Tampa Bay History 22/01

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Tampa Bay History

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On the cover: Norwegian Olympic skier Lief Svendsen is pictured near the bottom of a five-story manmade ski slope which was constructed in front of the Exchange Bank building on Franklin Street. Read Howard Hilton’s “The Abominable Snow Show” to find out why.
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You may wonder why a journal about Tampa Bay's history and culture has on its cover a photograph of a Norwegian rocketing down a ski slope. The answer should become more apparent as you take a second look at the photo. While the skier is wearing pants and a sweater, the crowd is dressed in more tropical attire, and the “slope” is made of wood and covered in chicken wire. The photograph was taken from the top of the man-made platform, four stories above Franklin Street on November 19, 1958, for the Tampa Snow Show. One of the Snow Show organizers, Howard Hilton, has written a wonderful article chronicling the week-long downtown event. Sadly, Mr. Hilton passed away in August of this year at the age of 82. We are fortunate that he had the forethought to write his memoirs. He possessed a great sense of humor and was able to laugh both at himself and the winter carnival he unleashed on his adopted hometown.

The year since our last issue has been an eventful one. The new Tampa Bay History Center is, at the time of this writing, nearly complete – the fulfillment of a promise made to Hillsborough County nearly twenty years ago. The year has also been a busy one for this year's contributors. The 2008 edition of Tampa Bay History features six articles, including the winner of the annual Leland Hawes Essay Prize in Florida History for Best Graduate Paper, an award given annually by the Tampa Bay History Center and the University of South Florida Libraries' Florida Studies Center.

The 2008 graduate prize winner, Nicole Cox, leads off this issue with her paper on the last hurricane to directly strike the Tampa Bay area – the 1921 Hurricane. Cox examines the storm in the context of the Florida Land Boom that was just gaining momentum at the time and how the reaction – or non-reaction – to the hurricane by local boosters played a role in the public's casual attitude toward these potentially dangerous storms.

Frank Schubert’s fascinating piece on one of Tampa’s most notorious, yet still largely unknown, figures, David Fagen, is our second article. Schubert’s in-depth examination of Fagen – a young man who grew up in the Scrub (Tampa’s first African American community), joined the Buffalo Soldiers in 1898 at the age of 19 and deserted the army the following year – goes beyond earlier and more superficial studies of Fagen. Schubert attempts to find the real story behind the man who deserted the U. S. Army in November 1899 to join the Filipino Insurrection.
Next is a re-examination of the Johns Committee by Seth Weitz, who explores a low point in the history of the University of South Florida (USF) and the state higher education system. In “Campus of Evil,” Weitz looks at the Johns Committee hearings at USF as both a “moral” and, more importantly, political crusade. Weitz writes about the controversy with an eye toward the long-term effects the discord would have on the university.

Leslie Poole, winner of the 2006 Leland Hawes Prize, has written a wonderful piece on St. Petersburg’s Katherine Tippetts, one of the founders of that city’s chapter of the Audubon Society. Tippetts arrived in St. Petersburg with her husband in 1902, where they operated a hotel and dabbled in real estate. After her husband died in 1909, Tippetts involved herself in social and environmental activities – in addition to operating the family business. Poole points out that Tippetts built a “foundation for activists who would follow in her footsteps in confronting Florida’s environmental woes.”

Editorial board member Joe Knetsch appears within these pages with an article on the early surveys of Fort Brooke and their impact on the fledgling town of Tampa. Knetsch’s expertise in the field of surveying, and his unique command of primary source materials, combine to make his piece an important addition to the scholarship of Tampa’s early history.

Anchoring the 2008 edition of *Tampa Bay History* is Mr. Hilton’s “The Abominable Snow Show.” It is presented here as Mr. Hilton wrote it (with a few minor grammatical edits) and is written in the first person – as if he was telling his story to all of you. I had the honor of spending some time with Mr. Hilton and hearing about the Snow Show from his perspective – an unusual mix of pride and embarrassment – and it was an afternoon I will not soon forget.

Thank you for a great and thoroughly enjoyable story, Mr. Hilton. This issue is for you.
Mrs. Jessie C. Rohrer, the wife of Edward P. Rohrer, emerged from her home the morning after a hurricane hit Tampa on Tuesday, October 25, 1921. In her journal, she documented the damage generated by Tampa’s worst hurricane in over seventy years, which she described excitedly and underlined for emphasis, “Some storm.”¹ The Rohrers owned a sizable amount of land in Tampa and lived in a wooded area close to the water, which provided Mrs. Rohrer with plenty of acreage for her extensive garden and chicken-raising enterprise. Much of her journal, which she kept from 1916 to 1959, focuses on her interests as a gardener and a botanist. However, the brief entry for the 1921 hurricane, written in pencil and now faded on crumbling pages, reinforced the significance of a natural disaster rarely mentioned in Florida history books.

According to Mrs. Rohrer’s journal, the tide rose through the woods and came within fifty feet of their house while eight feet of water covered her beloved garden.² Local history books echo this account with reports that the tide rose ten and one-half feet above mean low tide, five feet higher than any hurricane since 1848.³ Although weather reports and more recent accounts of the hurricane described the rising tide as the most destructive feature of this storm, the damage caused by the wind impressed Mrs. Rohrer, and she noted in her entry: “Wind 78 miles per hour in gusts. 68 miles per hour for 3 hours steady blow.”⁴

Nicole Cox is in the M.A. history program at the University of South Florida, Tampa campus. Her research focuses on 20th century U.S. cultural and environmental history.

² Ibid.
⁴ Journal of Jessie C. Rohrer.
The wind speed barely registered the storm as a category 1 hurricane on the modern Saffir/Simpson scale, which was first introduced to the public in 1975. The classification parameters before the introduction of this system identified hurricanes as “Great Hurricanes, Severe Hurricanes, or Minor, Minimal, Major or Extreme Hurricanes.” However, even the wind from a minor hurricane can produce extensive damage, as evidenced by Mrs. Rohrer’s description of the oak, cedar, bay, myrtle, mulberry, and persimmon trees blown down on her property as well as the loss of the garage roof. The hurricane tossed many of these trees into the river, which captured Mrs. Rohrer’s attention because the trees “were filled with dead chickens.” This entry ended rather abruptly with Mrs. Rohrer’s clarification, “Not our chickens however.”

General histories of Florida overlook or only briefly mention the 1921 hurricane that affected Tampa and its environs. An obvious explanation for this omission is that

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6 Journal of Jessie C. Rohrer.
the 1921 hurricane paled in comparison with the 1926 hurricane, which ravaged
Miami and the surrounding areas. In this storm, Moore Haven endured the most
severe loss of life when the Okeechobee dike collapsed, sending a tidal wave rolling
through the town, killing over three hundred people.\textsuperscript{7} Two short years later, the even
more infamous “killer cane” of 1928 brought wind gusts of 150 miles per hour and
killed thousands.\textsuperscript{8} In spite of boosters’ attempts to downplay even the catastrophic
1926 and 1928 hurricanes, research suggests that more people died in hurricane
disasters during this period than at any other time in Florida history.\textsuperscript{9}

Scholarship surrounding the latter hurricanes often identifies the natural
disasters as death knells for the Florida land boom and a precipitant of the much
greater “bust” the United States would experience in the following years. During
the 1920s land boom, Florida’s attributes were sold to thousands of people in
magazines, newspapers, movies, and other popular outlets. Mass production and
mass consumerism characterized the 1920s, making Florida and the land boom
accessible to the flourishing middle class, not just to the upper stratum of American
society. Some people were in search of paradise, while others were more interested in
the prospect of becoming very rich, very quickly. “Florida fever” swept the nation.

During the early 1920s, real estate business in Florida began to increase at
an unheard-of rate, reaching its peak in 1924 and 1925. Historians approximate
that between 1923 and 1925, more than three hundred thousand people settled in
Florida. During this period, nine of the thirteen new counties created were in the
southern part of the state.\textsuperscript{10} The 1925 Florida State Census showed a growth rate that
exceeded 35 percent in the preceding decade.\textsuperscript{11} Despite all of the methods employed
by boosters, the boom went bust in a matter of years, and the hurricanes did little
to improve Florida’s image in the eyes of the nation. In \textit{Mockingbird Song: Ecological
Landscapes of the South}, Jack Temple Kirby assesses the effect of these storms and
concludes, “The Great Florida Boom of the 1920s was practically silenced by awesome
hurricanes in 1926 and 1928.”\textsuperscript{12} Thus, it is not surprising that Florida history books
immortalize these storms and mention them in the larger context of the state’s boom-
and-bust period of the 1920s.

