m a stranger here,
Jus blowed in-to town ...
Some people like high yellers,
But gimme my black and brown. . .

The Dixie Harmony Four remembered hearing this song in jook joints of Perry, Florida, and throughout Suwanee County. The popularity and wide performance of “Poor Stranger Blues” indicate a strong identification with migratory travel, perhaps the steady journeys of working through the lumber and phosphate camps. As well, the final lines highlight a consciousness of skin color among blacks in the state.

Polk County inspired one of the most popular songs in the state – “Polk County Blues.” In her 1935 book, *Mules and Men*, Zora Neale Hurston reported that Charlie Jones sent her to Bartow and Lakeland in her quest for folk material. With a hint of disbelief, Jones inquired of Hurston, “Ain’t you never hea’d dat in Polk County de water drink lak cherry wine?“ For the most part, the song’s numerous verses describe experiences in the labor camps of Polk County.

I got up this morning, and I knowed I didn't want it.
Yea! Polk County!
You don't know Polk County like I do.
Anybody been there, tell you the same thing, too.
Eh, rider, rider!
Polk County, where the water taste like cherry wine.
A subsequent verse voiced despair over and dissatisfaction with the wandering life of the labor camp worker, while citing Tampa as a more desirable location.

Ruther be in Tampa
With the whip-poor-will
Than to be ’round here –
Honey with a hundred dollar bill.\textsuperscript{19}

While despair or loneliness may have resided in some of the blues songs popular in Florida, others commemorated the good times. One in particular celebrated the virtues of Ella Wall, known as the queen of love in the jooks of Polk County. Zora Neale Hurston illustrated one of her many experiences on a bluesy Saturday night in a humming jook. “Over at the Florida-Flip game somebody began to sing that jook tribute to Ella Wall which has been sung in every jook and on every single ’job’ in South Florida.” Hurston embellished her description by providing two verses from the jook tribute.

Go to Ella Wall
Oh, go to Ella Wall
If you want good boody
Oh, go to Ella Wall.
Oh, she’s long and tall
Oh, she’s long and tall
And she rocks her rider
From uh wall to wall.\textsuperscript{20}

Not all of Zora Neale Hurston’s contributions in uncovering Florida blues appeared in literary form. In 1935 she accompanied Alan Lomax southward on a folklore collecting trip. Alan Lomax and his father, John, proved to be pivotal figures in blues history. Together they brought the legendary Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter out of a Texas penitentiary and preserved his raw talent on record. Years later, the Lomax instinct brought Muddy Waters in Mississippi to the rest of the music world. The success of the collecting trips in Florida rested on Hurston’s immediate and easy access to small rural communities. Trips to Belle Glade and Chosen in June 1935 yielded the recording of migrant workers Booker T. Sapps, Roger Matthews and Willy Flowers. Sapp’s train imitation workout on the harmonica accompanied another blues harmonica standard by Matthews entitled “Fox and Hounds.” Willy Flower’s slide guitar performance highlighted the rendering of “Levee Camp Holler.” The combination of all three musicians’ talents on one song offered results which blues expert Bruce Bastin called “One of the finest small jook bands ever to be documented.”\textsuperscript{21}

Through Hurston, Lomax uncovered talent which he felt rivaled blues legends of the day. Ozella Jones, discovered on the State Farm in Raiford and whose “holler” singing style reflected the residual influence of the field holler in rural Florida, prompted Lomax to place her talent above that of Bessie Smith.\textsuperscript{22} In a similar vein, witnessing the talents of Gabriel Brown in Hurston’s hometown of Eatonville prompted Lomax to call Brown “the finest Negro guitarist I have heard so far, better even than Leadbelly although of a slightly different breed.”\textsuperscript{23} Brown vindicated Lomax’s accolades by moving to New York, where in 1943 his playing still retained
Zora Neale Hurston listening to Rochelle French and Gabriel Brown in her hometown of Eatonville, Florida, during June 1935.

Photograph from *Zora Neale Hurston* by Robert E. Hemenway.

Zora Neale Hurston at a Federal Writers’ Project book exhibit in 1938.

Photograph from *Zora Neale Hurston* by Robert E. Hemenway.
its Florida roots. Indeed, Brown’s last release in 1952 featured a traditional country blues number despite the increasing popularity of urban blues styles. He later returned to Florida, where he was reportedly killed in a boating accident in the 1970s.24

Hurston and Lomax recorded their many discoveries in 1935, and their efforts materialized into a significant compilation album, entitled *Boot That Thing*. Without this important fieldwork the existence of these Florida blues musicians and their performances would have gone unrecognized. *Boot That Thing* looms especially large in music history due to the scarce amount of Florida blues on commercial recordings. Furthermore, several decades of national blues popularity would pass by before any collecting would be undertaken again in Florida.25

The work of Zora Neale Hurston and her contributions to understanding black folk life make clear that recordings may not serve as the well upon which to draw information about Florida blues, but more localized and unwritten sources do provide insight. Many aging blues musicians and singers now live in obscurity in southern communities, never performing and giving no clue as to their early activities. The examples of individuals who presently reside in Florida highlight the low profile of blues music in the state; yet they confirm its glorious past, its vibrant present and its assured future.

The moniker “Washboard Bill Cooke” suggests the instrument upon which William Abercook staked his reputation, but it does little to reflect the colorful past of the blues musician who grew up in DuPont, Florida, a sawmill village where a jook joint was his first home. Located on the east coast, about fifty miles from St. Augustine, the DuPont of Bill Cooke’s youth possessed one of the largest sawmills in the United States. With rural isolation defining the borders of the village, the weekends were ignited by the excitement of the local joint, which during the week hummed only with the activities of the Abercook family. A converging of circumstances determined that the Abercook household would double as the local jook joint, where the sounds of blues music proved a leading attraction. In the camps, the biggest families resided in the largest house, so that the ten-room house came to the Abercook family by virtue of Bill’s many brothers and sisters. His father went by the name Jabber Abercook, but the boy really only knew his stepfather who treated Bill like a son. The Abercook household represented the only social center for the weekend, and when Friday evening arrived, the entire area came out for a big party. The sawmill workers received their pay once a month, while those farming in the area enjoyed a weekly salary, but together they all flocked to the weekend festivities of the jook house which acquired the name “Nit and Jenny’s.” Everyone arriving at the jook expected a great time as Bill's smiling stepfather invited everyone to play the southern card game known as the Skin Game. While his stepfather dealt the cards, Bill’s mother cooked up a delicious dinner for the hungry crowd.26

Jook night may have been eagerly anticipated by the laborers who were ready for a night of socializing after a week of hard work, but for the Abercook children it simply meant an earlier bedtime than usual. Bill, the oldest male of the children, circumvented the curfew by crawling out of bed and quietly peeping through a knothole in the door to watch the men and women dancing the belly-rub and the boogie-woogie. The dancers coordinated their movements to the percussion of someone shaking a tambourine made out of beer can tops or to an individual pounding out a blues rhythm on a piano. Usually the dancing continued uninterrupted until a
voice called out, “Ladies and Gents, get in a circle,” which signalled the beginning of a dance called the “Buck ’n Wing.” Many of the movements in this dancing resurfaced generations later in break dancing, according to Bill Cooke, thereby indicating its cultural longevity.

Washboard Bill’s curiosity placed him at the teetering edge of a possible confrontation with his parents, but Bill kept a watchful eye and an alert ear on the evening’s escapades so that he might relay all the details to the area children on the following day. Once the punctuations of dancing feet, highpitched laughter and competing voices died down, young Abercook hastily jumped in his bed and feigned snoring, knowing that his parents would soon pass by his room on their way to retiring for the evening. On the following day an enraptured young audience of boys and girls congregated behind the house to view a repeat performance of the previous evening’s jook dancing.

Unlike many blues musicians, Washboard Bill never actually entered the arena of performance during his childhood years. Instead, he actively participated in the musical culture around him and built up a wide range of personal experiences which he would later integrate into his musical style. Through his teens and up to his midtwenties, Washboard Bill remained close to the area of his birth and worked a variety of odd jobs in order to help his family. While “Nit and Jenny’s” served as the main social spot for several years, other establishments took its place once the sawmill changed owners and a new family occupied the big house. With the closing of “Nit and Jenny’s” came the arrival of new jooks in the outlying areas. “Cooters” and “Shullers” joined the roll call of south Florida jooks, and they quickly grew in popularity in the absence of the Abercook’s nightlife haven. For the most part, the names of jook establishments sprang from the names of their operators. However, this was not a hard-and-fast rule, as Bill Cooke happily remembered a place named “The House of Joy,” a regularly frequented blues establishment, run by a woman known as Fanny. On a Friday or Saturday night it was unusual not to hear someone say, “Let's go jookin.” Under the roofs of places like “Cooters,” “Shullers” and “The House of Joy,” couples danced the belly-rub and the Lindy hop to a steady blues rhythm.

By his twenties Washboard Bill yearned to see the rest of the country. So in 1931 he set out on the path of hoboing, committed to acquiring “an education that money can’t buy.” What he got was a treasure of experiences to incorporate later into his music. One vivid recollection came from a train which he hopped in Jacksonville bound for River Junction, Florida, where he saw his first hobo jungle. He later stopped in Pennsylvania and killed chickens for one family in
exchange for food. He built up a reputation in the neighborhood, and many people would urge
their friends to “Come see the Florida Chicken Killer.” His years of hoboing ended in 1941 when
he returned to the life of steady employment. New York City in 1946 found him working in a
bar, where a lone musician impressed him with a performance on a washboard. Following this
experience he constructed his own instrument and set off on a new course where he could
express himself in music. From that point on, the Floridian became known as Washboard Bill
Cooke.

In 1955 the adeptness of Bill Cooke’s washboard skills captured the attention of folk artist Pete
Seeger, whom Cooke fondly describes as “a real human being.” Their mutual admiration led
them to include a third party, the twelvestring blues performer Brownie McGee. Not surprisingly
the end result of this collaboration contained strong, traditional rural elements. As a part of this
ensemble the washboard playing of Florida’s Bill Cooke found an audience with the release of
Folkways Records’ *Washboard Country Dance Music*. Washboard Bill Cooke now lives in West
Palm Beach, Florida, and he continues to play his washboard for interested crowds. However,
his music is not represented on commercial recordings, and he remains an obscure figure in blues
music, offering more insight into the little known aspects of jooks in Florida, as opposed to
actual blues music in the state.

No individual better represents the low profile of blues performers in Florida than the dynamic
Mary McClain. Having never recorded, she is today relatively unknown outside this state, but
those who have witnessed her performances are enthusiastic in their praise. Until 1981 few of her
neighbors in Manatee County’s Palmetto knew that she had ever been a performer. Yet, once her
rediscovery became public knowledge, Mary McClain drew large crowds to her infrequent but
powerful live engagements in Tampa, Bradenton, St. Petersburg and Miami. Despite years away
from the spotlight she continues, even at more than eighty years of age, to be one of the most
exciting blues singers in the state of Florida.

Mary McClain ran away from the coal mining country of Huntington, West Virginia, where
she was born in 1902. Once several miles separated her from Huntington’s Logan County, she
joined the traveling Rabbit Foot Minstrel Show, where the initial role of chorus girl turned into
that of star singer. A long career of traveling in show business brought her into association with
such names as Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole and B.B. King. By 1944 Mary McClain, or
“Diamond Teeth Mary” as she became known due to the alleged diamonds she once wore in her
teeth, performed before large crowds on the traveling circuit. While fame came rapidly, careless
money management left her little to show for her success.

Mary McClain promised her husband that she would retire from performing when she reached
the age of sixty. In 1962 she honored her promise when a trip to Florida resulted in a permanent
move to Bradenton in Manatee County. The blues world appeared nothing more than a memory
when she joined and became active in a local church. The former crowd-drawing entertainer
slipped into the obscurity of a neighborhood which had no idea who she was. Her church’s view
of blues as the devil’s music kept her from returning to the stage in spite of continuing financial
problems.
In 1981 researchers from the Smithsonian Institute and the Florida Folk Arts Program stumbled across McClain in Bradenton. With some prodding, she accepted their invitation to return to the stage at the American Folk Festival at Wolf Trap in Washington, D.C. Her return debut preceded an appearance at the Florida Folk Festival in White Springs. At eighty years of age, Mary McClain stunned the crowds, with her electrifying performance the highlight of both programs.\textsuperscript{30} Since her comeback, she has made appearances in St. Petersburg and in Tampa, as well as a much heralded engagement in Miami. In addition, she proudly possesses a collection of European newspaper articles which describe and pictorialize her brief 1985 stint across the sea. The Florida Folk Heritage Award recognized her talent in 1986.

Diamond Teeth Mary continues to give an occasional performance, and announcements of her appearances consistently draw devoted fans who thrill to her impassioned performances of “St. Louis Blues” and other standards. Presently she resides in rural Palmetto amid rows of one- and two-room houses which are indistinguishable at night due to a lack of street lights. Financial problems continue to trouble her, but she is entirely uninterested in doing any recordings.\textsuperscript{31} Were
she to accede to a recording session, she would likely gain a place in blues history. Despite performing infrequently and never recording, Mary McClain continues to be one of the most enduring and popular blues performers in the state of Florida.

Noble “Thin Man” Watts and his recent return to recording and performing make him a prime example of the relatively unknown character of blues music in Florida. An east coast Floridian by birth, Noble Watts has ridden the entire gamut of experiences in blues music: from rough-and-tumble jook joints in countless rural areas throughout the state, into national exposure with bigname tour packages and a number-one record on the Rhythm and Blues Chart, back to seeming obscurity in Florida and then onto once again displaying his saxophone skills on record and before avid blues audiences. His life and music go a long way toward fine tuning the details of Florida blues.

The small town of Deland, Florida, located between bustling Orlando and the sandy beaches of Daytona, is home to both Stetson University and to Noble Watts. When the thirties had only just begun, five-year-old Noble had already become interested in the piano. Musical activity characterized his early years up through high school until he eventually arrived with his saxophone in Tampa. There the ever-eager saxophonist crossed paths with Tampa native and jazz great Cannonball Adderley who, along with future Duke Ellington collaborator Herbert Jones, convinced Watts to attend Florida A&M University. Alongside Cannonball and Nat Adderley, Watts performed in Florida A&M’s marching band.