\textsuperscript{7} Charlton W. Tebeau, “Boom-Bust-Hurricane Twenties,” in \textit{A History of Florida} (Coral Gables:
University of Miami Press, 1971), 387.
\textsuperscript{8} Robert Mykle, \textit{Killer Cane: The Deadly Hurricane of 1928} (New York: Cooper Square Press,
2002), 170.
\textsuperscript{9} Ted Steinberg, \textit{Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America} (New York:
Oxford University Press, 2000), 53.
291.
\textsuperscript{11} 1925 Florida State Census (Tallahassee: T. J. Appleyard, 1926), 15. Floridiana Collection, Special
Collections, USF Library, Tampa.
\textsuperscript{12} Jack Temple Kirby, \textit{Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South} (Chapel Hill: University
However, research on the 1921 hurricane reveals the need to study this less severe and seldom discussed natural disaster in the context of the boom’s takeoff. Boosters and citizens expressed determination not to let a hurricane interfere with the image and success of the “Year Round City,” as advertisers christened Tampa during the 1920s. Advertisers’ efforts added new meaning to the modern phrase “damage control” in both a literal and figurative sense. As the environmental historian Ted Steinberg explains in *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America*, “Natural disaster has a very shadowy history in Florida, rooted in years of denial for the sake of more hotels and suburban sprawl.” By studying different accounts that sensationalize, downplay, and even deny the damage generated by the storm, while emphasizing the significance of the upcoming boom, this research provides a fresh outlook on the relationship between development and disaster. Reactions and responses to the 1921 hurricane paralleled Mike Davis’s conclusion in *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*: “Even the weather (or rather its normative representation) is subject to ideological construction.”

Before and after the storm, local leaders, businessmen, realtors, and eventually the press sought to cover up the damage caused by the hurricane and rushed to draw attention back to the “paradise” they marketed as Florida. This analysis of the 1921 Tampa hurricane suggests that local businessmen and the press succeeded in their efforts to gloss over the natural disaster that occurred in the early stages of Tampa’s 1920s boom. Not only did the hurricane fail to deter the boom, but it actually facilitated the boom’s success locally.

Striking Tampa on October 25, the 1921 storm occurred late in the official hurricane season that runs from June 1 through November 30. In *Florida’s Hurricane History*, the historian Jay Barnes traces the path of the 1921 hurricane, explaining that August, September, and October are typically considered to be the peak months for Atlantic hurricanes, with September being “the most dangerous month for tropical cyclones in Florida.” However, in spite of the statistical analyses performed on hurricanes and the improved tracking, Barnes notes: “Statistics can be misleading in any attempt to determine what to expect in the future. And few hurricane seasons seem average in Florida.”

The twentieth century ushered in a period of greater public awareness of the existence and approach of weather phenomena. Kirby explains, “Until the twentieth century, however, if nor’easters and hurricanes were recorded at all, they became ‘historical’ and ‘public’ only to sparse populations affected and random readers of

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13 Van Beynum Horn, “City and Community Slogans,” Suniland 1, no. 3 (December 1924): 41. Floridiana Collection, Special Collections, USF Library, Tampa.
17 Ibid. 9.
Damage Control

This greater public awareness resulted from population growth, new technology, and an expanding government. The U.S. Weather Bureau, which operated under the aegis of the Department of Agriculture, issued an official report in the hurricane’s wake that provided insight into the efficacy of the 1920s warning system. According to the report, advisory messages indicating “formation and movement of hurricane had been received Friday and Saturday.” A brief mention in the Sunday, October 23, edition of the Tampa Morning Tribune explained that on October 22, the Bureau reported that a tropical storm of “considerable intensity” was moving northward, over the northwestern Caribbean. As the storm strengthened and moved over the Caribbean, the Bureau took observations at 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. on October 23 and telegraphed advisories. On Monday, October 24, at 10:40 a.m., the Bureau issued northeast storm warnings that quickly changed to hurricane warnings by 12:34 p.m. the same day.

According to the report, as the Bureau received advisories and observational updates, it telegraphed these to “displaymen” and contacted persons on an emergency weather records thereafter.”

18 Kirby, Mockingbird Song, 6.
19 Weather Bureau U.S. Department of Agriculture, Hurricane Report Tampa October 25, 1921, 1. Floridiana Collection, Special Collections, USF Library, Tampa.
20 “Hurricane Rounding Swan Isle for North,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 23 October 1921.
The description of the warnings issued during the 1921 hurricane suggests that the national Weather Bureau efficiently dealt with the situation. However, an examination of the local response indicates a lack of concern regarding the storm’s approach. In Barnes’s description of hurricane preparedness in the 1920s and 1930s, he explains that advance notice, if it came, was usually short. Remote areas might have no idea of an impending storm.

The local response to these official warnings and advisories did not indicate the same level of preparedness or apprehension as the U.S. Weather Bureau report. Although the report claimed to widely publicize the advisories, an article in the Tampa Morning Tribune suggested local skepticism and a general lack of concern regarding the approaching storm. The article, “Yucatan’s Blow Is Headed into Gulf,” reported the official weather bulletin from Washington but included a section titled “No Storms Here.” W. J. Bennett, who served as head of the local government weather bureau, reported on the storm’s current location, but he seemed to dismiss the potential threat. “It was about eleven years ago that Tampa experienced its closest acquaintance with a hurricane,” he explained. “On Oct. 18, 1910, one passed so close that the barometer reached 28.94, and the wind was forty-eight miles per hour. No great damage was done locally.” He neglected to mention that ten people perished during the 1910 storm.

Clearly, Bennett’s report was designed to quell any rising fears about the hurricane. Meanwhile, the rain had begun to fall on October 23, “and continued with scarcely a break until 9:15 P.M. of the 25th,” resulting in a total rainfall of 8.53 inches, 6.48 of which fell in a twenty-four-hour period between October 24 and 25. Bennett later disputed the official total and claimed that the rainfall exceeded this amount, but wind during the hurricane blew rain out of the gauge.

The headline in the October 25, 1921, edition of the Tribune blared, “Barometer Falls as Hurricane Heads in to Florida’s Coast.” This article emphasized the storm’s imminent approach, but both the writer and meteorologist Bennett remained hopeful that the storm would not affect Tampa. In fact, below the main headline, the writer included the note, “May Pass Tampa By as in All Past Instances.” Nevertheless, Bennett urged, “Every precaution should be taken in expectation of winds with a velocity of forty miles an hour or more.” The Tribune did not resume the paper until October 27, 1921, as the hurricane hit on the afternoon of October 25, eliminating communication with the outside world and probably providing little

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22 Barnes, Florida’s Hurricane History, 33.
26 “Yucatan’s Blow Headed into Gulf,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 24 October 1921.
27 “Barometer Falls As Hurricane Heads in to Florida’s Coast,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 25 October 1921.
opportunity for citizens to heed Bennett’s warning in the morning paper. In the midst of the deluge, the *Tampa Daily Times* released a special “Storm Edition” using the publishing office of the *Plant City Courier.*

In his 1950 history of Tampa, Karl H. Grismer summarized the storm’s path: “The hurricane developed in the Caribbean, swung around the western end of Cuba, proceeded northward to the latitude of Tampa Bay and then swung inland.” The official weather report determined that the eye of the hurricane passed over Tarpon Springs, located on the Gulf of Mexico northwest of Tampa. This area also experienced the lowest barometric pressure during the storm and peak wind gusts of over 100 miles per hour. It should be noted, however, that the official weather report did not mention these extreme wind gusts.

When the October 27, 1921, issue of the *Tribune* appeared, the front page declared, “Loss through Storm Severe; May Total $5 Million for South Florida; $2 Million Loss in Tampa & Vicinity; Only Few Lives Lost.” This damage assessment paralleled the official hurricane report that detailed Tampa’s destruction. Estimates varied as local insurance agents tried to approximate the total loss. The *Tampa Daily Times* described the difficulty of this task due to the “absence of cyclone insurance policies here, the adjustment of which might have furnished appraisers with a working basis for estimating the loss.” Only a handful of Tampans possessed insurance that had such a policy, which emphasized the lack of hurricane preparedness in 1921.

Local businesses were especially hard hit. Tampa Electric Company experienced significant damage, estimated at $200,000, as a result of power plant flooding and falling wires. The Peninsular Telephone Company and the Oscar Daniels shipbuilding plant experienced moderate losses. Residential and commercial destruction totaled $300,000. Downtown stores and waterfront residences fared the worst, especially in the suburbs of Palmetto Beach, Edgewater Park, and De Soto Park. In these areas, the damage was complete, with “some houses being totally destroyed, and practically all damaged.”

The collapse of the Bayshore Boulevard seawall and the flooding of prosperous neighborhoods in the city generated much concern as water invaded Tampa’s premier homes. An account of damage in Edgewater Park compiled a list of “sufferers” that identified the owners by name and gave the addresses accompanied by brief damage reports. For example, the *Tribune* identified Mrs. J. H. Tucker among the sufferers and noted, “house totally wrecked and floated three blocks away.”

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28 “City Held in Dismal Grip of Gale Twenty-Four Hours,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 25 October 1921.
29 Grismer, Tampa, 248.
32 “City Loss to Exceed $1,000,000,” *Tampa Daily Times*, 26 October 1921.
33 Ibid.
the most compelling features in this damage report is the description in parentheses that followed the entry for the Ferrara family, whose home at the foot of Flagler Street, overhanging the water, was a “total loss.” Tribune writers deemed it necessary to clarify that the Ferrara family was Spanish, which provided insight into existing ethnic divisions in the city.36 This qualification raised a question about whether or not neighbors in the “prosperous development of Edgewater Park” viewed the Ferraras as outsiders in their white enclave.