By 1945 Noble Watts, college-educated and ever improving on his instrument, toured with an extremely popular Florida blues band known as the Honeydippers. This ensemble of Florida bluesmen blazed through countless one-night stands up and down the state. Just a brief glimpse of their exploits illustrates further the nature of the Florida blues scene while at the same time reinforcing the point that high visibility does not characterize the history of blues in Florida.

When the Honeydippers arrived with instruments ready in a city like Tampa, they headed for the areas where blues reigned supreme. Central Avenue sparked the night life of black Tampa, and the din of its activity echoed across the rows of clubs for blocks. If the rhythm and blues hot spots along Central Avenue proved unsatisfactory, a popular club on Nebraska Avenue, known as the Board, offered patrons the option of drinking downstairs on the first floor or joining the dancing couples upstairs at the Blue Moon ballroom.
Orlando also lured blues bands to perform their sets at the Quarterback Club and the Sunshine Club. The Sunshine Club featured another blues-influenced entertainer from Florida – Ray Charles. With similar schedules of playing up and down the coast of Florida, it was inevitable that the path of Noble Watts and the Honeydippers would cross with that of Ray Charles.

Watts vividly recalled the day in Jacksonville when the Honeydippers needed a piano player for their next few performances. The answer to their dilemma came in the form of Ray Charles. “I remember Ray Charles standing in short pants in the musicians’ union office in Jacksonville,” Watts reminisced. “He told the leader of the Honeydippers, Charlie Blantley, that he could play.” Consequently, Charles, whom Watts described as a carbon copy of Nat King Cole at the time, filled in on piano whenever necessary, be it in Orlando or Tampa.

When Charles left Florida for Seattle, he set out on the course which would make him a legend, while Noble Watts remained with the Honeydippers, solidifying their reputation throughout the state. While the big city clubs drew large crowds, they did not guarantee much money for musicians, so that the Honeydippers made frequent stops at jook joints throughout Florida.

Hillsborough County offered saxophonist Watts his first jook joint encounter in Plant City’s tiny Shell Road Inn. The entire area measured no larger than a small room, and it had a sand floor. A small stand had been constructed in the corner, offering barbequed foods and beer and wine. With a capacity for no more than fifty people, it came as no surprise that when a blues band set up for the evening, people stood shoulder to shoulder with much of the overflow gathering outside. As the Honeydippers entered the Shell Road Inn, Watts disbelievingly surveyed the area as he walked through the door. Surprised yet unsure, Watts asked of Charlie Blantley, “We’re going to play here?” Band leader Blantley whirled around on the sandy floor and replied with a resounding “Yes.” Despite his initial hesitancy, Watts blew his saxophone with all his energy for the transitory clientele who came and went throughout the night. Jooks became a mainstay of the Honeydipper’s itinerary, with rural joints in Palatka, Sanford and Miami welcoming Watt’s honking saxophone. Fast and at times frantic schedules of playing successive jook dates may have presented less than ideal conditions, but Noble Watts recalled those nights as “fun and good experience.”

The combination of honing their skills in clubs like Jacksonville’s Two Spot and perfecting the excitement of the live shows in Plant City’s Shell Road Inn formed the Honeydippers into one of the most popular blues bands in the state. Famous musicians often highlighted the evening by arriving either to jam or to convince the Honeydippers to move to a big city like New York. Unfortunately, the Honeydippers never reached an audience outside their own state, partly due to the fact that they recorded only two or three sides for the Deluxe record label out of Miami. Today these few recordings are so rare that not even Noble Watts owns them. The saxophonist surmised that had the band done more records, and thereby toured behind them, the Honeydippers would have been an extremely popular item on a nationwide scale. The Honeydippers’ one-time popularity around the state, followed by their relative obscurity, attests to the limited impact which Florida blues made on the national scene in many cases, but it confirms the music’s existence and its role in the social life of black Floridians. While Noble Watts may regret the Honeydippers’ lack of national acclaim, his own personal fame came in the fifties.
In 1957 Noble Watts’ experiences on the road placed him in New York City for a time. With Jimmy Spool, a guitarist from the Carolinas, Watts put together a band whose members seemed to click as a group. The Deland native's honking saxophone propelled the group onto touring shows with the likes of Ruth Brown, Fats Domino and Chuck Berry. Watts and guitarist Spool harnessed the high level of creative energy amongst them by coming up with a song entitled “Hard Times.” The duo procured a label for their band’s effort, and in 1957 “Hard Times,” on the Baton label, headed for the number one slot on the Rhythm and Blues Chart.

Segregation inspired Watts and Spool to write “Hard Times.” Personal experience also helped them write a follow up hit, entitled “Jukin,” which sprang from Watts’ remembrance of countless Saturday nights when friends would tell him “Let’s go jooking.”

Watts continued to perform, even at New York’s legendary Apollo theater in the 1960s, but matching the popularity of “Hard Times” proved a difficult task. He eventually moved back to Deland, Florida. For a time, the days of performing and recording blues music appeared to be a part of the past. However, the eighties brought Watts together with a white blues band known as the Midnight Creepers, thereby returning Noble “Thin Man” Watts to the Florida blues scene.33
Emigrating southward from Chicago, the Midnight Creepers based themselves in the Deland-Daytona area of Volusia County, and together with Watts’ legendary saxophone they have turned in smoldering performances throughout the state. Collectively, Watts and the Midnight Creepers have issued an album entitled *Daytona Blues* on Deland-based Kingsnake Records. Among the high points of this effort stands the unmistakable tenor sax of Watt’s fifties smashes “Jukin” and “Hard Times,” both re-recorded for *Daytona Blues*. Kingsnake Records simultaneously captured the driving intensity of Noble Watts’ blues artistry on his triumphant return to vinyl with the aptly titled *Return of the Thin Man*. Watts exhibits particular pride over this album which he feels is strengthened by its blending of various blues and jazz styles. The saxophone solo on Watts’ original piece “Confusion” particularly pleases Deland’s rhythm and blues legend, who believes that the track will keep him in step with the times through its appeal to younger music listeners.

When asked recently if Chicago Blues or the Delta sound had a counterpart in Florida, the veteran bluesman replied that the state never really had its own sound. However, the performer of nearly four decades cited *Daytona Blues* as the result of Watts’ and the Midnight Creepers efforts to create what he called “Florida Swamp Blues.” Watts’ background and ability, joined by the spontaneity and modern influence of the Midnight Creepers, offers both recorded and live evidence of the continuing influence of blues music in the state of Florida.

A history of Florida blues music emphasizes the element of migrating people and oral traditions. Deep roots in folklore, as opposed to widespread existence on commercial recordings, characterize a good part of its formative years. Zora Neale Hurston’s writings, memories of raucous good times in rural jook joints and noncommercial field recordings provide a keyhole through which to view Florida blues music. Such sources point toward understanding the music’s existence within the rarely documented aspects of personal lives, specifically in black communities. By focusing on local individuals, some who teeter on the edge of obscurity, one discovers a rich past for Florida blues. Droves of avid blues aficionados who flock to performances by blues queens like Mary McClain confirm the music’s contemporary vibrancy in Tampa or St. Petersburg, just as in years when it lured people to remote jook joints. Continued high energy performances by musicians like Noble Watts insure that this contribution to American culture will continue to flourish in Florida. Despite any previous conceptions, Florida is a state of sand, sun and rhythm and blues.

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26 Washboard Bill Cooke, Telephone interviews (August 18-19, 1987).

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TRANSPORTATION IN FLORIDA FROM OXEN TO AIRPLANES: A PHOTO ESSAY

by Hampton Dunn

Tourism “made” Florida, but without transportation, there would be no tourists, or developers of any kind. Indeed, improvements in transportation have often preceded significant economic spurts. In the beginning, the Florida peninsula was an uninhabited wilderness, infested by mosquitoes, infected by malaria and infiltrated with wild animals. The first Indians arrived by walking, and they eventually pounded out paths through the woods. Then they traveled by horseback, enlarging the trails that finally would become roadways.

Early European mariners discovered Florida’s marvelous harbors, which explains why this area became “the cradle of America.” The Conquistadores – Ponce de Leon, Panfilo de Narvaez, Hernando DeSoto and Pedro Menendez – came and started the first settlements in what became the United States. DeSoto’s party boasted that Tampa Bay was the “best port in the world.”

It was not until after Florida became a territory in 1821 that much of the interior opened to white settlement. The Spanish colonialists had been content to stay put in the coastal communities of St. Augustine, Key West and Pensacola. With the development of the steamboat, Florida’s numerous rivers, lakes, creeks and later canals attracted these vessels. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, river boats took visitors exploring to the bowels of Florida’s woodlands and to such exotic sights as Silver Springs and Green Cove Springs.

After the Civil War the railroad barons, Henry M. Flagler and Henry B. Plant, revolutionized travel with their iron horses. They also built elegant hotels to accommodate their passengers, and Florida became a mecca. Little towns sprang up along the routes, and permanent settlers moved in. The arrival of the railroad opened up Tampa to explosive development in the 1880s.

After stage coaches, steamers and railroads came the automobile, turning America into a “nation on wheels.” Henry Ford produced a vehicle that the average American could afford, and after World War I, “Florida – or Bust!” became the slogan for nomads heading south. The Florida real estate boom of the 1920s resulted, and even though it was followed by a bust, the setback was temporary. The decades after World War II saw spectacular growth, fueled in part by the construction of an interstate system of limited access highways that dramatically reduced travel time from the north.

Meanwhile, the airplane vastly accelerated the pace of travel. It was in the Tampa Bay area that commercial aviation was introduced to the world. On January 1, 1914, an intrepid pilot named Tony Jannus began flying passengers on a regular schedule between St. Petersburg and Tampa.

Finally, it should be noted that Florida is the birthplace of space travel – just as Jules Verne predicted many moons ago. He envisioned flights to the moon by rockets launched in “Tampa
Town.” It came to pass that he was not far off target: Man was sent to the moon from Cape Canaveral, only about 100 miles from “Tampa Town.”

A French visitor, Edmond Johanet, came through pioneer Florida in 1890, stopping at a number of interior towns. His impressions of his travels appeared in the book *Un Francais Dans La Floride*. The Frenchman spent time in the town of Brooksville, the county seat of Hernando County. A boy, an ox and a cart must have been a rare sight for Johanet during his visit to Brooksville.
In 1938, the Peninsular Telephone Company (now General Telephone of Florida) was busy stringing a toll-route line from Tampa to Brooksville through some rather rugged countryside for the Bell Telephone Company. Oxen were still used because they could stop dead in their tracks when directed to do so by the linemen.

A horse-and-buggy traffic jam complicates travel on the Lafayette Street Bridge in Tampa (on today’s Kennedy Boulevard) during this scene from the turn of the century. The minarets of Henry B. Plant’s Tampa Bay Hotel loom in the background. A cyclist makes his way through the congestion by using the streetcar track as a bike path.
Open-air street cars clanged along the double track on Tampa’s Franklin Street when this busy scene was snapped at the turn of the century. The view extends northward on Franklin Street from Lafayette Street (now Kennedy Boulevard) at the edge of the Court House Square.

This boat carried hunters on a day trip out of Fort Myers and along the Caloosahatchee River. The day’s game hangs proudly from the boat’s roof. The correspondent who mailed the postcard from Fort Myers to his mother in New Castle, Delaware, wrote: “This is a usual thing here.” It was postmarked May 7, 1909.
A Ford jalopy makes its way down Main Street in Hardee County’s Bowling Green during 1910. Except for the automobile, the two pedestrians (to the left) appear to be the only movement along the unpaved streets.

One of the first automobiles in the Fort Myers area was this vehicle transporting women at the Koreshan Unity development in Estero during the early twentieth century.
A group of motorists donned their Sunday best for an afternoon of “joy riding” in an early model car in Tampa in 1914.

These Florida drivers depended on a different kind of horsepower to pull the out of the mud. This drama took place on the Russell farm at Fort Ogden in DeSoto County about 1920, and it was repeated elsewhere all over Florida before the roads and the autos became more sophisticated.
In October 1919 every seat of this jitney bus was filled as the driver carried passengers between Tampa and Clearwater. The side curtains could be lowered for customers’ convenience in instances of bad weather.

During the 1920s, the automobile reached small-town America, but as this scene in downtown Auburndale shows, traffic was not a problem.
Completion of the Gandy Bridge between Tampa and St. Petersburg was imminent in 1924 when this group went out to inspect the job. Space was left in the concrete paving for tracks for an intercity rail line, but it was never put into service. The bridge was the dream project of George S. Gandy.

As late as the 1930s, some areas of Florida were scarcely accessible to twentieth-century automobiles, except by nineteenth-century means. For years the Punta Rassa Ferry chugged back and forth to Sanibel Island. It is shown disgorging a load one day in the 1930s. This postcard was sent on December 12, 1937.
The Orange Blossom Special first came into Naples, Florida, on January 7, 1927. It was the first passenger train of Seaboard Air Line Railway, and service continued until 1971.

Pioneer aviator Lincoln Beachey was the first to fly a self-propelled airship in Florida, at Jacksonville, in 1908. He was the first to fly an airplane in the Sunshine State, at Orlando, in 1910. He is shown here in his Curtiss Pusher in Tampa in 1911. He first flew on Sunday, February 19, and was promptly arrested on charges of disturbing the peace.
On February 21, 1911, Tampa’s first air meet took place at the old race track near the McMullen Aviation Field, site of present-day Tampa International Airport. Crowds of curious and excited onlookers gathered to watch the historic occasion.

The Miss St. Petersburg, a Liberty-motored, all-metal plane, was one of a fleet used by Florida Airways in 1926-27 on the first airmail route in Florida. The ten-passenger craft was used on the run from Jacksonville to Tampa to Fort Myers and to Miami.
This man started the world’s first scheduled commercial airline on New Year’s Day, 1914, between St. Petersburg and Tampa. He is Antony “Tony” Jannus who flew the Benoist Airboat Old 43.
St. Petersburg acquired an airline in 1934 with the award to National Airlines of a 143-mile mail route between the Pinellas County city and Daytona Beach via Tampa, Lakeland and Orlando. The airline had five employees, including George T. (“Ted”) Baker, the dauntless architect of National Airlines, who is shown here (center in shirtsleeves) proudly displaying National’s ten-passenger Stinson in 1936.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


*Editors’ Note:* All of the photographs in this essay are from Hampton Dunn, *Florida: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Virginia: Donning Company, 1988). For a review of the book, see pages 66-67 of this issue.
In the early days of the Civil War, Florida felt little effect of the conflict waging to the north, but this soon changed. On April 16, 1861, just six days after the surrender of Fort Sumter, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a naval blockade of the Confederacy. The intent was not to invade, but rather to hold key positions along the coast, break up supply routes and generally disrupt the Confederate economy. The Union blockade was at first ridiculed by the South, but by the end of 1861 the acquisition of 200 ships by the U.S. Navy made the blockading fleet large enough to be divided into four commands and sufficient to extend along the entire Confederate coastline from the Potomac River to the Mexican border. As men from around the South enlisted in volunteer companies to fight, others became blockade runners, risking their vessels and their lives to supply these soldiers with food, arms and clothing. Civilians also began to feel the realities of war as everyday items became increasingly hard to get. Due to the blockade, a simple cup of coffee soon became a luxury.

The U.S. ships that patrolled Florida’s gulf coast belonged to the East Gulf Blockade Squadron, headquartered at Key West and responsible for the waters between Cape Canaveral and Pensacola. At Tampa Bay the Federals established a base of operations on Egmont Key and

*The author thanks Barry Domenget, Chris Graham, Dale Beremand and Roger Lancaster for their assistance.
posted a twenty-four-hour watch from the lighthouse. Small, swift boats from the blockading barks, the *U.S.S. Kingfisher* and the *U.S.S. Ethan Allen* sat poised to intercept any Confederate vessel spotted sailing in the Bay. Expeditions from the Union gunboats conducted numerous forays designed to cripple Confederate operations, destroy salt works and capture utilitarian vessels for U.S. service.

Florida’s vulnerable shoreline was a source of concern to Governor John Milton. Although the entire coast could not be defended, Milton proposed that signal posts be established at main points. He suggested that signal stations be under the charge of a new coast guard, composed of men in boats with oars and sails and with each boat armed with a four-pounder cannon, muskets or rifles and cutlasses. The governor also called for the placement of large calibre guns at shore batteries for use by artillerymen at the most important points along the Florida coast. Between these points, small bodies of infantry were to be stationed. Expressmen on horseback were to carry intelligence from the coast guard to warn of any approach of the enemy. Governor Milton organized his Florida Volunteer Coast Guard and called it into the service of the State of Florida and of the Confederate States by Special Order No. 2, on November 27, 1861.

The defense of Tampa Bay followed Governor Milton’s outline. Two companies of infantry, Companies D and E of the 4th Florida Regiment, drilled on the parade ground of Fort Brooke in Tampa. Units from the Volunteer Coast Guard manned signal stations at Pinellas Point, Maximo Point, Gadsden Point and Shaw's Point. Captain William Turner's Independent Horse Company provided cavalrmen to ride express between these posts. Finally, artillery batteries were manned at Fort Brooke, Spanish Town and Shaw's Point to guard against enemy assaults.

This was the situation at Tampa Bay when Robert Watson, a twenty-six-year-old Bahamian-born carpenter arrived in December 1861. Watson, a resident of Key West at the outbreak of the Civil War, was only one of many Floridians displaced by the war, but he assured a place in history by keeping a daily journal as the war carried him from Key West to the Tampa area, where he remained for six months. From there, he went on to fight in the battles of Chickamauga and Missionary Ridge, before making his way to the final surrender at Appomatox.

With Key West in Union hands, Robert Watson had fled the island in the company of three friends on September 27, 1861. Explaining his flight, Watson wrote in his diary that he left, “Owing to the political affairs of the country and the Federal troops having possession of this place, and as it is rather unsafe for a southern man to live here.” He first took a schooner to the Bahama Islands, after which he worked his way to Jacksonville on a leaky boat, arriving on November 15. Several days later on a train ride to Lake City, Watson met two Key Westers, Henry Mulrennan and Walter Maloney, who were en route to Tallahassee. Mulrennan convinced Watson and several of his Key West friends, Olivevus Marcus, Alfred Lowe and William Sawyer, to enlist in Mulrennan’s company of the Volunteer Coast Guard, which was stationed at Tampa Bay. The group of volunteers then reported to Cedar Keys, where, on December 13, 1861, they were sworn into the service of the State of Florida and the Confederate States.

Robert Watson’s original journal is apparently either lost or in unknown private hands, but a transcript, made in 1939, is available at the Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Park. The
The Tampa Bay area in 1861.

Map by Ronald N. Prouty.
following excerpt from the diary contains the complete text of all entries made during Watson’s stay in the Tampa Bay area. The unedited entries provide a rare glimpse of life around Tampa Bay during the first year of the Civil War.

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Dec. 13  ... Lt. Mulrennan\(^6\) took us before Judge Steele [in Cedar Keys] and we were sworn into the service of the State of Florida and of the Confederate States of America.

He came to our quarters this evening and told all hands that whoever was willing to join the Coast Guard must be ready by 12 o’clock the next day but I am sorry to say that not one of the party would join, they wished to go to Key West.

Dec. 14 Left Cedar Keys in the sloop Ocaola [Osceola] for Clear Water Harbor at 4 o’clock PM and arrived at 3 o’clock PM 15th inst. Called on Gus Archer, Dick Mars, John Lowe\(^7\) and some more Key West unfortunates. They were all very glad to see us and treated us like brothers.

Dec. 16 Walked five miles out in the country to get a cart to take our baggage to Tampa.\(^8\)

Saw the owner of the cart who promised to take us through next day but that he would have to take our things to his place that night in order to make an early start in the morning. Went on board, packed up our baggage, put them in the cart and walked back to his house after bidding our friends good bye. We slept at his house.

Dec. 18 Turned out at 4 o’clock AM, got breakfast and started for Tampa, a distance of 35 miles, arrived at Tampa at 5 o’clock ahead of the party, for on the road I met a Methodist minister who, seeing that I was very tired very kindly took me through in his buggy, the rest of the party arrived about one hour later. We went to the house occupied by the members of the Coast Guard\(^9\) and took our quarters with them. Found that Lt. Maloney\(^10\) and twelve men were on a cruise down the bay in the sloop Cate Dale,\(^11\) they arrived today and we reported ourselves to him. He told us that he would send us to Point Panellas in a few days, that point being our station for the present. Called on Messrs. Crusoe, Jandrill, Kemp and other Key Westers who are living in Tampa.

Dec. 21 Took our things on board of one of our boats, a 14 oar boat and started at 9

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Photograph from Kinfolks by William Curry Harllee.

Robert Watson, shown late in life with his wife Caroline.
o’clock AM for Point Panellas where we arrived at 4¼ o’clock.

Dec. 22  Lt. Maloney and myself left this place at 3 o’clock PM for Tampa but we had not gone but a few miles when it fell a dead calm and we had to pull for Gadson’s Point, a distance of 15 miles. When we got there we anchored the boat and laid down on the oars and tried to get a nap but it was such an uncomfortable bed that we could not get any sleep and about an hour later, 11 o’clock PM, a light breeze sprung up and we got under way and arrived at 1 o’clock AM.

Dec. 23  Began a clothes chest for my trunk is use up.

Dec. 24  Launched our second boat and had a jolly time of it. Mr. Post requested Lt. Maloney to name her Mollie Post which was done. He brought down a lot of whisky and we launched the boat with Mr. Crusoe and little Mollie Post in her. When the boat was in the water Mr. Crusoe gave us a short but very appropriate speech after which we all took a drink, and after supper went serenading and got gloriously tight on egg nogg.

Dec. 25  Took dinner with Mr. [George V.] Rickards and a splendid dinner it was. We spent a very agreeable day at his house and at night he had some of the best egg nogg I ever drank.

Dec. 27  All hands left today in our boat for our station where we arrived at 4 o’clock PM.

Dec. 29  Mr. [Robert, B.] Smith began drilling us today for the first time and the most of the party went through the facings very well.

Dec. 30  Sunday, washing clothes and making wash tubs out of whiskey barrels.

Dec. 31  The guard at the point reported a boat coming up the coast. We manned the boat and went after her, she proved to be a friend. Went back and drilled. Worked nearly all day building palmetto shanties. Some of the camp hunting and fishing, oystering, clamming & etc. & etc. Thus ends the old year 1861 and may the year 1862 be a more peaceable and happy year to us all and may the Southern States prosper in all its undertaking, gain its independence and be a prosperous, happy and powerful nation, and may we all return to our happy homes and firesides is my prayer. Amen. R. Watson. Point Pinellas Station January 1st
1862, Fort Buckley. New Years day, all hands in good health and spirits, working on the palmetto shanties, but who can tell where we will be next New Years day? The day ended as usual, with a drill.

Jan. 2 I was on guard on the point all day watching the blockading bark [the U.S.S. Ethan Allen] got back to camp too late to drill.

Jan. 3 While drilling this afternoon, the guard from the three miles distant from the camp, reported a boat coming along the coast. One boat was manned and went after her. She proved to be a boat from Clearwater Harbor, Gus Archer on her. Mr. Smith fired one shot at her which brought her to, got some soft soap from them as we were out of soap.

Jan. 4 Some of us fishing, others hunting. Drilled after dinner. A boat was reported coming toward the bayou where we are stationed. One boat was manned, all armed with muskets. Mr. Smith fired one shot across her bow. She proved to be the Cate Dale with Lt. Maloney and two recruits on board. No news of importance except an account of a battle
at Louisburg, 800 prisoners taken by our troops. After supper we all sat around the camp fire playing music, singing, dancing, spinning yarns & etc until 10 o’clock PM when I went to bed.

Sunday 5 Began my morning devotions by washing ten pieces of clothes, on guard tonight, everything quiet all night.

Jan. 6 Thirteen of us went to Maximore place\textsuperscript{18} to build. palmetto quarters. Arrived there at 11 o’clock AM and commenced work. The mosquitoes were very thick in the first part of the evening and it was very warm but about 11 o’clock it was so cold and damp that we could not sleep. Our beds consisted of a few palmettos spread on the ground and a blanket spread over them.

Jan. 7 Worked all day on the quarters, cutting poles, palmettos, and putting them up. Dug a well which caved in as soon as it was dug. Got supper, stood guard and all quiet through the night.

Jan. 8 Finished the house today. Cut and put on board a load of palmettos and pulled up to our camp, a distance of five miles. Got home safe and finding the boys drilling. Sent my trunk and all of my fine clothes up to Mr. Crusoe at Tampa. Mr. Smith and John Bothell [Bethel]\textsuperscript{19} started for Tampa at 5½ PM, also Mr. Thomas Russell who had been detained by Lt. Maloney, he had stopped at the station on his way to Clearwater Harbor but as he had no pass from the comdg. officer at Tampa he was detained as a prisoner and sent to Tampa. No boat or person is allowed to leave Tampa without a pass and our comdg. officer has orders to detain all boats and persons without said pass.

Jan. 9 At roll call this morning Lt. Maloney told us that the following named persons would be the crews of the boats, viz: in the Mollie Post, Saml. Ashby, Cox[swain] Joseph Cole; John Allison; Chas. Chapman; J.E. Collins; Chas. Comb; Alfred Lowe; Marcus Olieviers; Augustus Murilac; Chas. Miller; J.W. Talbut; William Sawyer; Robert Watson; J.D. Sands; Peter Williams; G.W. Smith; Edward Dorsey; Cook. In the Mary Jane, Chas. Berry, Cox[swain]; Jule Chabot; Benj. Albury; Thos. Bums; Thos. Butler; Jno. Bethel; Jas. Barnett; G.W. Edward; William Franklin; R. Falley; Saml. Morgan; W.B. Joyselyn; Benj. Swain; G.V. Rickards; John Morrison; Chas. Anderson cook. Went over in the Mollie Post to Marenda’s place\textsuperscript{20} and cut and trimmed our 14 oars. Got a lot of mullets while over there and arrived at camp at 4 o’clock PM, took dinner, cleaned guns & etc, after supper played music, sang a few songs, smoked our pipes and turned in for the night.

Jan. 10 Nothing worthy of remark today except that some of the boys wounded a deer but did not get it. Shot 1 rattlesnake and brought it to camp. At night caught a lot of fish. Nothing to eat for supper but mush,\textsuperscript{21} all the rest of the provisions being out for several days.

Jan. 11 Very foggy this morning, some of the boys have, gone hunting, others fishing, clamming, oysterling & etc. all of which came home empty handed except those who went oysterling. They brought in a fine lot of oysters. Provisions very scarce.
Jan. 12 Mr. Smith came from Tampa today bringing us the news that Lt. Mulrennan was promoted to captain, also that there had been a battle fought at Beaufort and that our army had defeated the Lincoln army and run them on board of their ships. Lt. Maloney went up to Tampa today in the Cate Dale. Mr. S. brought us ten days provisions which was very acceptable as we have had nothing to eat for the last four days but corn meal and whatever we could catch in shape of game or fish, all of which had to be boiled for the want of grease. Slept about four hours today, it being Sunday and having been on guard last night, all quiet during the night.

Jan. 13 Commenced a palmetto house for the officers, cut the frame and put it up, also the palmetto leaves were cut and brought to the frame. Some of us were playing music, others were playing cards, dancing, singing, & etc in the evening when we were startled by the report of a gun. All hands rushed for their arms and ammunition. Mr. Smith ordered the boats to be manned which was done in a hurry. We pulled out of the bayou and discovered the Cate Dale ashore on the bank. Lt. Maloney had fired the gun for assistance. We took a line from her and pulled her off and towed her in to our quarters. Mr. Crusoe came down in her to pay us a visit, they brought no news of importance. Went to bed at 9 o’clock PM feeling very tired and sleepy for I had worked hard all day. Everything quiet through the night.

Jan. 14 Worked all day thatching the house. Nothing worthy of remark took place during the day. In the afternoon we drilled and Mr. Smith and two men made preparations to go on a cruise to Mullet Key to have a look at the blockading bark. They started at 7 o’clock PM. I was on guard at night and felt very unwell owing to a bad cold. No excitement through the night.

Jan. 15 Worked all day flooring the officer’s quarters which was finished by night. No drill today owing to the absence of Mr. Smith who arrived from Mullet Key at 7 o’clock PM. He made no discoveries of importance. Mr. Crusoe killed a fine deer in the forenoon. No excitement during the night.