Loss of life totaled eight on the west coast of Florida, with five deaths occurring in the vicinity of Tampa. Two individuals drowned, and falling wires electrocuted three people, two of whom the Tribune described as “Negro children.” A falling tree knocked wires onto the porch of a black family in Hyde Park. According to Mrs. W. G. Squires of the Red Cross, who reported on the “affair,” “The children ran out to

36 Ibid.
remove the wire. In so doing their death immediately followed.”37 Compared with the sensational stories described below, the deaths of the two black children, who were not even named, garnered only a mention in the newspaper report.38

The October 27 and 28 Morning Tribune editions provided a combination of sensational survival accounts and tragic stories that contrasted with the confident reports about recovery efforts. For example, the story about J. D. Wilder of Rocky Point and his “night of terror” depicted the tragic side of the disaster. The elderly Mr. Wilder clung to a palm tree all night with his eighty-five-year-old wife, only to lose his grip on her hand and witness her being washed out to sea.39 The dramatic tone of this account varied greatly from the front-page story about repair efforts, whose author flippantly claimed, “Tampans awoke yesterday morning after a fitful night’s sleep to find the greatest hurricane that had visited this section since 1848 had blown itself out and it was time to take stock of the damage.”40 Mr. and Mrs. Wilder definitely experienced more than an innocuous, fitful night’s sleep.

Another fantastic story recounted the “harrowing experience” of Mrs. C. W. Greene, the wife of a prominent Tampa businessman, who tried to assist her husband in securing their boat. While Mr. Greene struggled with the boat, Mrs. Greene sat in the couple’s ten-foot skiff, which suddenly came loose from its mooring, sweeping Mrs. Greene into the bay with only one oar. Using what the Tribune proclaimed as “a display of seamanship which has perhaps never before been equaled in Florida territory, she managed to guide her boat by shifting her weight from side to side, as necessary” and safely arrive onshore.41 Like the Tribune’s October 27, 1921, headline that noted, “Only Few Lives Lost,” the Weather Bureau’s report assessed that the loss of life “was remarkably small, due to warnings, and to fact that storm came in day time, when escape was possible from dangerous localities.”42

In spite of the damage, the Tribune summarized the losses throughout South Florida and concluded on October 28, 1921, “Everyone is accepting the storm as an incident and all are going to work to rebuild the devastated areas, with the firm conviction that there will not be another storm of such severity during the life of anyone now living.”43 Society events continued uninterrupted, and the Tribune publicized the details of these gatherings. By dismissing the storm as an isolated “incident” that would never occur more than once in a lifetime, the writers brushed aside the hurricane’s significance and the regularity with which these natural disasters plagued the state.

38 Ibid.
39 “Aged Man Clinging to Tree, Sees Wife Lost” Tampa Morning Tribune 27 October 1921.
41 “In Rowboat for 11 Hours at Mercy of the Storm,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 27 October 1921.
43 “Storm Damage General over Southwestern Part of State,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 28 October 1921.
A glowing report by meteorologist Bennett pronounced Tampa’s response to the hurricane to be nothing short of perfect. He acknowledged the importance of the wide distribution of storm warnings in saving lives. A highlight on the front-page coverage featured Bennett’s discussion of the storm’s damage to his own home on Bayshore. Nevertheless, in a weatherman’s version of boosterism, Bennett declared, “But I have confidence such a storm will never come this way again and I have started repairs like my neighbors, for we know Tampa still lives, and this storm will not check its growth.”  

Citizens like Bennett grew adamant that a hurricane would not detract from the burgeoning promise of the state’s boom.

In Bennett’s final evaluation of the city’s response to the “great storm,” he asserted, “The destruction of property could not be prevented by any human effort.” This explanation absolved humans of having any role in the damage and emphasized the idea that these sorts of disasters were unnatural, an example of the “act of God” approach that the historian Ted Steinberg rails against in his analysis of the 1935 hurricane that devastated the Florida Keys.

Along similar lines, the Tampa Daily Times writer Con O. Lee compared this “uncommon” side of nature to a “sweet little girl who has never said an unkind word suddenly going on the warpath and wrecking furniture and committing wholesale crime.” This idea supported the premise that nature was unpredictable and vengeful. Lee also suggested that nature, and more specifically a hurricane, had a female personality. This sort of rhetoric used to describe the 1921 storm added fodder to Florida's long history of gendering hurricanes, which the Weather Bureau made official in 1950. Steinberg notes, “Transforming what had once been known across America as ‘Florida hurricanes’ into female storms served to naturalize further the destructiveness of these calamities.”

Steinberg also evaluates the “Do-It Yourself Deathscape” Florida created, and condemns the idea that humans do not play a role in these disasters. Steinberg poses the question, “Why is South Florida a disaster waiting to happen?” He attributes much of the problem to private developers building in areas vulnerable to natural disasters, including hurricanes and flooding. After examining the state’s natural disaster history while looking toward the future, Steinberg concludes, “Private-property-driven economic development helped to sow the seeds of future destruction, while Florida’s business community sought to deny the very real risks involved and, where possible, to blame nature or God when disaster did occur.”

The relationship between the public’s response to the 1921 hurricane and the land boom foreshadows Steinberg’s
portrayal of South Florida’s natural disaster history. An article about a weather event that occurred on the opposite side of the United States emphasized another maneuver designed to draw attention away from the recent storm in Florida and focus readers’ attention elsewhere. The October 27 edition of the *Morning Tribune* informed readers that Florida was not the only state to experience natural disasters: “California Gets a Bit of Storm Too: Tornado Swings into Sacramento.” The writer reported, “Scores of houses were unroofed, hundreds of windows were broken out and other damage, the full total of which cannot be estimated tonight.” This account suggested extensive damage, possibly on a greater scale than damage reports of Tampa’s hurricane.50

The city’s desire to divert attention from the recent storm to a different type of natural disaster far away diminished the hurricane’s significance. This technique also raises the question of whether or not Florida writers seized on the tornado to shift negative attention to a rival tourist destination. Davis notes the frequency with which “natural disasters on several famous occasions have decisively influenced the Darwinian competition among American cities and regions” —notably the competition between South Florida and California in the wake of the 1926 and

50 “California Gets a Bit of a Storm Too,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 27 October 1921.
1928 hurricanes. The example from October 27, 1921, emphasizes the idea that this competition was gearing up as early as 1921.

By October 28, the tone of the articles in the Tribune changed, and writers, businessmen, and citizens pronounced earlier damage reports to be exaggerated. Headlines including such phrases as “Damage Estimates Diminish” and “Few Traces Are Left” covered the paper’s front page. Journalists declared that the storm was no more than a memory, and matter of factly explained, “Any person walking or driving through the downtown section of the city last evening would have been hard put to find a trace of storm damage.” Electric company crews and workers speedily removed all signs of storm debris in an effort to return the city to normal as quickly as possible and put the storm behind them. Boy Scout executive Roy Bachman issued an edict for all Tampa Boy Scouts “to put on their uniforms and start out at once to clear the streets of fallen limbs and also to help those who are in distress from the storm.” Almost all the reports, including a special message from Tampa’s mayor, Charles H. Brown, urged citizens not to “feel discouraged but look bravely ahead to the future.”

However, not everyone benefitted from this citizen response. Tampa City Council reports from the October 31, 1921, meeting described the damage control the city needed to perform after the storm. The city’s response included debris clearing and assisting the people who had lost their homes in the storm. Unfortunately, the city’s annual budget had no appropriation to cover this type of emergency. Resolution 172A solved this problem with the transfer of $12,000 for emergency cleanup funds that the council previously allotted for the Spanish Town Creek sewer project.

The rapidity of the citywide response brings up the question of why Tampa was so eager to underplay the effects of the hurricane and bury all evidence of the damage. By October 28, 1921, reports relating to the storm focused on recovery efforts. Businessmen who returned to Tampa from the Northeast and other parts of the country expressed concern about the “wild rumors” circulating across the nation that Tampa suffered mightily in the storm. Travelers professed relief that their business interests fared better than expected. Concern about the city and the state’s image in the hurricane’s aftermath resulted in a barrage of booster reports about Tampa’s welfare.

Peter O. Knight, vice president of the Tampa Electric Company, categorized the storm as a “temporary setback” instead of a “disaster.” Knight professed dismay and regret that “some very exaggerated stories have gained space in the newspapers.

51 Davis, Ecology of Fear, 53.
52 “Damage Estimates Diminish,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 28 October 1921.
54 “Mayor Commends Public for Conduct during Tying Storm,” Tampa Daily Times, 26 October 1921.
55 Tampa City Council Minutes, 31 October 1921, 332. City of Tampa Archives.
56 “Temporary Setback, Not Disaster, in the Storm,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 28 October 1921.
printed in other cities, stories having only the slightest basis in fact, or no basis at all, and in some cases being wild imaginings.” Knight blamed other cities for spreading these inaccuracies, which suggested eagerness on the part of overzealous reporters to malign Tampa and disparage the state. He acknowledged that these “yarns” would be harmful to business, but remained confident that the rest of the world would quickly come to its senses. Knight employed booster images of Florida as a disaster-free paradise and denied or glossed over the state’s natural disaster record:

One should recollect that this state is freer from disasters than any other in the country. Take the history of the past seventy-three years. There was the hurricane of 1848 and the big freeze of 1894. Seventy-three years of the state’s history and only two setbacks. We have no floods, we have had no great conflagrations, no epidemics of disease. We have a climate that cannot be duplicated in all the world; it can’t be bought, yet is ours without price.57

Knight’s complaints about the hyperbolic press led to questions about the veracity of his claim. The press clearly and unsurprisingly sensationalized stories about the hurricane. However, the combination of sensationalism and understatement implied that the press suppressed the storm’s actual significance. Knight’s response proved to be a dress rehearsal for trivialization of the far more powerful and destructive 1926 hurricane. In 1926, he complained that the Red Cross should be wary of doing more harm than good in their efforts to raise money for the devastated coast.58 Clearly, hurricanes threatened Florida’s image as a paradise.