Jan. 16 Washing and mending clothes, trimming oars and etc., drilled in the afternoon. Was aroused from a sound sleep at 2½ o’clock AM by the beating of the drum. Turned out taking my musket, revolver and ammunition and formed in line with the rest of the men, all of us wondering what was up. Lt. Maloney called the roll after which he examined and then informed us that we could go to bed again as he had alarmed us for the purpose of seeing how quick we could be ready for action. I turned in again and had just fell asleep when the guard gave the alarm that a boat was coming into the bayou. We all snatched our arms and were ready in short order, then marched down to the beach. The boat proved to be from the sloop Cate Dale who was lying outside of the bayou loaded with provisions for us. The boats were manned and went out to her, took her load and carried it to camp. She left immediately for Tampa.

Jan. 17 Mr. Crusoe went with her. While drilling this afternoon the man at the lookout reported a boat coming up along shore. The Mollie Post’s crew were ordered away, we went out and overhauled the boat. She proved to be a friend sans [not] a ship standing for the blockading bark. Started for the bayou when we saw the Mary Jane coming out towards us. Laid on our oars and waited for her. She also spoke [saw?] the boat and then started for the
bayou. We waited until she was opposite to us and then gave way both crews doing their best. Our boat struck three or four times on the bank and one of the bow oars broke but we beat her, it being the first race that we have had. It was quite interesting and exciting. At roll call Mr. Smith called for volunteers to man the Mollie Post. Nearly every man in the company volunteered, myself among the number, but as it was my guard night I was not allowed to go. The boat was manned and started for Boca Ceiga pass to look for a boat that was reported laying there. They got back to camp at 1 o’clock PM not seeing anything of the boat. All quiet through the night.

Jan. 18 Not having anything to do in the forenoon I slept for about three hours. After dinner went after and brought in a lot of fire wood. Mended some of my clothes all of which were getting rather the worse for wear. At night played cards and went to bed. No excitement through the night.

Jan. 19 Sunday. Inspection of arms at 8½ o’clock AM, my gun was pronounced to be in the best order in the company. I forgot to mention that we had target shooting
yesterday, a great many of the company did not hit the target and I hit in the same place, my gun gave me an awful kick and I really thought that my jaw bone was broke. Every one of the guns kicked badly owing to there being too much powder in the cartridges. The best shot received for a prize two pounds of tobacco, the second best one pound and the third best half pound. I went to the oyster bar and ate my fill of oysters and brought home enough to fry for supper. At 7 o’clock PM volunteers were called for to man the Mollie Post to go to Boca Ceiga to try and capture a Yankee schooner boat that reported to be about that place. We started at 7 o’clock PM with fifteen men and Lt. Maloney in command. Arrived at Maximo place at 11 o’clock PM, took our things on shore and turned in. About 2 o’clock AM we were all aroused from sleep by Marcus who was on guard. He rushed into the shanty and sang out to us to hurry up and get our arms for the Yankees were upon us. We all jumped up, seized our arms, loaded them and rushed out into the open air expecting to see a large part of the enemy close at hand, but found that it was a false alarm. Marcus had seen four of our men coming out the woods and took them for the enemy. We made and drank some coffee, manned the boat and pulled for Boca Ceiga at which place we stopped at, at daylight, went on shore had a look at the bark, ate breakfast, smoked our pipes and was calculating to stay till next day when we saw a boat coming down the coast hailed and brought to. She proved to be a friend and informed us that the Yankees had taken Cedar Keys and burnt some of the place. The boat was manned and we left for camp at Point Pinellas for the Lt. said that he expected that we would be wanted in Tampa. We arrived at camp at 1 o’clock PM finding Capt. Mulrennan there. He was waiting for us to go to Tampa. All of our provisions had already gone, we got dinner and started for Tampa feeling very tired at which place we arrived at 8 o’clock PM all hands completely used up for we had pulled for twenty four hours on a steady drag, only taking time out to eat. We went to our old quarters, got a slight supper and turned in.

Jan. 21 Volunteers were called for to go over to Spanish Town to build batteries as the enemy was expected in a short time. Everyone volunteered willingly but all of us that had been on the last cruise of the Mollie Post were excused. They went over the river and nearly finished one battery, the rest of us went up to the barracks and took three small cannon and boated them over to our batteries or rather those that we were to build. It rained very hard all night and the house that we are staying in leaked badly.

Jan. 22 All hands at work on the batteries today. Had to knock off several times in consequence of rain but finished the one that was began yesterday and nearly finished another. Rained very heavy all night with a plenty of thunder and lightning but I managed to sleep very sound.

Jan. 23 Worked on the batteries all day. In the afternoon Capt. Mulrennan fired two shots at a target with one of the six pound guns, made very good shots. Moved over to Spanish Town today into very comfortable quarters with the exception of our having to sleep on the floor and fleas very bad. All quiet through the night.

Jan. 24 Nothing today it being rainy, in the afternoon we were drilled, several of our men sick but not seriously. No disturbance through the night.

Jan. 25 Nothing worthy of note took place today.
Jan. 26  Sunday. After breakfast Mr. Smith took a guard of eight men over to the Spanish smacksmen\textsuperscript{24} who had refused to work and were suspected of trying to escape in boats to Key West. They were removed from the house they occupied to one nearer to us. They were removed by Capt. Sheffield’s order, he being commanding officer in Tampa.\textsuperscript{25} A guard is set over them night and day, and they have to work eight hours every day. About 2 o’clock PM we were informed that the crew of the Olive Branch\textsuperscript{26} was coming up the river, the schooner having been taken by the Yankees. I went down to our battery and waited until they landed but was very sorry and disappointed to learn that my friend Canfield was taken prisoner by the d--d black republicans. Five of her crew escaped in a boat but Canfield would not leave the schr as he though[t] that there was no chance of escape in the boat. The five that arrived here took quarters with us.

Jan. 26 [sic] Went over to the magazine and got a lot of ammunition for our cannons and muskets, took them to the boat and carried them over to our side of the river, but just as we began to land it we were called back by the Ordinance Sergeant who told us that we could have but half of what we had in the boat. I went up after Capt. Mulrennan and told him about it. He was very angry about it and told us to land the whole of it and said that Capt. Sheffield could take his ammunition and go to the devil with it for he would have nothing more to do with it. We landed it and went home to our quarters.

Jan. 28  Capt. Mulrennan took Alfred Lowe and myself over the river to make cartridges. We worked all day and made quite a large number. The sloop Cate Dale came up from Point Pinellas late in the evening bringing our clothes, for I forgot to mention that we left all our clothes there when we came up, our boats being too small and crowded to bring them with us when we came.

Jan. 29  Worked all day on the cartridges. Two of the schooner Olive Branch’s crew joined our company today, the other three Capt. Mulrennan sent to Cedar Keys in a boat belonging to us, the boat is to bring arms, ammunition and provisions for us. Nothing more worthy of note today.

Jan. 30  At roll call this morning Mr. Smith informed us that there would be an election this day for one 1st., one 2nd and one 3rd Lt. and that our company would hereafter be known as the Key West Avengers. After roll call there was great disputing about who should be run for the above named officers. Nearly all of the company were in favor of not giving W.C. Maloney a vote for any office as he is not liked by many on account of his actions towards the company, and also for the following expressions that he made at Point Pinellas. He said that we could not be treated like white men but must be treated like niggers, he made this remark to Mr. Smith and several of us heard him but while the boys were electioneering and writing tickets some one went over and told Capt. Mulrennan about it. He came over immediately in a great passion and told us that he did not care a d--d who was elected for 1st Lt. for he should appoint Walter Maloney over him. We all knew that it was out of his power to do so and Mr. Smith would have been unanimously elected for that office, but he came over and called the company together and told them that he had heard about the feelings of the company and he wished for his sake that they would not run him for that office as it would make hard feeling between him and the other officers should he be elected and requested that all who were
in favor of letting thing go on smoothly and not run him for the office to shoulder arms. But not a
gun was raised. He then begged them not to persist in running him and made quite a nice speech
but his feeling overcame towards the last so that he could scarcely speak. He said in his remarks
that he did not want any office on account of pay for he had money enough, he only desired to be
of service to his suffering country. He thanked them all for their good opinion and kind feelings
toward him and etc. and wound up by requesting them again not to run him as he could not think
of accepting the office. The men then to please him very reluctantly shouldered their arms. He
thanked them and told them to break ranks. The election was then postponed until next day at 2
o’clock PM. I was not at camp at the time Mr. Smith was there speaking to the men as I was over
the river making cartridges, but I was told all about it at supper.

Jan. 31  I am on guard today, came home in time for the election, 30 out of 50 votes were
given to W. C. Maloney for 1st Lt. 20 of the men did not vote for him but as there
was no opposition he was elected. Mr. Smith was elected 2nd Lt. unanimously. Samuel Ashby
was elected 3rd Lt. Nothing more of note except that I was on guard four hours at night.

Feb. 1  Drilled this morning, slept about hours in the forenoon as I had but little sleep last
night. The following appointments were made by Capt. Mulrennan: Chas. Berry
Tim Buckley; Robert Watson and John Allison for masters mates and Joseph Cole; Jule Chabot;
John Bothell and Saml Morgan for cox[s]wains. I received an invitation from some ladies in
Tampa to call over and spend the evening. I accepted the invitation and went over after supper.
Was introduced to several of the fair sex and passed a very pleasant evening, got back to our
quarters about 10 o’clock PM and turned in.

Feb. 2  Sunday. Inspection of arms by Capt. Mulrennan. Our arms pronounced to be in
good order. I am on duty today as officer of the day. 30 volunteers were called for
to go on an expedition to Manatee to look after the Yankees that are reported to be in that
place. Our boats were launched and put in the stream. We are to start tomorrow, I go with them.
Nothing more today.

Feb. 3  Great preparations this morning getting the boats ready and packing our dunnage.
Left Tampa at 2 o’clock PM. Capt. Mulrennan in the Mary Jane. Lt. Ashby in the
Mollie Post and Lt. Maloney in the sloop Cate Dale. I am in the Mollie Post and we beat the
Mary Jane so bad that we had to anchor at Gadson’s Point and wait for her. When she came up
with us Capt. Mulrennan told us to proceed to our old quarters at Point Pinellas at which place
we arrived at 9 o’clock PM which was over an hour ahead of the Mary Jane. We built a fire, ate
some bread and drank water and was perfectly satisfied after taking a smoke we turned in
keeping no guard as the Cate is lying at the mouth of the bayou.

Feb. 4  After breakfast this morning we fired off our guns and cleaned them. All hands
had a good sleep through the day and after an early supper loaded our guns, put
our things in the boats and started for Manatee at 7 o’clock PM after building a large fire at the
camp. The wind being very light we had to tow the Cate Dale all the way to Manatee, a distance
of 14 miles. Camped three miles below the settlement in open air with a heavy dew all night.

Feb. 5  Started for the settlement at daylight at which place we arrived at 7½ o’clock AM.
In passing the guns out of the Mary Jane one of the guns accidentally went off, one of the buckshots went into Tom Butler’s foot. It struck one of his toes breaking it all to pieces and passing up into his foot. All hands in good health and anxious for fight. Got breakfast at 12½ o’clock PM. Sent Tom Butler up to Tampa in the Cate Dale to have his wound dressed for we have no doctor with us. I walked out to Capt. Dick Roberts a distance of 14 miles. He and family in good health and spirits. Spent a few hours very agreeably with them and got back to camp at 11 o’clock PM.

Feb. 6 After breakfast we went over to the sugar plantation. I drank a lot of cane beer which was very nice but it did not agree with me. After dinner we started for Shaw’s Point taking 25 men belonging to Turners Horse Company with us. We fixed our quarters, got supper, set the guard and turned in, the mosquitos and fleas in abundance.

Feb. 7 The Cate Dale arrived this morning bringing us the news that there had been a fight at Cedar Keys but no particulars as to the result, also that Tom Butler was out of danger, also that Capt. Sheffield had tried to take our cannon the day after we left but Lt. Smith would not allow him to do so, nothing more today.

Feb. 8 One of our men has been missing since yesterday. After breakfast I went into the woods and cut a mast for our boats having carried ours in coming down to this place. Ended the evening by singing songs, telling stories & etc. The fleas were so savage that I could not sleep.

Feb. 9 Nothing worthy of remark took place today. I am on guard tonight and tomorrow. I did not get a wink of sleep all night on account of the fleas. Dark and stormy all night with lots of rain the blowing very hard. All of us in hopes that the blockading barque would go on shore but she did not.

Feb. 10 On guard today. Continued raining until 12 o’clock PM. The Mollie Post’s crew with Capt. Mulrennan went up to the sugar plantation and brought us at the camp a barrel of cane beer. They were all pretty merry owing to the strength of the beer that they had drank in large quantities at the mill. All went well through the night.

Feb. 11 The horse company are all growling and dissatisfied, they don’t want to stand guard. I hope they will go away soon for they are the laziest, dirtiest and lousiest set of men that I ever saw. Our boat went up the river after beef but did not get any, it not being ready for use.

Feb. 12 Went fishing this morning, caught a few nice sheephead. After breakfast the horse company went away, thank fortune. I think that we will go to Tampa soon, for the fleas are awful.

Feb. 13 I went to mother Jose’s place this morning after beef Started at 3 o’clock AM and got there before daylight. The distance is six miles. Got 287 lbs. of beef and got back to camp about 8½ o’clock. After breakfast as I sat on my bed smoking my pipe and looking at Bill Talburt, his pistol, a Colt’s revolver, went off. The ball passing through his hip
but luckily only going through the flesh without striking the bone or chords, I acted doctor. The 
three volunteers that came with us for a cruise, viz: John McRay, William Ferris and Tom 
Coward went up to the Manatee hotel\textsuperscript{36} to stay until we are ready to go to Tampa. I think that 
they do this to avoid going on guard for they thought that when they came here they could play 
the gentlemen but Capt. Mulrennan makes them do the same as we all have to do. We are to 
leave for Tampa tomorrow night, so says the capt. I am on guard tonight and never shut my eyes 
the whole night on account of the cussed fleas.

Feb. 14  
Got breakfast at 6 o’clock this morning took all of our things in the boats and went 
up to the settlement. We stopped at mother Joe’s\textsuperscript{37} and she treated Capt. 
Mulrennan and myself to a glass of whiskey which is the first liquor that I have tasted for two 
months. Left for Tampa at 4 o’clock PM, we had an exciting race between the Mary Jane and the 
Mollie Post, the latter having a boat in tow, but the Mollie Post beat her. We raced for 16 miles 
without slackening up any. All hands drenched in perspiration. We arrived at camp at 12½ 
o’clock AM when we all turned in.

Feb. 15    
All hands in good health. Great blowing between the two boat crews, each party 
swearing that their boat can beat the other. General cleaning of arms all day. 
Nothing more today.

Feb. 16    
Sunday. After breakfast this morning instead of inspection of arms Lt. Smith told 
us that the Confederate States wanted us to join their service for one year or the
war. He delivered quite a nice speech which had the effect of getting us all to join. Capt. Mulrennan received a letter from my brother George a few days ago. I am much disappointed that I did not receive one from him for he knows that I am here. He states that all the trees on Key West are to be cut down and that all the principle houses in the place are to be occupied by the soldiers. I am on guard today and tonight. No excitement through the day or night.

Feb. 17 The Capt. told me that he wanted me together with Mr. Russell and Rickards to build tables, benches, bunks & etc. so that the men can be made comfortable. We went to the saw mill and picked out some lumber and ordered more to be sawed. Nothing more worthy of remark today.

Feb. 18 Twenty-five men started this morning for Manatee under Lt. Smith and Ashby. They took with them twenty five of Sheffield’s company. We brought our lumber across the river in boats and backed it up to our quarters. Picked out a lot of tools and ground and put them in order, made saw horses & etc. All ready to go to work tomorrow. Our company is to be divided in messes of twelve men in different houses, which will be much better than all hands living together.

Feb. 19 Ten men started for Bayport after a small schooner belonging to the state of Florida with orders to bring her to this place. Worked all day making tables. I received 40 cents per day extra and am excused from guard or any other duty.

Feb. 20 Worked all day and in the evening I received an invitation from a young lady to come over and spend the evening and to bring my flutina. I accepted the invitation and went. Passed a very pleasant evening and got back to camp at 11 o’clock. While over there I heard that the enemy had been at Clearwater and taken our boats that had been left there for safe keeping. The people at that place offered no resistance whatevr. Shame on them, for three or four men could have killed the whole party, the enemy being in a boat and they in a thick wood within gunshot.

Feb. 21 While at roll call this morning one of the men that started for Bayport came to camp bringing information that the enemy had been at Papy’s bayou and that a man named John Whitehurst and his wife had gone off with them to the blockading barque. This man had long been suspected of being on friendly terms with the enemy, but no proof could be brought against him until now. I spent the evening with Mr. Rickards and family.

Feb. 22 Capt. Mulrennan and ten men went to the place lately occupied by Whitehurst for he is expected to be back after his things, and if they come there will be a chance for a fight. There is only eight men left here at present and should the enemy come we would have to take to the woods for safety.

Feb. 23 Sunday. Truly this is a cosmopolitan company, it is composed of Yankees, Crackers, Conchs, Englishmen, Spaniards, Germans, Frenchmen, Italians, Poles, Irishmen, Swedes, Chinese, Portuguese, Brazilians, 1 Rock Scorpion Crusoe; but all are good southern men. There are also Scotchmen, Welshmen and some half Indians, surely this is the greatest mixture of nations for a small company that I ever heard of.
Feb. 24  There has been nothing worthy of note since last date except many rumors of battles fought won and lost. Our company returned to camp. Stayed two days then went on another cruise leaving only seven of us in camp. I have been at work on the bunks & etc. Up to yesterday when we got out of lumber and as there is a report that Tampa is to be evacuated I would not get any more until Capt. Mulrennan comes back. Mr. Smith is expected today from Tallahassee where he has been on business for the company. The mustering officer was here and said that he had no orders to muster us in as a boat company, but as a company of heavy artillery. We would muster in as such, therefore Mr. Smith went to Tallahassee to see what can be done. We are willing to enlist for the war as a coast guard or in the navy and Capt. Mulrennan and Mr. Smith backs up in the determination of not entering as a foot company. They both say that we must stick together and if the worst comes we will fight on our own hook. I am now in mess of twelve men. We pay two dollars each a month for servant hire, they cook and wash for us and keep our house in order. At present Charley Berry and I are the only two present, the balance are on a cruise. The Yankees have taken Fernandina about a week ago. Just heard by mail that Jacksonville and St. Augustine are in the hands of the enemy consequently I have lost all of my tools worth $300.00, a serious loss for me for I was in hopes that I would save them and should My life be spared, to start business after the war was over.

Mar. 16  Sunday. Recvd information that the enemy had shelled and burnt the dwelling and out houses of Mr. Abel Maranda. Our Capt. gave us orders to get ready to go to Manatee tomorrow. We took one six pounder and put it on board of the sloop Cate Dale and landed the other on the opposite side of the river. We are to wait until the mail arrives as Lt. Smith is expected in the stage.

Mar. 17  After getting everything on board today, the order to go to Manatee was countermanded. Everything had to be taken on shore and all hands ordered to start immediately for Manatee and bring up all of our company stationed there. No news by the mail and Lt. Smith did not come or write. Started from the wharf at 4 o’clock PM and it being nearly calm all night did not get to Shaw’s Point until 4 o’clock AM. When we were near that point we saw three boats pulling with all speed for us. Got our guns ready for action but they proved to be our boats. Got to the settlement at 8 o’clock.

Mar. 18  Went out in the country and called on Mr. Bill Lowe and family and Capt. Richard Roberts and family all well. Took dinner with Capt. Roberts and went back to camp. Started for Tampa at 5 PM. Stopped at Point Pinellas and landed Chas. Berry and five men to signalize when the enemy comes in sight. Stopped at Gadson’s Point and landed Joseph Cole and 5 men for the same purpose.

Mar. 19  Arrived at Tampa at 6 o’clock AM. After breakfast turned in and had a nap for I had not slept any for two nights. In the afternoon was informed that 30 volunteers wanted to go on a scout at Point Pinellas. The Yankees had been at Miranda’s place and burnt everything that he had, his clothing and wife’s nieces and children’s clothes, and chased him through the woods, fired twice at him but he escaped unhurt. I returned to go but it blowed too hard to start.

Mar. 20  Blowed and rained all day. No excitement.
Mar. 21  Started at 1 o’clock PM in the Cate Dale with a good breeze. Stopped at Gadson’s Point about sundown and went on shore and got supper with the men stationed there. After supper it rained and blew pretty hard and continued squally all night. I got no sleep, having no place to sleep clear of the wet.

Mar. 22  Squalls and head winds all day.

Mar. 23  Very rough, but started for Point Pinellas. The sloop came very near capsizing several times but managed to get to our destination at sunset. Camped in the woods and slept first rate although it rained through the night.

Mar. 24  After breakfast we went over to a shanty about three miles distant where we are to be stationed for the present. Dug a lot of sweet potatoes, cooked and ate supper and turned in.

Mar. 25  After breakfast this morning Jerry Weatherford who had charge of some men on Point Pinellas came over and informed us that Wm. Talbot, John Singleton and John Baker had stolen a boat and run away taking their arms and all the provisions that they had in the camp. I was never more surprised in my life. Over a dozen of us volunteered immediately to go in pursuit of them. We repaired a small boat belonging to Mr. Coons and five of us started in the afternoon, the boat leaking very badly. It is useless to mention all the little incidents that took place as we went along the coast wading the boat over oyster bars, having no chance to sleep, our clothes wet all the time, very little to eat & etc.

Mar. 27  We stopped at Point-a-Rassa this day. Stayed until next morning but could see nothing of the runaways and our provisions nearly out came to the conclusion that we had better go back. We therefore started after breakfast and stopped at Henry Brown’s place in the afternoon. He has got a splendid place, beautiful lemon and orange groves, thousands of lemons rotting on the ground. He gave us some potatoes, pumpkins and lemons after which we proceeded homewards. We arrived at our camp at Point Pinellas on the 2nd of Apl. and found that the boat company was broken up and that we were to be formed into Guerrilla-companies. Capt. Mulrennan to have charge of one company and Capt. Smith another, the company toumber thirty four rank and file. There were only eight men left at the camp. The rest of the men had gone to Tampa.

Apr. 2  Seven men came from Tampa today. We are all to be at Tampa on the 10th. Capt. Mulrennan has gone to Tallahassee to draw our pay & etc. We went hunting but got nothing.

Apr. 3  Twelve of us went on a cruise visiting the places of the tonies that had gone to the blockade. Got a lot of corn and some salt & a few old chairs & etc. at Frank Gerard’s place. At Grinder’s place we killed two hogs and visited two more of the traitors places.

Apr. 5  Got back to camp on the 5th all well.
Apr. 6  Shot a fine large steer, it was the best beef that I have seen for some time. Made soup of the head and it is a positive fact that there was sixty gallons of soup made and drank this day and there is twenty of us. Besides there was about fifteen pounds of potatoes cooked and ate during the day. Passed the evening at Mr. Coons house. He and wife and eldest daughter are highly educated and I wonder at their burying themselves in the pine woods of Florida when they have lived all their lives in the best of society.

Apr. 7  Nothing worthy of remark today.

Apr. 8  Saw a schooner going to the blockade.

Apr. 9  Took our things over to the bayou and got ready to start in the morning.

Apr. 10  Started this morning for Tampa with Mrs. Miranda and son, Miss Alice Curry and brother on board. It being calm had to pull all the way. Arrived at 2 o’clock PM. Heard that Charley Collins had married Mrs. Black the night before. In the evening a lot of us went over to his house and gave him a serenade with tin pans & etc. he came out with his fiddle and struck up also. We then stopped the noise and he and Woods played several very nice tunes together, after which we went to the officers quarters, took an old fellow that belongs to our company named Pratt that was living with a negro woman that cooked for the officers and rode him on a rail down to the wharf and threw him overboard. We then gave him a lecture, told him what it was done for and that if he was caught doing the like again that we would give him thirty nine lashes, after which we went to our different quarters and turned in.

Apr. 13  Nothing worthy of remark took place during the last two days except that I joined Capt. Mulrennan’s company. Capt. Smith wanted me to join his company and offered to make me first masters mate and quartermaster of his company but I preferred being with Mulrennan. At 11 o’clock AM the alarm was given that the enemy was in sight and coming up the bay. We all took our arms and ran down to the ditches all hands anxious for a fight. A large schooner was coming towards the town and after keeping us waiting for over an hour came to anchor behind an island two miles from town. Picket guards were set at all the different roads leading to this place for we are of opinion that the Yankees have landed men below us and came in the schooner to draw our attention while they march up in our rear. A boat was seen coming from her and two of our boats were manned and went out to her. She had a flag of truce and demanded the surrender of Tampa. Major Thomas told them that he would not surrender it. The Yankee officer then gave him twenty four hours to take the women and children out of the town as they would attack the place at the end of that time. Our men gave three cheers at the prospect of having a fight which made the men in the Yankee boat look down in the mouth as they expected to see us all look frightened and ready to surrender. Capt. Smith told us to take all of our clothing and carry them up the river as the enemy might come too strong for us and should we have to retreat it would be impossible to carry anything with us. A strong picket guard on all day and night. I am at work making cartridges tonight.

Apr. 14  No sign of the enemy but there is a bright lookout for them.

Apr. 15  Election of officers today. Samuel Ashby was unanimously elected Lt. of Smith’s
company. Chas. Berry was elected Lt. protem in Mulrennan’s company. In the afternoon the Cate Dale that had started for Old Tampa in the morning was seen coming back. A little after dark two boats were manned and we went after thinking that they may be in distress, and such was the case for on coming up to them they told us that a boat with English flag had chased them. We both took them in town and took her up town. When we got back we were informed that two men had arrived from Manatee stating that they had ran away from Key West. About one hour later a boat was seen coming up. We went down to our battery, hailed and brought her to. She proved to be from Key West with four men that ran away from that place. A guard was set over them all night but they were liberated in the morning.

Apr. 16 On guard today and night, no excitement.

Apr. 20 Nothing worth of remark from last date except drilling twice a day. Inspection of arms this morning. I am on guard today and night.

Apr. 24 Recvd letters from Capt. Mulrennan this morning informing us that he had accepted the appointment of assistant quartermaster general with the rank of major, also that our boat company was mustered out of the service since the fifth of March and that we were expected to join a heavy artillery company. He advises us to form ourselves into the artillery service, if not we will be pressed into some infantry company. He says that if the company insists on his being their Capt. he will resign his commission and be with us. The company was then formed into line and all that wished to be in the artillery company requested to step forward two paces. Nearly all of us stepped forward and I think that in a day or two they will all join. He informed us also that he had permission to go to Key West with a flag of truce to get the families of the men in this company to come over here. I trust that he will go as I can then get some news from home for I have not received a line from them since I left home.

Apr. 25 The company went into election for officers this morning and the following is the result. R.B. Smith Capt., W.C. Maloney 1st Lt. Saml. B. Ashby 2nd Lt., and John A. Bethel 2nd Lt. At 4 o’clock PM twelve of us went over in a boat and brought over Major Thomas and his lady. The major mustered us into the Confederate service after which the company gave three cheers for the major. We then pulled him and his lady up and down the river for which he thanked us.

Apr. 26 Raining all the morning. Drilled in the afternoon.

Apr. 27 Inspection of arms.

Apr. 28 Commenced drilling with the bayonet on the Zouave drill. I forgot to mention that the following appointments were made on the 25th: 1st Sgt. Chas. H. Berry; 2nd do Robert Watson; 3rd do Joseph Cole; 4th do John Allison; 5th do Jules Chabet; 1st Corporal Saml. Morgan; 2nd do Wm. Sawyer; 3rd do Augustus Merrilac; 4th do Rogino Phalez.

Apr. 29 Drill as usual morning and afternoon. Took several ladies out in two of our boats and had a race after which Mrs. McKay one of the ladies that was in the boat sent us two and a half gallons of wine which was very nice.
Apr. 30 Drilled and Major Thomas inspected our arms, quarters & etc. pronounced all to be in good order.

May 1 By the request of several of the company Mr. Crusoe drew up the following petition: Fort Brooks/Tampa, Fla. May 1st 1862/ To/ The Hon. Stephen R. Mallory/ Director of the Navy/ Confederate States of America/ Sir/ The undersigned Marines, Citizens of Key West, Fla. would respectfully represent that they have been in the service of the State of Florida as Coast Guards since the month of December last, that lately they have reorganized and are now members of Captain Robert B. Smith’s Company 7th Regt. Florida Volunteers regularly mustered into the service of the Confederate States for three years or the war and stationed at Tampa, Fla.