Florida’s realtors echoed Knight’s concerns at the weekly luncheon of the Tampa Realtors’ Association. Members decried the inaccuracy of newspaper reports in Tampa and elsewhere. This group adopted a long list of resolutions, culminating in a demand that the local and Associated Press “be requested to use its columns in correcting the erroneous impressions that have gone broadcast to the great detriment of the city and south Florida.”59

These sources, studied in conjunction with the exaggerated reports in the newspapers, highlight a conflict between the press and other groups that seized this event as an opportunity to profit from the disaster, and the business class in Tampa, which was determined to downplay the effects of the storm for fear that business would suffer. In Acts of God, Steinberg analyzes a similar dispute in the aftermath of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. As he explains, “The battle to interpret the San Francisco disaster began even before the smoke had cleared.”60

57 Ibid. Florida cities including Pensacola, Key West, and Tampa experienced severe yellow fever outbreaks throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Eirlys Barker, “Seasons of Pestilence: Tampa and Yellow Fever, 1824-1905” [master’s thesis, University of South Florida, 1984]).
58 Steinberg, Acts of God, 53.
59 “Realtors State Reports Overdrawn,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 29 October 1921.
60 Steinberg, Acts of God, 26.
The steamer Favorite was torn from its moorings on the east side of the Hillsborough River and carried onshore near Plant Park, on the west side of the river, by the storm. The boat returned to service within a few weeks of the storm’s passing.

The *Tampa Morning Tribune* reprinted some of the most compelling statements regarding the hurricane in booster editorials from newspapers around the state and the nation. For example, in “Sunshine Is Breaking through Storm Clouds,” the *Jacksonville Metropolis* declared, “It can be truthfully stated Florida is less exposed to storms and cyclones than the majority of states in the Union.” The author compared Florida with the Midwest and the Far West, where residents expected tornadoes and earthquakes to occur. Moreover, in the writer’s opinion, “These violent experiences come under the heading of ‘Acts of Providence’ and the only way to take them is philosophically, because they are beyond the control of man.” Nevertheless, Floridians did not need to worry about their future, even after the storm, because their land was one of “enviable prosperity, illimitable resources and an admirable citizenry.”

Similarly, the *Louisville Courier Journal* published a piece that distinguished between a gale and a hurricane. According to the writer, the recent storm was nothing

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more than a gale, which is a “wind between the speed of a stiff breeze and the speed of a hurricane. It is a steady dependable sort of storm. The native knows what to expect of it.” Furthermore, Tampans had restored everything in the city. Then, the writer lapsed into purple prose to describe the aftermath in Tampa: “The sun shines. The sky is again glorious. The mockingbird greets the dawn from the top of the magnolia.” In case readers did not grasp the “gale’s” insignificance, the *Louisville Courier Journal* provided a meteorological comparison between these minor storms and the dreaded cyclone in the Midwest, the foreign typhoon, and the likelihood of contracting pneumonia in the cold North.  

Thus, these articles about dreadful natural disasters in other parts of the United States and the world diverted attention from Florida and minimized the regularity and significance of hurricanes in the state. Although the editorial in the *Louisville Courier Journal* did not dismiss the possibility of a storm affecting Florida in the future, the writer confidently concluded, “The worst storm since 1897 and such other storms as Florida may experience in the future, will not affect the flow of settlers or tourists to that singularly blessed state.” By this point, the press refused to describe the incident as a hurricane and instead preferred to use watered-down terms such as “gale.”

Boosters and businessmen recast publicity about the storm in a positive light as they described reconstruction and damage control as heralds of boom days to come. At the end of Knight’s 1921 article, he described Tampa as “prosperity untouched” and urged readers, “Look ahead and see what is coming!” The Florida frenzy known as the land boom had begun, and no hurricane could stop it, or rather Tampa would not allow a hurricane to halt the boom’s promise. In fact, evidence suggests that the hurricane contributed to boom-time prosperity. At least some individuals wanted citizens to believe that even a natural disaster could bring good fortune. In the midst of the chaos generated by the storm, the *Tampa Daily Times* reported that the increased building in Tampa served as a sign of boom days to come. Lumber, roofing, and construction companies profited in the storm’s aftermath as citizens struggled to rebuild as quickly as possible. Some of these articles alluded to profiteering during the rebuilding as carpenters accused lumber companies of unfairly raising prices and merchants increased the cost of survival necessities such as candles and lamps.

While Tampans eagerly looked ahead to pie in the Florida sky, the storm dissipated from the citizens’ collective consciousness. Steinberg refers to the machinations to describe, deny, disassociate, and forget natural disasters, regardless of scale, as the “politics of forgetfulness.” This phenomenon would not benefit Florida or the United States in the future. In 1926, 1928, and 1935, the state faced a series of frightful events...
hurricanes that were made more tragic by the efforts to diminish and forget earlier natural disasters.66

In a special editorial that appeared just days after the 1921 hurricane hit, the *Tribune* posed the question, “Can Tampa Ever Be Second Los Angeles?” Woodward F. Barnwell, a booster and businessman, outlined a plan for Tampa’s progress that would elevate the city’s status above that of Los Angeles. Barnwell touted the endless possibilities that Tampa offered: “Our geographical location, fertile soil, mining possibilities, perfect climate and other natural advantages cry out to every man, woman and child in West Florida for development.”67 Barnwell neglected to mention the recent hurricane or the likelihood of another storm affecting the state because the disaster did not fit the image of progress, even though parallels existed between natural disasters and the public responses in Los Angeles and Tampa. The writer emphasized what he believed to be the necessary role of humans in reshaping the environment to create cities that would suit their own needs: “Cities like children must be trained intelligently; proper growth, physical, mental and moral cannot be gained in a haphazard manner. There must be a force with knowledge and experience leading, teaching, educating and forever striving for a definite end.”68

In Tampa after the 1921 hurricane, boosters, businessmen, city officials, and the press united in their reaction to the natural disaster, and they remained fixated on progress, profit, and prosperity—definite ends. Tampans would not allow a hurricane to interfere with the land boom’s promise—at least not a category 1 hurricane. In fact, they used the rebuilding process to boost development. However, the 1926, 1928, and 1935 hurricanes that later desolated regions of Florida proved more formidable opponents in man’s contest to control both nature and popular perceptions of its meaning.

Both historians and contemporary observers have advanced a variety of explanations for the outcomes of these storms. Analyses of the 1926 hurricane determined that lax building codes and an absence of construction inspections proved disastrous.69 It seemed unlikely that building codes would have been better five years earlier. Nevertheless, Tampa’s small area, which totaled 8.6 square miles, and the limited amount of development, provided other explanations for the storm’s reported lack of damage.70 The historian Raymond Arsenault emphasizes the role of “demography and nature,” not scientific or technological advancement, in challenging the traditional natural disaster discourse. He concluded, “Beginning in 1926, a series of powerful hurricanes disrupted the Great Florida Boom, causing extensive damage

66 Steinberg, Acts of God, 201.
67 “Can Tampa Ever Be Second Los Angeles,” Tampa Morning Tribune, 30 October 1921.
68 Ibid.
70 R.L. Polk and Company’s Tampa City Directory (Tampa: R.L. Polk, 1921), 64. Floridiana Collection, Special Collections, USF Library, Tampa.
and loss of life in an area that had been all but uninhabited a generation earlier.”\(^\text{71}\)

While Floridians in the twenty-first century might feel more secure with construction regulations and hurricane tracking, the concept of disaster inflation raises an interesting question. How would Tampa fare in 2008 if a hurricane of similar strength to the 1921 storm hit the now much larger metropolis and its areas of urban sprawl? Dick Fletcher, the former meteorologist for WSTP St. Petersburg, predicted “property damage would be about $25 billion to $50 billion higher.”\(^\text{72}\)

As Mike Davis explains in his study of Los Angeles: “Vulnerability to disaster has


an inflationary dimension. Uncontrolled horizontal growth of the megalopolis relentlessly undermines existing infrastructures.” Floridians have been fortunate during the recent hurricane season. However, on the eighty-seventh anniversary of the 1921 storm, we must question the degree to which economic motivations dictate a natural disaster’s damage and influence our efforts to control modern Florida’s image.

73 Davis, Ecology of Fear, 53.
Seeking David Fagen: The Search for a Black Rebel’s Florida Roots

By Frank Schubert

David Fagen was by far the best known of the twenty or so black soldiers who deserted the U.S. Army in the Philippines at the turn of the twentieth century and defected to the enemy. His story filled newspapers great and small, from the New York Times to the Crawford (Neb.) Tribune. His notoriety was so great that the Times called him “the celebrated Fagen,” and it was Fagen that the military hero Frederick Funston wanted desperately to kill and, when he failed to do so, made excuses to cover his failure. In the press, the literature, and the official records of the war, one name kept popping up: David Fagen, the teenager from Tampa who had enlisted in the Twenty-fourth Infantry in 1898 for the war against Spain and attracted the attention of the New York Times for leading insurrecto soldiers against the Americans and frustrating the great Funston. Who was this soldier, and what was his story?