That they are sincerely anxious to render good and efficient service to their Country and are satisfied that the Army is not the proper place for them, that they have been informed that Seamen in the Army can be transferred to the Navy, and therefore make this their application, and pray to be transferred to a Gun Boat or other vessel of war where they may have a chance to meet the enemy and strike for their Country's cause/ Very respectfully/ Your obt servts/ Names: Robert Watson, Seaman Carpenter/ Chas. H. Berry/ Joseph E. Cole/ Jules A. Chabot/ Samuel Morgan/ Jas. Barnett/ A.B. Low/ J.P. Williamson, Seaman Carpenter/ Wm. Sawyer/ Chas. H. Chapman/ John B. Sands/ John Duprey/ Geo. V. Rickards, Seaman Carpenter/ M.A. Olivier/ J.A. Moss/ Edward Dorey/ Joseph Fagan/ Manl. Moretdeoaca/ Thos. Burns/ Rofino Fales/ Wm. D. Curry/ Jacob Weatherford/ Francisco Dees/ Wm. Joseylin/ Jas. Leavitt.

May 5 This petition was sent last night and Capt. Smith is dreadfully put out at it; he says that we want to break up the company, but we assured him that such was not our intention but that we wished to enter the navy and would do so if we could get a chance.

May 6 Several letters came from Key West this morning but I received none nor can I learn one word about my mother or brothers. They must have left Key West or forgotten me, probably it is for the best.

May 7 I am on guard today and night.

May 8 A soldier in Capt. Magee’s company died yesterday and all of the military in this place, our company among the number, went to his funeral.

May 9 About 11 o’clock PM we were aroused from sleep by the beating of the drum, we all hurried up to headquarters with our arms and learned that the enemy had been at Clearwater Harbor and taken several prisoners, and one man Scott Whitehurst, had gone voluntarily with them. They said that they would be back in a few days, consequently twenty of our company went there to meet them. They started at 1 o’clock AM.
May 10  Sunday. On guard today and night. Major Mulrennan arrived this morning. He comes to sell all state property and to pay off our company, he is a welcome visitor as we are sadly in need of money.

May 11  I and all of the company was paid off today, up to the 5th of March. From that date we are to be paid by the Confederate States. Mulrennan charged us all 5 percent for paying us off which has caused a great deal of hard feelings, for to make the best of it, it is very mean and shabby of him to exact it from us.

May 12  At 10 o’clock PM just as I was going to bed the drum beat to quarters, we all hastened with our arms & etc and learned that twenty of us were to go to Clearwater Harbor. We volunteered cheerfully as there was a prospect of a fight. We started at 12 o’clock with twenty of our company and twenty four of Gette’s company. We pulled the whole way to Old Tampa, distance of forty miles.

May 13  We arrived at 11 o’clock AM all hands tired, sleepy and out of humor for we had pulled without a spell from the soldiers who were too green and lazy to help us. We cooked and ate dinner and walked over to Clearwater. We arrived there at 3 o’clock PM, ate supper with our men that were stationed there and then walked six miles further to a place that was thought the enemy would land at. Had to wade one creek and sleep in an old shanty on a dirty floor full of fleas and no blanket to cover us for we had left them at Old Tampa. Kept guard all night but nothing happened.

May 14  After an early breakfast we started for the settlement, Lowes Landing, Anona, and on the road we met a horseman with the intelligence that the Yankees were at Archer’s place (Bill Fletcher Meares [of] Largo talked to them) and were getting the sloop Osceola off. We hurried up and when we got to the settlement the Capt. halted us and sent ten men as a scout to see if the enemy was there. After waiting two or three hours, all hands getting impatient, the order was given by Lt. Henderson to march to the place that the Yankees were supposed to be at. We had got about three miles on the road when we were met by Capt. Smith on horseback. He informed us that the enemy had got to Osceola off and were on their way to Clearwater, so we turned back in double quick and when we got to where we started from we saw them coming, but when they were opposite us they went about and beat it out of the pass. We were all greatly disappointed for I never saw men so eager for a fight in my life. We kept a strict guard all night but they did not come.

May 15  At 10 o’clock AM we left for Archer’s place under Lt. Ashby, Capt. Smith having gone to Tampa, Lt. Henderson and his command staying at Clearwater. We arrived at our destination and stopped at Bob Whitehurst’s house, of one of the Tories. We found plenty of everything to eat such as green corn, peas, cabbages, honey & etc, hogs, cows & etc. We lived high. Kept a strict guard.

May 16  Guard day and night. Archer, Lowe, Mears and Anderson moving their things to Clearwater, from there to be taken to old Tampa and we are to carry them and their families to Tampa for they are afraid to stay on their places as the Yankees have threatened to take them prisoners. Two scouts were sent out and they reported that the enemy had been at a
place owned by one of the Tories and had dug potatoes and robbed six bee gums. They could not
have left more than two hours before the scouts got there. They found a letter in the house
directed to Major Thomas. The letter contained two letters for Frank Phillips. Shortly after, a
horseman came from Clearwater with the information that Lt. Maloney had arrived at that place
and that Mr. Jas. McRay & sons had arrived at Tampa. They were sent in a smack with a flag of
truce. They have been prisoners at Key West for some time. Mr. McRay stated that three barges
with 90 men had left the blockade for Clearwater to take that place and our company that they
heard was there. We went up to Clearwater in the afternoon together with the families of Archer
Lowe and others.

May 17 Started for Old Tampa on foot at which place we arrived at 12 M, got into our
boats and left for Tampa at which place we arrived at 8 PM and learned that the
company [E of Captain McGehee] belonging to the 4th Reg. were to leave for Jacksonville the
next day and that we are to move into their quarters.

May 18 Went over and had a look at the quarters and of all the dirty houses that I ever saw
they beat all, hog pens are cleaner. Concluded to wait till next day to clean them
out.

May 19 Cleaned and whitewashed the quarters today and a nice job we had.

May 20 Moved over today but we would rather stay on the other side of the river.

May 23 On guard today and night. All quiet.

May 24 Received a letter from my brother George stating that all the family was in good
health, also that my aunt Mrs. McKenzie died.

May 26 A Rag of truce was sent to the blockade today to see if they would give up some
negroes that had ran away from their owners and are on board of the barque. I
wrote my mother by this opportunity.

May 27 I am on guard today and night. Rained all day and night. About 12 o’clock at night
the boat from the blockade arrived. They did not succeed in getting the negroes
but our letters will be sent to Key West by first opportunity.

May 30 I am on the sick list today having taken medicine last night, in fact I have not felt
well for some time but could not make up my mind to take medicine until now.

June 10 Our ration of beef was cut down from 1¼ lbs to 1 lb per day and pork from ¾ lb
to ½ lb which caused a deal of hard feeling and dissatisfaction among us all, but
as it is an order from the Secretary of War we have to submit.

June 14 Received orders to get ready to march for Tennessee within ten days. All of
Gette’s company got furloughs and left for home immediately and many of our
men did the same. I remain in camp.
Jun 22  The schr Rosa Lee, formerly the Eliza Fisk, sailed for Havana today. I and many of our company wrote letters and sent them by her.

Jun 24  Several of us went masquerading and had quite a nice time although it was rather warm.

Jun 27  Left Tampa today at 9 AM. The ladies in large number turned out and saw us off. There was quite a waiving of hdksfs and many tears shed but I am satisfied that none were for me for I have no female acquaintances in the place. We crossed the river, gave three cheers and proceeded on our way & stopped at the 13 mile run for the night, ate supper, had some music & dancing in spite of our being tired for the road is soft sand and tiresome to walk....

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EPILOGUE

After the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard reorganized as Company K of the 7th Florida Infantry regiment, it proceeded to Tennessee to join the Western Army of the Confederacy. As a member of Company K, Robert Watson took part in the battles of Perryville and Chicamauga, the siege of Chattanooga and the assault on Missionary Ridge, before his company was transferred to the Confederate States Navy. On March 9, 1864, Watson and several others from his company joined the crew of the Confederate ram Savannah, on which he served until that ship was blown up by the Confederates to avoid capture. The crew marched to Charleston, South Carolina, and then to the defenses of Wilmington, North Carolina. Watson was at Fort Fisher during its bombardment, when his detachment was withdrawn to Fort Buchanan. He served in the defenses around Richmond, Virginia, until it was evacuated by the Confederates. A member of Admiral Semes’ naval brigade, Watson was with General Robert E. Lee’s army in its last march, and he was finally captured near Appomatox, on April 8, 1865, the day before the army surrendered.48

Watson was paroled on April 14, but he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Union. Denied transportation home, he found a friend in Washington, D.C., and was there when President Lincoln was assassinated. Watson then borrowed enough money to make his way to New York, where he found another friend who loaned him money for passage to Havana. At that point, Watson’s journal ends. However, he ultimately returned to his home in Key West and married in 1868. On April 6, 1911, he died in Key West at the age of seventy-five.49

Editors’ Note: For information on “living history programs” that reenact activities recorded in Robert Watson’s diary, see the “Announcements” section of this issue.

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3 Florida Board of State Institutions, Soldiers of Florida in the Seminole Indian, Civil, Spanish-American Wars (Live Oak, Florida: Democrat Book, 1903), 48-49.
4 Watson Diary, September 27, 1861, transcript at Chickamauga-Chattanooga National Park, Georgia.

5 Ibid., October 12, 15, 23, November 2, 15, 20, December 7, 1861.

6 Lieutenant Henry Mulrennan had organized the Coast Guard company on November 27, 1861, and he commanded it until April 22, 1862, when it was mustered into Confederate States’ service as Company K, 7th Florida Regiment. He then resigned and shortly thereafter fled the country by running the blockade to Cuba. Soldiers of Florida, 49.

7 John Thomas Lowe, a native of the Bahama Islands, worked as a mariner in Key West at the beginning of the Civil War. Fleeing his home in Key West because it was under Union control, Lowe had come to the Tampa Bay area. In April 1862, he enlisted at Tampa in Company K, 7th Regiment. In 1864 he transferred to the Confederate navy and served with Robert Watson on the ram Savannah. After the war he resumed his seafaring life and resided at Anona in the Tampa Bay area. William Curry Harllee, Kinfolks: A Genealogical and Biographical Record of Harllee, Fulmore, Curry, Kemp, Bethal Robertson and Dickey Families, 3 vols (New Orleans: Searcy & Pfaff, 1934-37), vol. 2, 1938, 1948-49.

8 Tampa traces its beginnings to the establishment of a U.S. Army fort by Colonel George Mercer Brooke in 1824. Fort Brooke was established to protect the settlers of the Tampa Bay area from Seminole Indians. The village that grew up along side the fort was first known as “Tampa Bay,” but in 1855, the state legislature incorporated the city of Tampa. By 1860, the city had a population of 900. Anthony P. Pizzo, Tampa Town, 1824-1886: Cracker Village with a Latin Accent (Miami: Hurricane House, 1968), 1-3, 57.

9 According to Governor John Milton’s specifications for coastal defense at the outbreak of the Civil War, the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard was described as “seamen in boats of about thirty five feet length, manned with a number of men necessary to manage them with oars and sails and the men of each boat armed with a four pounder [cannon], Muskets or Enfield rifles and Cutlasses.” Milton to Benjamin, October ?, 1861.

10 Walter C. Maloney appears on the 1860 census as a twenty-one-year-old, Florida-born sailmaker, living at Key West. He enlisted in Florida’s Volunteer Coast Guard upon its formation in November 1861. Elected first lieutenant on January 31, 1862, he later was mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Infantry Regiment. He resigned on October 26, 1864, to join the Washington Siege Artillery stationed near Adams Run, South Carolina. 1860 Manuscript Census, Monroe County, Florida; Soldiers of Florida, 49, 185.

11 The largest of the three vessels utilized by Florida’s Volunteer Coast Guard at Tampa Bay, the sloop Cate Dale (or “Kate Dale”) transported the officers as well as the six-pounder cannon and provisions between the signal stations. The Mary Jane and Mollie Post were fourteen-oar, single-sail-rigged boats of approximately thirty feet, and each was probably mounted with a four-pounder cannon in its bow. After her service with the Coast Guard ended in June 1862, the Cate Dale continued to serve the Confederacy at Tampa Bay as a blockade runner. She was eventually captured by the U.S.S. Sunflower in Sarasota Bay in March 1864, when she was headed for Havana with seven bales of cotton. Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, 30 vols (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1927), vol. 17, 673.

12 This may refer to Madison Post, a prominent Tampan who had served as mayor and who had several daughters. Karl H. Grismer, Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida (St. Petersburg, Florida: St. Petersburg Publishing Co., 1950), 324.

13 George V. Rickards enlisted in the Coast Guard on December 24, 1861, as a private. Mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Regiment in April 1862, he died at Camp Chase prison camp on April 17, 1865. Soldiers of Florida, 49, 186.

14 Listed on the 1860 census as a twenty-four-year-old, Florida-born farmer and resident of Lafayette County, Robert B. Smith enlisted in the Coast Guard on December 1, 1861. Elected first lieutenant on January 30, 1862, he was later elected captain of Company K, 7th Florida Regiment, at its reorganization on April 25, 1862. 1860 Manuscript Census, Lafayette County, Florida; Soldiers of Florida, 49, 185; Robert B. Smith Military Record, War
Point Pinellas was one of four coastal defense signal stations manned by members of the Coast Guard to warn of the approach of vessels in the U.S. Navy’s blockade. The Maximo Point station could spot an approach from the north through Boca Ceiga pass while the guard at Point Pinellas commanded a view of the main channels into Tampa Bay. Signals were relayed by lighting a bonfire which could be seen by a third station at Gadsden’s Point on the interbay peninsula (the location of today’s MacDill Air Force Base) which would in turn relay the warning to Fort Brooke in Tampa. A fourth station was located at the mouth of the Manatee River at Shaw’s Point for the purpose of warning Manatee Village. “Fort Buckley” was the formal name of the main camp of the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard, located three miles north of Point Pinellas at Big Bayou.

Built in 1859 at Boston, the U.S.S. Ethan Allen was a wood sailing vessel, classified as “a fourth-class bark.” Purchased by the U.S. Navy in August 1861 and commissioned on October 3, 1861, the Ethan Allen was immediately assigned to the Union’s East Gulf Coast Blockading Squadron which patrolled the Gulf of Mexico. The ship ultimately captured eight prizes and destroyed extensive salt works along Florida’s gulf coast. Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (Washington, D.C.: Navy Department, 1968), vol. 3, 371; Records of Union and Confederate Navies, vol. 1, 222.

These “muskets” were a smoothbore weapon, such as the U.S. model of 1842, as indicated by the usage of “buck and ball” ammunition. Watson Diary, February 5, 1862.

This undoubtedly refers to the home of Antonio Maximo Hernandez. Born in St. Augustine, Florida, and settled at Tampa Bay as early as 1818, Maximo knew every passage and inlet of the bay and was an invaluable resource for the military officers at Fort Brooke. In 1843 he settled on lower Pinellas Peninsula, known then as “Fisherman’s Point,” where he established his fishing rancho. The tip of the peninsula was renamed “Maximo Point” in his honor. Pizzo, Tampa Town, 1-3.

On the 1860 census of Monroe County, John Bethel appears as a thirty-six-year old school teacher, born in the Bahamas and living in Key West. After enlisting in the Volunteer Coast Guard on December 1, 1861, he was elected coxswain on February 1, 1862, and was later mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Regiment. He was promoted to second lieutenant in January 1863 and signed the roll as company commander in February 1863. He resigned on February 27, 1864, due to a disability, with the intention of joining the Confederate Navy, and he was captured by Union forces in August 1864. 1860 Manuscript Census, Monroe County, Florida; Soldiers of Florida, 49, 185; John Bethel Military Record, Confederate Records.

“Marena’s place” refers to Abel Miranda’s house at Big Bayou on Pinellas Peninsula. Originally from St. Augustine, Miranda had settled at Tampa by 1850 and served as a lieutenant in Captain Richard Turner’s Volunteer Mounted Infantry during the Third Seminole War. Nicknamed “the Cat,” he was greatly feared by the Federals during the Civil War and was a notorious rebel agent, actively involved in guerilla operation around Tampa Bay. His was the only home at Tampa Bay destroyed by Union troops during the Civil War. Watson Diary, March 16, 1862; Pizzo, Tampa Town, 66-67.

“Mush” refers to cornmeal, the main staple in the Confederate soldiers’ diet, which could be baked or eaten as “mush” from a cup. Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Johnny Reb: The Common Soldier of the Confederacy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 97.

See note 18.

“Spanish Town” (near the mouth of the Hillsborough River) was the location of a battery of three six-pounder cannons, which formed part of the defensive fortifications for Fort Brooke. Pizzo, Tampa Town, 65.

“Spanish Smacksmen” were Cuban fishermen.
25 William A. Sheffield was mustered into Company D, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment on September 7, 1861; he retired at reorganization of the regiment on May 10, 1862. Three companies of the 4th Florida Regiment were assigned at Tampa Bay between October 1861 and April 1862. John T. Lesley’s Company K was stationed at Shaw’s Point from October to December 1861, when it was ordered to Fernandina, Florida. Companies D and E were stationed at Fort Brooke and participated in operations with the Coast Guard until it was reorganized and sent with the remaining companies of the 4th Regiment to join General Braxton Bragg’s Army of Tennessee in April 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 118, 124.


27 Located on the south bank of the river for which it is named, seven miles from the river’s mouth, historic Manatee Village now lies within the corporate limits of Bradenton, in the vicinity of 15th Street, East. It was first settled by Armed Occupationist Josiah Gates from Fort Brooke in 1842. Manatee became the county seat for newly created Manatee County in 1856. Four years later the village consisted of a hotel (Josiah Gates’ Inn), store, courthouse, blacksmith shop and church. The population of the county, which extended from the Hillsborough County line south to Charlotte Harbor and from the Gulf of Mexico to Lake Okeechobee, numbered approximately 900, including almost 300 slaves. Lillian B. McDuffee, *The Lates of Manatee* (Bradenton, Florida: Manatee County Historical Society, 1961), 44-66; Janet Snyder Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness: A Settlement History of Manatee River and Sarasota Bay, 1528-1885* (Tulsa: Caprine Press, 1983), 249; 1860 Manuscript Census, Manatee County, Florida.

28 This refers to smoothbore muskets, such as the U.S. model 1842, used by the company at that time.

29 A seaman born in London, England, Thomas Butler had enlisted in the Coast Guard on December 15, 1861. He was mustered into Company K, 7th Florida Regiment, on April 25, 1862, but he was discharged on July 7, 1862, in Tallahassee, for disability due to the accidental gunshot wound he had received on February 5, 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 49, 186.

30 A retired sea captain from Key West and an acquaintance of Watson, Richard Roberts was a blockade runner who operated locally with Captain Frederick Tresca. Harllee, *Kinfolks*, vol. 2, 1938; Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 240, 352.

31 Known then as the Cofield-Davis plantation and first established by Robert Gamble in 1844, this plantation consisted of thousands of acres and produced maximum yields of sugar and molasses. The plantation sugar mill was destroyed by Federal soldiers in August 1864. The mansion still stands as a Confederate memorial at the Gamble Plantation State Historic Site in Ellenton. Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 149-80; *Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, series 1, vol. 17, 741.

32 Located on the south bank of the Manatee River at its mouth on the site of today’s De Soto National Memorial, Shaw’s Point had an Indian mound twenty feet high and extending 150 yards along the shoreline. During the Civil War, Federal naval expedition reports described it as having a Confederate installation consisting of a “temporary barracks and a gun mounted on wheels on an indian mound.” Captain John T. Lesley’s Company K, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment, was stationed there from October to December 1861. Thereafter, until June 1862, a detachment consisting of men from Company D, 4th Florida Regiment, and the Coast Guard manned the point on a rotational basis. *Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, series 3, vol. 17, 67-69; John T. Lesley Military Record, Confederate Records.

33 “Turners Horse Company” refers to Captain William Iredell Turner’s Independent Cavalry. Turner, of Oak Hill, Florida, had led a company of volunteers during the Third Seminole War from 1855 to 1858. During the Civil War, his independent horse company was composed mostly of men from Hillsborough County, and it operated locally until the company was disbanded and reorganized into other regiments in early 1862. At that time Turner accepted a commission as a major in the 8th Florida Infantry, but he had to resign shortly thereafter due to complications from an old wound received during the Seminole War. After the Civil War, Turner settled at Manatee River and

34 Julia (“Madam Joe”) Atzeroth and her husband Joseph were immigrants from Bavaria who settled at Teo Rocio Bay (present-day Terra Ceia Island) in 1842. Their home was destroyed in the 1848 hurricane, after which they purchased an unfinished home on the north bank of the Manatee River (on the site of present-day Palmetto), where they built a store. Joseph Atzeroth enlisted in Company K on May 1, 1862, at the age of sixty-one. He was discharged for disability and old age on November 7, 1862, at Knoxville, Tennessee. Ollie Z. Fogarty, *They Called It Fogartyville* (Brooklyn: Theodore Gaus, 1972), 44; *Soldiers of Florida*, 186; Joseph Atzeroth Military Record, Confederate Records.

35 James W. Talbut (or Tolbert) deserted the company with John Singleton and John Baker in a boat from Pinellas Point on March 25, 1862. *Soldiers of Florida*, 49.

36 The residence-hotel, owned by Manatee’s first permanent white settler, Josiah Gates, was built in 1853 and located at the end of present-day 15th Street, East, on the banks of the Manatee River. The twenty-room hotel was considered the most commodious structure of the era, south of Jacksonville. McDuffee, *Lures of Manatee*, 69-70.

37 See note 34.

38 “Flutina” was a period term for a miniature flute.

39 See note 20.

40 “Point-a-Rassa” refers to Punta Rassa, a small community located at the mouth of the Caloosahatchee River, near Fort Myers.

41 “Ditches” refers to the earthworks constructed along Tampa’s waterfront as part of the defenses of Fort Brooke. They extended from the mouth of the Hillsborough River to the Indian mound at the foot of Morgan Street. Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 65.

42 Formerly a Confederate privateer, the *Priscilla C. Ferguson* of Charleston, South Carolina, the “large schooner” referred to was a sailing vessel that had been captured on November 13, 1861, at Bahama Channel. Purchased from the Key West Prize Court by the U.S. Navy Department in February 1862, the ship had been renamed the U.S.S. *Beauregard* and outfitted with one thirty-pounder Parrott Rifle and two heavy twelve-pounder howitzers. Alphabetical list of naval vessels in *Records of the Union and Confederate Navies*, series 2, vol. 1.

43 Matilda McKay was the wife of Captain James McKay, a leading Tampan who was an active blockade runner and Confederate agent. Pizzo, *Tampa Town*, 66-69.

44 Except as noted in three instances, the profession given after each name was “Seaman.”

45 Thomas J. McGehee was captain of Company E, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 126.

46 James Gettis (or Gettes) was captain of Company B, 4th Florida Infantry Regiment. *Soldiers of Florida*, 173.

47 William B. Henderson was first lieutenant of Company B, 7th Florida Infantry Regiment. *Soldiers of Fortune*, 173.

48 Watson Diary, passim.

49 Harllee, *Kinfolks*, vol. 2, 1887.
BOOK REVIEWS


Hampton Dunn has the unique ability to write about long past events as if they happened yesterday. His splendid selection of historical photographs that appear in this book are vastly enlivened by the captions, which comprise a chronicle of the important – and sometimes not so important but interesting anyway – events in Florida’s history. For example, he writes, “There was a horse and buggy traffic jam on Lafayette Street Bridge in Tampa the day this picture was taken around the turn of the century” to give life and immediacy to a fairly unexciting photograph. Directly above it is pictured a subdued and dignified group of young women in gym suits with long sleeves and bloomers, labeled “Let’s hear it for the girls’ basketball team of St. Petersburg High School about 1900.”

Dunn divides his extremely sprightly and readable history into eight chapters, seven of them based on time periods and the eighth a look at the present and future. What is most impressive is the variety of his subjects and the easy familiarity with which he treats them. Ranging from Ponce de Leon, “Florida’s first tourist,” who landed somewhere on Florida’s northeast coast in 1513, to Betty Castor, “the first woman ever elected to serve on Florida’s State Cabinet,” Dunn’s remarks are accurate, to the point and well expressed.

The enormous scope of the more than 500 pictures and their captions covers practically every aspect of the State’s known history, from its early nineteenth-century days as a mosquito-infested desert with a few isolated settlements to its explosive growth beginning after World War II.

Perhaps because visual materials are not very plentiful, the period from the 1500s to the early 1800s is sketchily treated, but not much of historical significance happened during these years anyway. The really interesting aspects of Florida’s modern history, centering on its people and places, are what provide the fascination of this book. Looking out at you from its pages are almost mythical figures, such as Seminole Chief Osceola, “a surprised, serious and sullen man” after his treacherous capture by the U.S. Army during the Indian wars of the 1800’s; Henry B. Plant, “the Connecticut Yankee who opened up Florida’s West Coast by bringing his railroad to the area and building grand hotels along the way”; and Governor Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, after whom Broward County was named, one of the State’s “most colorful – and controversial – politicians.” Pictures of places like Silver Springs, Miami Beach and Tarpon Springs in the very early days of their development provide glimpses of what Florida was like in the days of its innocence, when there was plenty of space for animals, fish and orange groves, as well as people.

What Dunn manages to create is the flavor of our state, with all its charms and imperfections, in an unforgettable way. Complete with plentiful quantities of “cheesecake” – what would Florida be without its bathing beauties? – craziness, and an exaggerated attention to the pleasures of life, this illustrated history tells more real truths about us than most scholarly tomes do. For Hampton Dunn, who never took a graduate degree in History or anything else and yet is
President-Elect of the Florida Historical Society, it is a fitting capstone to a productive and distinguished career.

*Edgar W. Hirshberg*


Mounds and earthworks of shell, stone and soil are the only immediately visible architectural remains left of the many different prehistoric human cultures who inhabited the eastern United States over the past several millennia. The different constructions are of different ages and
functions. Late Archaic food gatherers of the coasts collected shellfish and left huge domestic midden or garbage heaps or rings as early as 4,000 years ago. Woodland peoples began building conical earthen mounds for the burial of the dead just before the time of Christ. Occasionally they constructed mounds in the shape of animal effigies as well. Mississippian stage societies, organized in complex chiefdoms supported by maize agriculture, beginning around A.D. 1000, built flat-topped pyramids known as temple mounds, which supported sacred structures and sometimes had high status burials.

Through the centuries much of this rich archaeological record has been destroyed by plowing, looting and other devastating activities. For example, most of Florida’s roads are made with shell mined from prehistoric middens and sand “borrowed” from mounds and habitation sites. Some of what is left has been preserved, however, often in public parks, for later generations to study and enjoy.

This compact guidebook is packed with information on accessible mound sites in the Atlantic states. The authors are an independent scholar and a geographer, publishing out of Newark, Ohio, home of a famous group of spectacular burial mounds. Their excellent introductory material includes a cultural chronology with timetable and graphs, describing the evolution of different kinds of ways of life through time. There are drawings of mound construction techniques, maps showing important site locations in the eastern United States and a wonderful
section detailing the history of mound exploration by early explorers and scientists, from Thomas Jefferson to Smithsonian anthropologists.

Following this is a very good chapter on historic preservation. Much less care has been taken to safeguard these traces of the unwritten past than to preserve records of Euro-American history. Preservation laws (many listed here) now protect sites on public lands from vandalism, but disturbance of any archaeological materials is strongly discouraged.

The bulk of the book is a listing of forty-two mounds, their settings, accompanying public facilities, hours and dates open, reference materials and specific historical background. There are well drafted maps and verbal directions, including walking time, and other gems such as beautiful artifact photos and a quote from Thoreau. The sites are listed from Maine to Florida. It is curious that New Jersey, New York and other states with a wealth of mounds are neglected, but non-coastal West Virginia is included, as well as the Gulf Coast. Florida is especially well-represented, with many famous mounds noted in the Tampa Bay area. Preceding a good index are several bibliographies and even lists of museum exhibits and of maps and where to obtain them.

This book will be an excellent, though selective, guide for everyone from archaeologists and historians to interested travelers planning trips to include seeing some of the few remains of ancient America that we are finally beginning to conserve.

Nancy Marie White


The tapestry of Florida history is, like that of all histories, complex. Historians reweave this fabric from several threads, including written documents which specify and quantify, visual images which freeze an instant of time and oral histories which lend personal interpretation to the past. But others reweave in different fashion, and in this book J. Russell Reaver, Professor Emeritus of American Folklore and Literature at Florida State University, shows us how an accomplished folklorist goes about examining the texture of Florida culture.