For many years, historical studies of Florida at the turn of the twentieth century that discussed the war with Spain tended to focus on local volunteer regiments, on civilian patriots trying to make soldiers comfortable in camp, and on businesses and communities experiencing strong economic surges as a result of Florida becoming the springboard to operations in Cuba. And, indeed, Florida was just that: all of the V Corps—the seventeen thousand men who went to Cuba, along with those left behind—were bivouacked in Tampa and Lakeland, Miami, Fernandina, and Jacksonville. Among them were all four regiments of black regulars, three (the Ninth Cavalry, and the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth infantry regiments) in Tampa, and the fourth, the Tenth Cavalry, in Lakeland. Recently the experience of these soldiers in Florida has been the subject of a growing number of books, articles, and dissertations.¹

Some Floridians joined regular units, and David Fagen was one of those. He enlisted on June 4, 1898, for a term of three years, and began an extraordinary military journey, starting as a private in the Twenty-fourth Infantry and ending as a captain in Emilio Aguinaldo’s Filipino revolutionary army, fighting against his former comrades and the United States, in a conflict that started as part of the war with Spain in 1898 and ended by throttling the Filipino independence movement in 1902.

How does one find out about the origins of such a young man? He does not appear in what might be called “uplift” histories, such as Rowena Brady’s *Things Remembered,* a book that traces the emergence of a black professional and entrepreneurial middle class in Tampa. He’s not in Maxine Jones and Kevin McCarthy’s *African Americans in Florida,* with its biographies of pillars of black Tampa, such as the educator Blanche Armwood and the nurse Clara Frye, both of whom made vital contributions to their community.

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In fact, in an earlier version of a local history, D. B. McKay’s *Pioneer Florida*, published in 1959 during the waning days of segregation, there is some indication of how far David Fagen and his family were from being among the pillars of black Tampa. In a chapter called “The Good Colored People of Tampa,” Sam Fagen, David’s father, made a cameo appearance, by way of illustrating what did *not*, in McKay’s judgment, constitute the so-called “good colored people” of Tampa. Here is the story, as McKay wrote it:

Sam Fagin [*sic*] was a shiftless old Negro who was never known to work, but had about 20 children. I mention him because I recall a funny story about him. When the late Clarke Knight had just graduated from law school he walked into the police station one morning looking for business. He saw old Sam in a cell and asked why. Sam said he was accused of stealing chickens. Clarke volunteered to represent him. The next morning when Sam was arraigned before Judge Harry Peeples the judge glared at him and evidently unnerved him. Told to plead to the charge, Sam whispered, “Jedge, when you looks at me lak dat it seems lak you looks right through me. I ain’t gwine lie to you, Jedge--I’s guilty.” Clarke was on his feet instantly to protest: “Judge Peeples. You frightened this poor old man so badly with your fierce expression that he doesn’t know what he is saying. I am his lawyer, and I tell you he is not guilty.” Whereupon the honorable court delivered himself of this gem: “Sam Fagin, stand up! I’ll have you know that I came from South C’alina, and I was taught to always take the word of a white in preference to the word of a Negro. You say you are guilty--your lawyer says you are not guilty. I prefer to believe your lawyer. Case dismissed.”

The tale shows starkly the racism of the day, when a black man’s word was not even good enough to establish his own guilt. The story may also show a black man so shrewd that he knew that all he had to do was admit guilt to be exonerated.

What about Sam’s son David? What can we find out about this young African American man from the mean dirt streets of the Scrub? Where is the evidence that would reveal who he was, what and who might have shaped his life, and--perhaps most important--what might have been the sources of his rebellion? And, once we have the evidence we can be sure of, how can we use this as the basis from which to imagine, guess, and extrapolate in an effort to create a full picture of an extraordinary young man?

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The search begins with his family and standard sources—census records, insurance maps, and vital records. Sam Fagen (ca. 1840-1899) did not have twenty children. He and his wife, Sylvia (ca. 1853-1883), had seven, and David was the seventh, following four brothers and two sisters. There was also Sylvia’s son George Douglas, the oldest child in the family in 1880 at the age of eleven, when David was just one year old. Sam was a laborer, and if he was not a local legend, he should have been. In addition to his acquittal as the perpetrator of the great chicken robbery, an 1878 story in the *Sunland Tribune* had him catching an alligator, and one in 1881 reported that he had stolen oats for his horse. Sylvia “kept house,” as the census report put it. George was sixteen in 1885 and did “general job work,” so he may have contributed a bit to the household, but the family was big, depended mainly on Sam’s earnings as a laborer, and probably had trouble making ends meet.

In this context, we have to try to understand Sylvia’s role during her short life and why it was important that she “kept house.” Kathleen Howe, in her article “Stepping into Freedom: African Americans in Hillsborough County, Florida, during the Reconstruction Era,” notes that whites didn’t understand that “social circumstances and the legacy of slavery gave labor different meanings for African Americans. For black women,” Howe wrote, “the meaning was deeply influenced by their desires to nurture their families and maintain their own households.” During the 1870s, the percentage of black adult women keeping house or with no outside employment went from 50 to 64 percent. Sometimes circumstances required freedwomen to earn wages, but they “created economic niches that added earnings without sacrificing care of their families or submitting to the supervision of whites.” Thus, in the 1880 census, one begins to see “laundress” as the occupation of some.

This view of the importance of women keeping house was confirmed by Leon Litwack in his study of African Americans in the post-Reconstruction South. “In removing themselves from the fields and the white family’s house,” Litwack wrote, “black women evinced a desire to spend more time tending to the needs of the family and to escape the abuse that often accompanied close proximity to white men. In removing their wives, daughters, and mothers from domestic and field work, many black men sought to assert their position at the head of the family and provide family members with a protection denied them as slaves.”

The family’s address before Sylvia Fagen’s death in 1883 is not known, but the 1886 city directory locates Sam Fagen and his family at the corner of Nebraska Avenue and Constant Street, in the Scrub, the original black neighborhood of Tampa.

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5 Sylvia Fagen died on May 2, 1883, and was buried in Oaklawn Cemetery, section 4. http://www.tampagov.net/dept_Parks/cemetery/Engine.asp.
8 Litwack, *Trouble in Mind*, 124.
Tampa, named for the scrub palmetto that covered the area. Litwack observed that “to find the black neighborhood in almost any town or city, one needed no map or signs,” that the streets were rarely paved and inevitably turned to mud in rainstorms, and that the housing was always the least desirable in town. He cited “the Bottoms” in Knoxville, Tennessee, a cluster of rickety shacks on stilts along a creek, in a neighborhood surrounded by industry—tobacco warehouses, a foundry, a slaughterhouse, and the inevitably volatile creek that was sometimes within its banks and sometimes at flood. Residents had no political power, received no municipal services, and found it almost impossible to escape their surroundings. Litwack could just as easily have been describing the Scrub.

A 1927 study of the conditions of life in the Scrub noted: “The rent quarters are small and close together. They are situated on unpaved streets and narrow alleys. Bathing facilities are scarce: garbage is often uncollected.” Tony Pizzo considered it “a world of its own.” Outsiders did not venture there, and “only those who lived

there frequented the place.” When Ybor City was established in 1886 just two miles east of Tampa, the black community found itself between “the Cracker village of Tampa” and the new Latin town; with both expanding in all directions, the Scrub, sandwiched in between, became, in Pizzo’s words, “a lost and forgotten world.”

The moment David Fagen walked into the recruiting office, he started leaving clues about who he was and where he came from. He had to provide two character references, people who knew the family and lived nearby. He chose the carpenter Samuel Bryant and the laborer William Hicks, both residents of the Scrub. William Hicks remains obscure, but Samuel Bryant was a pillar of the black community. His mother, Dorcas Bryant, was a prominent early entrepreneur who made her money the hard way, as a laundress and landowner. Samuel Bryant owned the Nebraska Avenue Carpenter Shop, was active in the Republican Party during Reconstruction, and built Mt. Sinai African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on land donated by his mother. That Fagen sought out such a prominent member of the community as a character witness shows how important he considered this step in his own life. That his family knew Samuel Bryant well enough to make such a request suggests that Sam Fagen was more than just a chicken thief.

The enlistment papers also contain information about David’s civilian occupation. His application says only that he worked as a laborer for Hull’s Phosphate Company, but that in itself says a lot. This industry, which had its start in the waters near Tampa in 1883 during the dredging of the Hillsborough River channel, followed a standard pattern, with mines using blacks for common labor and whites as foremen and mechanics. Black laborers earned one dollar per day, usually for ten hours of work, breaking off phosphate rock with crow bars, picks, and oyster tongs while standing in rivers abuzz with mosquitoes, and tossing the rock into small boats, to be dried and crushed for use in fertilizer, baking powder, matches, and cleaning and water-softening compounds. Blacks provided as much as 95 percent of the workforce, and when there were not enough workers, mines used convict gangs on a contract basis at forty cents per man per day. Ninety percent or more of these prisoners were black as well. Overall, phosphate mining in the 1880s and 1890s was a brutal, demanding grind of long hours, hard work, and low pay, “requiring strong men with the stamina to perform back-breaking work under Florida’s burning sun.”

12 Tony Pizzo’s Ybor City,” 51.
13 Brady, Things Remembered, 11.
14 In 1899, Joseph Hull, president of the Peace River Phosphate Company, sold his business to the American Agricultural Chemical Corporation. He then started a new company northeast of Mulberry, which by 1909 was the largest producer in Florida, with about half of the state’s land-pebble production (Arch Fredric Blakey, The Florida Phosphate Industry: A History of the Development and Use of a Vital Mineral [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973], 56).
It takes little imagination to understand why a young man might leave this for the army.

It takes no more imagination to understand why the phosphate industry was a center of worker radicalism. Like the turpentine and timber camps, phosphate mines were violent places. Black laborers’ efforts to increase wages and improve conditions met concerted resistance from the operators. In 1899, an effort to stop escalating racial violence against black phosphate workers in Dunnellon resulted in the formation of an “Anti-Lynch and Mob” club. In October of that year, members of the club fought a pitched battle with local law enforcement officers in which two club members were killed and the organization effectively broken. In 1903, a white phosphate employer in the Bartow vicinity killed a black worker after the worker got into an argument with the owner’s bookkeeper. “At times,” Paul Ortiz has written, “the state’s phosphate and turpentine regions resembled armed camps as workers battled woods riders (turpentine foremen) and bosses over wages and company store debts.” Ortiz’s work on Florida supports Litwack’s overall observation that “the economics of repression produced a black workforce mostly dependent on whites for their daily sustenance. But it did not necessarily produce the docile, contented, easily controlled workforce whites had envisioned.”

There may have been other reasons that the army appealed to a young African American man from Tampa. After all, it was the United States Army that had brought the end of slavery to the states of the former Confederacy and made it stick. Then, in the years after the Civil War, the presence of the army at Fort Brooke, in the words of Katherine Howe, “proved critical for African Americans seeking to exercise their freedom. . . . Federal troops in Tampa mediated disagreements and prevented widespread racial violence against blacks.” The black people of Tampa appreciated the importance of the military, and in 1870 they successfully petitioned the governor for an African American militia company. It never did much beyond train, march in parades, and protect the polls during Reconstruction. But the very existence of the unit showed an awareness of the role of the military in protecting the community. This understanding fed on what Paul Ortiz called “traditions of black self defense” in Florida. The white Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, in fact, warned on July 13, 1890, of a new breed of black Floridian that it called the “Winchester Negro,” who feared no white man.

The newspaper put its finger on a growing regional phenomenon, the

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17 Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 165.
19 Ortiz, “Like Water Covered the Sea,” 118-19.
emergence of the black outlaw, the “bad nigger,” to use the term contemporaneously and positively applied by African Americans.20 In the 1890s, black folklore increasingly emphasized “the black outlaw and desperado, usually a loner who chose to violate all of the moral and legal precepts of society, who wielded his own brand of justice.” This “outlaw” was celebrated for “cunning, boldness, coolness, and wit, often in the face of overwhelming odds, and for the uncanny ability and imaginative powers he displayed in outwitting his enemies.”21 One such man, the Alabama turpentine worker Morris Slater, known as “Railroad Bill,” shot and killed a police officer, escaped, and roamed southwestern Alabama, robbing trains, and stealing from all—black, white, rich, and poor. In March 1896, bounty hunters in Atmore, Alabama, blew his head off, but legend had it that he had transformed himself and still watched his pursuers with amusement.22 Florida’s equivalent was Harmon Murray, a young man whose life of crime as leader of the North Florida Gang centered on Alachua County and who “achieved Statewide notoriety” before seventeen-year-old Elbert Hardy, another black Floridian, killed him in Gainesville in September 1891.23

On top of that history and tradition, there was the formidable presence in May 1898 of the black regulars who could be seen all over Tampa. They were proud, tough, confident men, and the very sight of them in and near the Tampa Heights camp that was close to Central Avenue and the Scrub must have impressed a young black man.24 The *Tampa Morning Tribune* wrote on May 5, 1898: “The colored infantrymen stationed in Tampa and vicinity have made themselves very offensive to the people of the city. The men insist upon being treated the same as white men are treated, and the citizens will not make any distinction between the colored troops and the colored civilians.” This may have been offensive to whites, but it was surely a revelation to some blacks to see such men refusing to be denied service in bars, carrying weapons in broad daylight, and upright and powerful in their bearing.

In any case, David Fagen did not have many alternatives to the army. As the enlistment paper shows, he could not sign his name. There were schools in the Scrub. Harlem Academy was first mentioned by name in the minutes of the Hillsborough County School Board in 1889; and as early as 1876 there are indications in the minutes of the board that a “colored school” existed. Rowena Brady found evidence of a

20 See Al-Tony Gilmore, *Bad Nigger! The National Impact of Jack Johnson* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1975), for the use of this phrase to describe the ultimate defiant African American, the first black heavyweight boxing champion, who scandalized white America with his white lovers and his heavyweight crown.


22 Ibid., 438-39.


freedmen’s school on Harrison between Morgan and Marion permanently established by 1870, “one room without partitions and few windows” that served the community until Harlem Academy was established. But, if David Fagen went to school at all, he did not stay very long, and whatever schooling he had was negligible.25 Not that it would necessarily have mattered much if he had attended. As a disillusioned black schoolteacher from Mississippi said: “You educate your children--then whatcha gonna do? You got any jobs for ‘em? You got any business for ‘em to go into?”26

Statements in an enlistment document of Fagen’s were not necessarily true. When he signed up, Fagen said he was over twenty-two years old, although the census report of 1880 put him at the age of one, which would have made him nineteen in 1898. Moreover, the army assumed he was single. It did not enlist married men, and Fagen claimed that he had no dependents. However, according to Hillsborough County records as examined by Julius Gordon, he had married Maggie Washington on October 23, 1897.27 If he was still married in June 1898, he kept this information to himself. But Fagen was not the only one who might have fudged on that document. Lieutenant Charles Tayman, the white recruiting officer, indicated that Fagen spoke, read, and wrote the English language “satisfactorily.” Fagen verified this by signing the document with an “X.” He could not write his own name.

Fagen had little education, but there is evidence that he learned. Six months after the war in Cuba ended, the army contracted significantly. It offered soldiers the opportunity for discharges, and he accepted one. He got out, came home, and took a look around. He learned that his father had died, maybe discovered that his wife had found someone else--in 1899 she lived under the same name she had used when she married him, at 813 Harrison Street in the Scrub--and reenlisted. This time, instead of using an “X,” he signed his own name. The signature was wobbly and crooked, but it was his. And that’s not all he learned in eight months of service. In 1898, he had stated that he did not drink “intoxicating liquors.” The next year, he reported “moderate” use of spirits.

In addition to giving us clues to where Fagen came from, the enlistment papers tell us about where he was bound. The first time he enlisted, Anthony Marrow and John Calloway witnessed his “X.” Marrow was a schoolteacher from North Carolina. He was just nearing the end of his first enlistment in H Company of the Twenty-fourth, the same company to which Fagen was assigned, and rose to be regimental sergeant major of the Twenty-fifth Infantry, the top enlisted grade. Calloway was a printer from Richmond who rose quickly to the rank of battalion sergeant major. He was articulate, sensitive, and deeply conflicted about his role in suppressing the

26 Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 60.
Filipino revolution. We do not know what Fagen learned from these two professional soldiers, whether he saw either one as a role model, whether they communicated their worldviews or the importance of learning, but in the Scrub he probably saw few men who combined their physical presence and worldly awareness. He would see a good number of such men during his time in the army.

He actually went to Cuba, a veteran of less than one month when he boarded ship with a group of replacements headed for the island. He did not serve with his regiment—the Twenty-fourth Infantry—in battle at San Juan Hill, where the black regulars shared top billing with Theodore Roosevelt and the First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry (the Rough Riders), but he did work among the yellow fever patients at the hospital near Siboney, Cuba, and came down with the fever himself. He was still ill when he reached Montauk Point, New York, with the Twenty-fourth.

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29 Fagen enlisted on June 4. Four days later, the Twenty-fourth Infantry boarded ship for Cuba, although the regiment did not actually sail until June 14. New recruits and other replacements followed as part of a six-ship convoy that left Tampa on June 30 and arrived in Cuba on July 10. There is no clear evidence tying Fagen either to the replacement convoy or to the original departure. Lacking that, it is reasonable to assume that a recruit with four days of service would not be sent into combat with his regiment (Adjutant General’s Office, U.S. Army, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain, including the Insurrection in the Philippines and the China Relief Expedition, April 15, 1898, to July 30, 1902* [Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1993], 1:65, 69, 122).
He came back and shared the Twenty-fourth’s hero’s welcome, went west to
serve at Fort Douglas, outside Salt Lake City, Utah, and at Fort D. A. Russell, near
Cheyenne, Wyoming. When he got out, he came home and went back in the army.
He spent part of 1899 with detachments assigned to patrol the redwood forests just
west of Sequoia National Park, and sailed from California to the Philippines in the
summer. By then he had seen more of the world than likely had seemed possible
during his Tampa childhood.