Assuming that the folktales and legends of a people constitute a powerful expressive system through which they construct a social reality, Reaver has drawn from his personal archive (built on more than forty years of field collecting in Florida) more than ninety representative folktales. His choice is eclectic and his method scholarly. The tale bearers come from varied racial, cultural, occupational and regional backgrounds. Some are literate, while others are not, but all can spin off the lies and truths of popular lore in fine style: tales of slavery, Reconstruction, haunted Tallahassee houses, sunken treasure, marvelous disappearing lakes, gigantic mosquitoes, folk heroes like Bone Mizelle, animal tricksters like Rabbit, the divine origin of hushpuppies, a drift of ghosts and other wonders. Properly collected and recorded as told, these tales together demonstrate the richness of Florida’s folk traditions.
Reaver presents the selections in five chapters: “International Folktales,” subdivided into animal tales, ordinary tales, and jokes and anecdotes, following the standard form of the Aarne-Thompson index reference; “Legends”; “Tall Tales and Trickster Stories”; “Ghost Tales and Horror Stories”; “Urban Belief Tales.” The folkloric items thus range from traditional tales with widespread analogues on other continents and considerable antiquity to contemporary urban tales familiar to most readers. The author’s notes are extensive and give information about the informants, circumstances of the recording and comparisons of tale type and motifs. Indices summarizing tale types and motifs will be welcomed by those interested in comparative scholarship, and the bibliography will be useful to all who wish to do further reading.

This volume is a major contribution to our literature on Florida folklore and should stand on the shelf beside the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Alton Morris and Stetson Kennedy. The University Presses of Florida are to be congratulated on making Reaver’s valuable materials available to both public and academic audiences.

**Patricia H. Waterman**


Two texts, narrative and photographic, produce this cultural history of Victorian Florida, showing how the state was seen by wealthy and middle class white tourists during the second half of the nineteenth century. To these innocents, Florida was an idyllic winter playground, where one might find adventure, relaxation and good health. Travelling first by steamer and later in trains, aptly known as “travelling hotels,” the Florida-bound tourists entered the state in luxury. In resorts they enjoyed bicycling, gambling and golf. In the wilderness, men donned impractical but proper camping dress, such as “white flannel trousers, white rowing jersey, and a straw hat” (p. 75). Unless men were rowing, peajackets were appropriate wear. Female vacationers sported simpler versions of their uncomfortable (and hot) everyday clothes, wearing high collars and long sleeves, long skirts, corsets, bustles and elaborate hats – even when they were fishing, hunting or riding in rowboats and hoping for “no ill luck” (p. 143). According to Palm Beach gossip, one woman created controversy when she “disported herself in a man’s bathing attire to the amazement of onlookers” (p. 168). That is, she appeared in tight above-the-knee shorts and a tank top.

The incongruity between these tourists and the natural Florida landscape is startling. With stubborn specificity, photographs by artists, amateurs and commercial photographers reveal details of the natural beaches, lakes and rivers – settings which today are polluted and/or dwarfed by civilization. Prominent landscape photographers, most notably Charles Bierstadt, recorded the impressionist effects of the rivers and the swampland. But most of the illustrations of rivers, peaceful beaches and isolated private resorts which dazzle the reader are the work of lesser known commercial photographers, many of them from Florida and published here for the first time. At the end of the book are biographies of the photographers, picture credits, a selected bibliography and an extensive index.
The book takes the reader on a guided tour of Fernandina and Fort George Island, Cedar Keys and North Florida, Jacksonville, the St. Johns River, the Ocklawaha River, the Orange Belt, Tampa and the West Coast, St. Augustine, the Halifax River, Indian River Country, Palm Beach, Miami and Key West. Without exception, the authors match the illustrations to the text. They explain the photographs with patience and precision. The reader is forced to read in a non-linear way, looking from text to photograph to text again. Other illustrations help to create this unique reading experience. They are photographs of material artifacts including advertisements, brochures, maps, newspapers, train schedules, travel booklets and souvenirs. (A tiny live alligator in a cigar box was popular. So were palmetto hats and orangewood canes.) Midway through the book A Tourist and Hunter’s Guide To Indian River Country, 1889-90 Season appears, adding to the reader’s ability to imagine the traveller’s perspective. Letters from travellers and commentary by writers including the

1889-90 Season appears, adding to the reader’s ability to imagine the traveller’s perspective. Letters from travellers and commentary by writers including the poet, Sidney Lanier, enhance the reading of this book still further.
What is missing? There are only a handful of photographs of blacks, Conchs, Indians and poor whites. Tourists viewed these people as quaint and occasionally photographed them. But the commercial photographers included here do not record their histories. Another sad side of Florida tourism is the destruction of the natural environment. During the 1880s one riverboat traveler remarked, “From the lofty decks of the steamers a great deal is seen, but every moment one is hurried ruthlessly away from some spot where there is every temptation to linger, and then left to while away hours at some landing where preceding crowds have gathered every flower, and alarmed every bird with pistols and parasols” (p. 57). Worse than these Victorian travelers were hunters. In Florida, they hunted alligator, deer, panthers and sea turtles. Adding to the destruction, financiers, including Henry M. Flagler and Henry Bradley Plant, built luxury motels on scenic beaches, the beginning of the condominium-lined, private, no-trespassing shores we see today. *Victorian Florida* preserves an elite vision of the state, a Florida still pristine, still wild.

*Ruth A. Banes*


While attending Florida State University in the 1970s, I often heard the story of how FSU and its rival, the University of Florida, were statutorily commanded by the Florida legislature to meet annually on the gridiron. Usually, some Gator would be trying to rub in the usual dominance of his town over mine. This story is one of several that is laid to rest by this fact-filled, lovingly produced history of Florida State University. It was the Florida Board of Control (precursor to the Board of Regents) that directed the state universities to compete in all intercollegiate sports in 1955. A bill introduced before the senate that year was rejected because it was felt a special law was not the way to implement this now infamous meeting.

FSU has had many colorful people associated with it throughout its years of change and adaptation as a major state university. From Faye Dunaway, who was runner-up in the 1959 Miss FSU contest, to Dr. Paul A.M. Dirac, Nobel Laureate for Physics in 1933, the range and scope of students and faculty have always been varied.

The opening chapters recount the history of this institution, which began in 1857 as the West Florida Seminary. Through the efforts of Albert Alexander Murphree, president from 1897 to 1909, the seminary was given college status and renamed Florida State College in 1901. Enrollment stood at 252 in 1902.

The Buckman Act (1905) caused the name to be changed to Florida Female College, which offended nearly everyone associated with the college. In 1909, the name was officially changed to Florida State College for Women, which it remained until 1947. The Tallahassee branch of the University of Florida (TBUF) opened in 1946 to accommodate the returning World War II vets. TBUF was located at Florida State College for Women’s West Campus. Initial enrollment reached 600. On May 15, 1947, de facto coeducation became authentic with the birth of Florida State University.
Filled with photographs from every decade of FSU history, the second half of this volume tells the story in pictures. These photographs were culled from various archives around the state, and they depict what life was like not only on the campus, but within the city of Tallahassee itself.

Martee Wills, who was the Director of Media Relations at FSU until 1986, and Joan Perry Morris, who is curator of the Florida Photographic Archives, have done a commendable job of compiling the information and photographs for this history of Florida State University.

_Jana S. Futch_


Although you do not have to be an alumnus of the University of Florida to appreciate this fascinating look at the history of the state’s largest and oldest public university, it certainly helps if you “bled Orange and Blue.” Combining narrative by Samuel Proctor and almost two hundred pages of photographs organized by photo-historian Wright Langley, this large format book traces the growth of the university from its beginnings in 1853 as the state supported East Florida Seminary in Ocala. Its first head, Gilbert Dennis Kingsbury, resigned in a sex scandal involving the music teacher, but the institution moved to Gainesville and never looked back.

Eventually, the state found itself supporting eight different colleges scattered from the Florida Agricultural College in Lake City to the Normal and Industrial School in St. Petersburg, and in 1905 combined them into the University of Florida. Gainesville won the competition with Lake City to be the permanent site, but not without some hard feelings. As horse-drawn wagons carried away equipment from the Lake City campus, mathematics professor W. S. Cawthon “rode in the first wagon with a rifle across his knees” (p. 36).

Samuel Proctor’s narrative follows the growth of the institution through eight university administrations, from Andrew Sledd (1905-1909) to Marshall Criser, current president. Along the way, Proctor mixes the important milestones with the fascinating trivia. Thus, the history of the various liberal arts and professional colleges shares space with the perennial dreams of a championship football team – dreams so important that 1948 gubernatorial candidate Fuller Warren pledged a winning team for the University of Florida in his campaign.

The book is not, however, one long paean to Gator greatness. The blemishes are here too. When political science professor Newell Sims resigned in the midst of the post-World War I Red Scare, President Murphree said: “We are going to have no socialism, Bolshevism, or atheism at this University” (p. 46). The “Johns Committee” of the 1950’s, looking for communists in the classroom, is called “higher education’s darkest hour in Florida” (p. 47). The entrenched resistance to integration delayed the enrollment of the first black undergraduate until 1962. Proctor even mentions the segregationist votes of Justice Stephen C. O’Connell of the Florida Supreme Court, later president of the university (1967-1973).
Wright Langley has collected a complete photographic history of the university, from the celebrations in Gainesville in 1905 at the coming of the university, to student protests in 1985 over South African investments. Here one will find former football greats, student haunts, views of old campus buildings when they were still young, and past student fads, including a photograph of male streakers in the 1970s. Langley’s search for photographs and illustrations, some rare, resulted in a book that is more than simply a collection of yearbook pages.

The book is recommended for all those interested in Florida’s history. Yes, even Florida State and U.S.F. alumni might find something of interest concerning The University of Florida.

Terry A. Smiljanich
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Confederals, founded in 1980 by Barry Domenget, is a local company of military historians interested in studying and portraying the life of the common infantry soldier of the Civil War - both Confederate and Union. The members of the group, which is based in Bradenton, participate in battle reenactments and living-history programs across the country, and they have earned the respect of experts for their attention to historical accuracy. The Confederals frequently participate in National and State Park programs, and they appeared in the television mini-series, "North-South, Book II."

The Confederals can be seen portraying Robert Watson's Florida Volunteer Coast Guard (see pages 36-65) from November to April at the Manatee Village Historical Park in Bradenton and from May to October at the Gamble Plantation State Historic Site in Ellenton. The programs faithfully reproduce the sights and sounds of a typical Civil War encampment. Visitors can gather around the campfire and sample the coffee and hardtack while soldiers tell what life was like in the Tampa Bay area during 1862.

Confederals will portray the Florida Volunteer Coast Guard at the Manatee Village Historical Park on Sundays from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on the following dates in 1989: January 8, February 5, March 19 and April 16. The park is located at 604 15th Street East, Bradenton. For more information, call the park office at 813-747-9664.

On March 9-11, 1989, the Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference will meet in Mobile, Alabama. The theme of the conference will be "The Maritime History of the Gulf Coast." The University of South Alabama, which has joined the University of West Florida and Pensacola Junior College in sponsoring the conference, will host the meeting.

The organizers would like to have sessions on a wide range of topics, and they hope that scholars from a variety of academic disciplines will attend and participate. Proposals for papers or for sessions should be submitted to Dr. George Daniels or Dr. Michael Thomason, Department of History, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama 36688. Papers presented will be published in the Gulf Coast Historical Review.
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KENT KASTER earned a B.A. degree at the University of South Florida, where he is currently pursuing a M.A. in history.

RONALD N. PROUTY is Art Director in the Advertising Department at Manatee Memorial Hospital in Bradenton, and he serves as Secretary-Historian of the Confederals, a local living-history group. (See "Announcements" section of this issue.)

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COVER: An early-day postcard identified this caravan as "starting for the Everglades from Fort Myers." See photo essay, pp. 24-35.
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"MOONSHINER GETS JAIL AND 'EVIDENCE' LOST"

Jake E. Matts, who was arrested at his home at Palm River Friday by Sheriff White, Chief Deputy Logan and Deputies Dudley and Blake, and charged with running an illicit still, pleaded guilty in criminal court yesterday and was sentenced to serve six months in the county jail and pay a fine.

"The distilling apparatus, which was of unique design, was set up in the sheriff’s office yesterday and attracted much attention. Two bottles of evidence were also in the sheriff’s desk and a Tribune man was invited to pass on the quality of the product by smelling the contents which he did, and passed the bottle along to Rev. C.W. Duke who was present.

"A short time after this it was discovered by the sheriff that this particular bottle of evidence had disappeared. Deputy White immediately went after the Tribune man, but he was able to 'pass the buck' and now everybody around the office is wondering where to look." Tampa Tribune, June 22, 1919.
"LIQUOR AND THE 'POOR MAN’S CURSE’"

"Liquor, as everybody knows, has long been the 'poor man’s curse.' So the rich men who are filling their cellars with it against the time of drought are happy in the consciousness that they are acting for the best interests of the poor, who can't afford such an investment."

*Tampa Tribune*, June 20, 1919.
"GENTLEMEN DRUNKS"

"Tampa, Fla., Nov. 29. - Police Chief C.J. Woodruff surveyed first week-end reports today of his recently started 'Home, James' service for 'gentlemen drunks' and wondered if it was worth while. Last week he announced a deluxe service for 'respectable citizens' who drank too much. He thought the service might prevent traffic accidents. Today he had reports on Saturday night's business.

"One client, whose name was withheld, was taken home. Another telephoned for a police cab, but could not give his whereabouts, so the police were unable to provide service. A third requested the service, but the attending officer ruled that he did not qualify as a gentleman and took him to jail." New York Times, November 30, 1936. (Courtesy of William E. Leuchtenburg.)
"OLDSMAR’S FAT MEN MEET"

"The Florida Fat Men’s club had a semi-occasional convention in Oldsmar, and the big men are having large troubles. Early in the weighty deliberations, a lot of thin toothpick-shaped men walked into the hall. They were so thin no one saw them coming. Before the fat men knew it, the thin men came pretty near having a majority of those present. They demanded membership in the club on the ground that they are prospective and potential fat men. As the candidates are jolly good fellows, it was decided to admit them with the provision that they patronize the grocery stores more liberally and fill up to their eye brows at every meal. A 66-foot tape line was used to measure the girth of some of the portly candidates. One of the colossal ones confessed he had a backache from carrying his stomach around. It was recommended that the name of the organization be expanded, in harmony with the growth and size of its membership." St. Petersburg Times, July 1, 1919.