In the Philippine Islands, his story diverged from that of most of his comrades. As with most aspects of his apparently short life, we have more circumstantial
evidence than hard data about his defection. He had disputes with his superiors and
seven court-martial convictions for minor transgressions. Late in November, while
his company was in San Isidro, the chief town of Nueva Ecija province in Central
Luzon, he deserted and went over to the enemy. He apparently had help: a report
from his regiment said that an insurrecto officer was waiting for him with a horse. We
do not know precisely why, but he took the biggest risks a soldier could, turning his
back on his country and his comrades, his family, and his home.

He became an officer in the revolutionary army and led troops against
the Americans. And he was good at it. In the eight months that began with July
1900, there are records of nine skirmishes between U.S. troops and guerrilla forces
that included Fagen. All of them took place in the sparsely populated and densely
overgrown regions of Nueva Ecija. Generally he did not seem to move far from San
Isidro, on the Rio Grande de la Pampagna near Mount Arayat, the dominant terrain
feature in the province.

In July, Fagen sprang an ambush on troops of his old regiment, leading to
a fierce firefight with General Funston’s scouts. It was the rainy season in Luzon,
and American operations had slowed because of the difficulty in moving troops
and supplies. According to Jack Ganzhorn, an Arizona gunslinger who was in the
Thirty-fourth Volunteer Infantry and served as one of the scouts, Fagen and his men
surprised a two-wagon convoy of the Twenty-fourth near Manacling, killed one man
and wounded two others, burned the wagons, and waited. Then, when the scouts
came up, he struck again, repeating the ambush and pinning the scouts with their
backs to the river, which was running high and wild from the rains. According to
Ganzhorn, as Fagen crept closer, he taunted the Americans. “Captain Fagan’s done
got yuh white boys now,” Fagen is said to have jeered. “Less’n you all surrender, my
little gugus is gonna chop on yuh with their meat-cutters.” An American lieutenant
found the heckling unnerving and leaped to his feet but was pulled back before he
could get hurt, shouting in response, “Go to hell, you black scum! A million of you
yellow-bellied rats couldn’t whip Funston’s Scouts!” It was a near thing for the scouts.

In addition to the sources cited below, this narrative draws substantially from Michael C. Robinson
Historical Review 44 (February 1975): 68-83.
By the time reinforcements arrived, they were out of rifle ammunition and had their pistol cartridges in their hats next to them, waiting for the end. One American lay dead, and Fagen had vanished, leaving his own dead where they fell.31

In December, Fagen clashed with the great Funston himself, east of San Isidro. “In this fight,” the redheaded bantam rooster of a volunteer brigadier general later lamented, “I got a fairly good look at the notorious Fagan at a distance of a hundred yards, but unfortunately had already emptied my carbine.”32 That was bad luck for Funston, but good luck for Fagen, who slipped away again.

Funston, who masterminded the audacious capture of the revolutionary leader Emilio Aguinaldo, came out of the war as a popular hero.33 His failure to add Fagen to his trophies must have rankled. At the Funston family Christmas dinner in Kansas, just three weeks after the lack of ammunition deprived him of his kill, his sister-in-law Magdalena Blankart chided him in absentia with a little versification:

By Jiminy Christmas Fred
What's this I see?
Poor old Fagen
Hanged to a tree?

How did it happen
This is queer
Tell us about it
We're dying to hear.34

In 1901, the Filipino revolution collapsed around Fagen, with one leader after another giving up in the spring and summer. Fagen’s immediate superiors, Generals José Alejandrino and Urbano Lacuna, surrendered and tried to cut a deal for Fagen. Funston’s response was predictable: “This man,” Funston said, speaking of Fagen, “could not be received as a prisoner of war, and if he surrendered it would be with the understanding that he would be tried by a court-martial—in which event his execution would be a practical certainty.” Soon posters offering a $600 reward for “Fagen, dead or alive,” in both Spanish and Tagalog, went up in towns all over Nueva Ecija.35

31 Jack Ganzhorn, I’ve Killed Men: An Epic of Early Arizona (New York: Devin-Adair, 1959), 146, 172-73; Frederick Funston, Memories of Two Wars: Cuban and Philippine Experiences (London: Constable, 1912), 364-65; Twenty-fourth Infantry, Regimental Returns, National Archives, Record Group 94 (Microcopy 665, reel 250).
32 Funston, Memories of Two Wars, 386.
33 On the capture of Aguinaldo, see David Haward Bain, Sitting in Darkness: Americans in the Philippines (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984); and Funston’s Memories of Two Wars.
34 Magdalena Blankart to “My Angel Mother,” December 26, 1900, Funston Papers, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.
35 Funston, Memories of Two Wars, 431, 434.
The apparent end came in December 1901. A native hunter named Anastacio Bartolomé walked into an American outpost with a cloth sack, pulled out the “slightly decomposed head of a Negro,” and said it was Fagen’s. He also produced weapons and clothing, field glasses, Fagen’s commission in the Filipino army, and the West Point class ring of Lieutenant Frederick Alstaetter, one of Fagen’s former captives. Bartolomé said he and five companions had been fishing on the east coast of Luzon when Fagen arrived with his wife and two armed Negrito companions. After spending a night together and cooking breakfast, Bartolomé and his friends had attacked the newcomers with bolos and killed Fagen, whose wife leaped into the ocean and drowned while the Negritos fled. Bartolomé severed the head, tossed it into his sack, and returned with the trophy.

Bartolomé’s story and evidence were persuasive but not conclusive. The army announced Fagen’s death, but officers on the scene had doubts about whose head had been delivered and started asking for precise descriptions of Fagen from members of his former company. No definitive evidence was ever amassed: the official file on the incident is titled “the supposed killing of David Fagen,” and there is no record of the reward being paid. Besides, an uncorroborated document, published in a study of
Filipino constabulary, purports to deal with the pursuit of Fagen ten months after his alleged death.

At least two other possibilities are consistent with the evidence. First, Bartolomé could have come upon Fagen’s camp while he was gone, taken the documents, clothing, and other objects, and later obtained a head with which to “prove” the kill. That would not have been hard to do. One officer had earlier remarked on Fagen’s small head. Fagen’s Negrito companions were of a black group known for their small stature, so a small head may have been readily available.

Collusion between Bartolomé, an admitted former insurrecto, and Fagen is also possible. Fagen may have turned over his personal effects to the hunter to gain relief from pursuit. He could then have hidden among the natives of northern Luzon, while Bartolomé turned in a head and claimed the reward.

At this point, we are unlikely to fill the gaps in the record. However, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Fagen may have survived and spent the remainder of his life among the Negritos. He could have lived to a ripe old age in the dense, overgrown backcountry of Nueva Ecija, where Jim Crow could not go.

Why is Fagen’s rebellion important? Where do we find his significance, and how do we place him in context? Fagen’s revolutionary act came at the time of the hardening of segregation into an institutional legal system, a time that marked the clear end of any hope that the results of the Civil War might include equality for black citizens. Yet here was a rebel in the ultimate sense, not only a deserter but a successful defector, who became a preoccupation of and an embarrassment to military officialdom. The troopers Edmond DuBose and Lewis Russell of the black Ninth Cavalry were the only defectors hanged for their crime. All of the whites who did the same thing and were later caught received prison terms. Black defection troubled military officialdom, as evidenced by Frederick Funston’s preoccupation with Fagen and the significance he accorded to Fagen’s defection.

The war in the Philippines represented a moral challenge for black American soldiers. This conflict pitted them against a nonwhite population for which some of them felt a genuine sympathy. The conflicts with the Indians in North America, fought against semi-nomadic hunter-warriors whose cultures, religions, and languages were beyond comprehension for most soldiers, evoked only the rarest expressions of sympathy from black soldiers. But the Philippine war was different. This conflict started at the time that Jim Crow was hardening, while the Indian wars took place before the solidification of segregationist practice. Black soldiers also saw substantial similarities with the Filipinos, many of whom were literate Christian city-dwellers

and farmers; and the reminders of the deteriorating situation at home, with whites bringing to Manila the same racial epithets and the same Jim Crow segregation, gave many soldiers pause.

When Sergeant John Calloway wrote to his hometown paper that he and his comrades were “between the devil and the deep sea” on the war, this was the issue that troubled him: he was an American soldier who owed his loyalty to his country imposing a social system that oppressed him on a population with which he empathized. As indicated by their letters home, many of which were published in newspapers and reprinted in Willard Gatewood’s “Smoked Yankees,” most black soldiers understood this dilemma and lived with it as long as they were in the islands. David Fagen was among the very few who responded to it by severing all of his ties with home, family, comrades, and country.

How do we summarize David Fagen’s experience beyond the knowledge that for a young man of Fagen’s time, place, and circumstances, the army would have represented an important but imperfect avenue of escape? The historian Lerone Bennet Jr., noting just how imperfect this option was, called military service one of the more subtle dead-ends in a period overwhelmingly marked by dead-ends for African-Americans, because it carried “the traditional hope that it would lead to better treatment for blacks in civilian life. Pulled by this theory and pushed by the fact that it was difficult to find employment elsewhere, thousands of blacks found themselves involved in the dirty work of subjugating and policing the American Indians and brown people in the Philippines and the Caribbean.”

Keeping this in mind as well as George Rawick’s injunction that men do not make revolution “for light and transient reasons,” we still lack any concrete evidence of Fagen’s motives. We can guess that Florida—the Scrub, the death of his father and failure of his marriage, the phosphate diggings, the memory of the military role in ending slavery, the establishment of Jim Crow and the resistance to it—all contributed in some way to David Fagen’s makeup and to the decisions that led him to walk away from everything.

The comment of the editor George Knox in the pages of the Indianapolis Freeman with which Mike Robinson and I ended our 1975 article on Fagen still serves as a fittingly ambivalent obituary to a black rebel about whom we do not know enough:

Fagen was a traitor, and died a traitor’s death, but he was a man, no doubt, prompted by honest motives to help a weaker side, and one to which he felt allied.

37 Richmond Planet, September 30, 1899.
by ties that bind. Fagen, perhaps, did not appreciate the magnitude of the crime of aiding the enemy to shoot down his flag. He saw, it may be, the weak, the strong, he chose, and the world knows the rest.  

But it is possible to go a step beyond the ambivalent Mr. Knox. The David Fagen who cut his ties with home, who led Filipino soldiers against the United States, who knew how to set a deadly ambush, and who taunted and threatened his foes was more than a good revolutionary soldier and leader. He was a “bad nigger.”

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41 Indianapolis Freeman, December 14, 1901.
In his inaugural address given in Tallahassee on January 3, 1961, the new governor, Cecil Farris Bryant, proclaimed to all Floridians, “it is no longer time for Bryant--it’s time for Florida. . . . It’s time to remember that we are first and foremost citizens . . . and by the heritage we share, to do all in our united power to make Florida the rich material, social, cultural and moral experience . . . it ought to be.”

This was a profound statement coming on the heels of the tumultuous 1950s, which saw a further divide not only in the nation but in Florida as well over the question of equal rights for African Americans. The previous governor, LeRoy Collins, who was a racial moderate, had tried largely in vain to drag Florida out of the “Old South” and into a “New South” by not taking drastic measures to halt integration as had many of his contemporaries in the Deep South. Collins also pushed for the reapportionment of the state’s legislative districts, which often drew scorn from many in rural North Florida.

Ironically, Bryant, an ardent and outspoken segregationist and opponent to reapportionment, as governor pledged to unite the deeply divided state. Florida, while a member of the “Solid South,” a united bloc of former Confederate states, did not march in lockstep with its Deep South neighbors such as South Carolina or Georgia. Due to its climate, Florida had seen numerous population booms in the late 1800s and early twentieth century that had transformed the once backwater state into a vacation and retirement spot for many northerners. As the twentieth century wore on, more and more emigrants from the Northeast and Midwest moved to Florida, especially South Florida, bringing with them political and social beliefs that ran counter to...
the “Old South” value system treasured in North Florida. Conservative Democrats from rural North and Central Florida recognized as early as the 1880s that their lifestyle would be challenged in the future by those they referred to as “outsiders.”

The conservatives had placed safeguards in the 1885 state constitution meant to ensure that the North Floridians would maintain control of the state legislature in spite of the imminent population growth of South Florida. By the end of the 1950s, the North Florida Democrats, known as the Pork Chop Gang, were already employing ignominious tactics in order to keep power. In 1956, they created the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (FLIC), which was also known as the Johns Committee after one of its founders and key members, state senator Charley Johns. After the U.S. Supreme Court had outlawed segregation in public schools in Brown v. Board of Education, the FLIC looked to halt integration by discrediting the NAACP by linking the organization to communism. When this failed to produce the desired results, they next looked to homosexuality on the campuses of Florida’s universities, instituting what they deemed a moral crusade while linking homosexuals to communism. This was a ploy to maintain their power by discrediting any and everyone whom they felt was a threat.²

Despite holding many similar beliefs as the members of the FLIC and being highly sympathetic to the Pork Chop Gang, if not an actual member himself, Bryant looked to bring an end to the bickering between the regions of the state. As he had mentioned in his address, it was “time for Florida.” The new governor realized that he would have to compromise some of his values in order to benefit the state as a whole. He exclaimed, “this day, to fulfill its promise, must see a new dedication on the part of the people of Florida.”

He went on to note that while “the interests of Miami and Madison, of Tampa and Tice, are not, and cannot be expected to be identical . . . there is no compelling reason why . . . the Legislature cannot achieve a harmonious blending of varying interests to develop equitable programs.” While many felt that reapportionment of the legislative districts—a battle that had been ongoing for close to forty years by Bryant’s inauguration—was paramount, the new governor believed Florida would never advance in the eyes of the nation without improving the state’s educational system, especially the university system. Bryant referred to the early 1960s as the “knowledge revolution” and did not want Florida to be left behind.

A year after Bryant’s inauguration, Florida opened its fourth public university, the University of South Florida (USF) outside of Tampa. Prior to the opening of USF, Florida was home to only two public “white” universities, and Florida State University had only been coeducational since 1947. When USF opened its doors to freshmen in 1960, it raised eyebrows within the small rural community of Temple Terrace just north of Tampa. It was not soon after the opening of the institution that disgruntled parents and clergy called upon the FLIC to come and investigate the university for “questionable” teaching practices. The Pork Choppers led the assault on USF, and it

4 Ibid.
became part of what they framed as a defense against communist infiltration into the state’s schools. They passed the Stallings-Eldredge Bill, which called for the creation of a new mandatory course for Florida’s high schools entitled “Americanism versus Communism.” Although this was meant for the high school level, it foreshadowed the battles that took place over the next couple of years in Tampa between the USF administration and parents, who were often aided by the Pork Choppers and the FLIC. 5

John S. Allen had been selected by the Board of Control in 1957 to be the first president of the University of South Florida. When Allen opened the new university to students in 1960, the Tampa Bay Area had a population of close to two hundred thousand, and while many of the students came from urban Tampa and St. Petersburg, others hailed from outlying rural communities that shared values with the Pork Choppers. In reality, they were mortified at the prospect of a new public university in a region of the state that was attracting more and more “outsiders” by the day.

Debate over why the FLIC came to Tampa ran rampant during the 1960s, with the Tampa Tribune reporting that FLIC was invited to “investigate Communist activities as well as morals, deviations and homosexuality.”6 Mark Hawes, counsel for the FLIC, stated that he was concerned with the teaching practices of South Florida’s faculty in general since the students, as a result of the improper education they were receiving, “might be softened to where they might be susceptible to Communistic doctrines or some other doctrines.”7

Aside from communism, some claimed the committee was drawn to Tampa because of the racially liberal teaching of some of the faculty. One student claimed that her “Introduction to Teaching professor . . . talked quite a lot about integration and segregation and everything, and he is in favor of us having it here . . . I had quite an argument with him . . . about intermarriage.”8 Another student commented on a film she had been shown in one her classes that “showed Negro men and white women together, holding hands, and I remember in one scene she, I believe, took a cigarette from his mouth and started smoking.”9

Charley Johns, in a letter to Allen, warned the president that his university would soon be under investigation “in regard to the infiltration into state agencies by practicing homosexuals,” and in doing so, the FLIC would try to ascertain the “extent of this problem” while performing the undertaking with “a very high level

5 Tampa Tribune, April 3, 1961.
6 Ibid., May 18, 1962
7 “Testimony Given to the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee” (cited hereafter as “Testimony”), May 30, 1962, box 5, folder 10, Papers of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee (cited hereafter as FLIC Papers), Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.
of dignity.”

Homosexuality, communism, and integration were all concerns of the FLIC and the rationale behind their investigations over the past five years. However, the Johns Committee, despite Charley Johns’s letter to Allen, was drawn to Tampa largely because of the University of South Florida professor Thomas Wenner.

Wenner, according to the FLIC member and state representative George B. Stallings, was “blowing off about how the university has accepted Negro students and should announce it to the nation.” Stallings was appalled and leveled his abhorrence at the comments and his concerns to Johns by stating: “if this guy wants to make such an announcement he should not be salaried in a tax supported institution of the State of Florida . . . . I hope that our committee will be able to do something about this bird and his big mouth.” Johns agreed with his colleague and alerted his chief investigator, R. J. Strickland, of the possible danger in Tampa by proclaiming, “the next time you are down that way, see what you can find out about this Professor.”

In the midst of allegations of improprieties, Wenner switched tactics in an effort to shift the focus away from himself. He contacted state Representative Joe McClain and informed him of homosexuality on the University of South Florida campus, referring to the school as a “campus of evil.” Wenner remained on the offensive, indicating that there were faculty members sympathetic toward the Soviet Union and that McClain should ask FLIC to come to Tampa to launch an investigation. Wenner, in turn, would be more than happy to supply the committee with a list of professors who harbored both homosexual and communist tendencies.

At the same time, Wenner issued his plea to McClain, a grassroots effort was underway in rural Hillsborough County to ensure that the University of South Florida was not, indeed, a “campus of evil.” Jane Stockton Smith, whose son Stockton Jr. had enrolled at USF, led the movement. Jane Smith noted that her son felt that higher education, especially the university system, should encourage not only morality but faith and patriotism as well. Johns felt the same way in regard to the new school. He also knew that USF would not be the last state university built and opened in Central and South Florida. Johns and his allies were aware of the effort to bring a state university to Miami as state senator Ernest Graham had presented the idea to the legislature as early as 1943. By the time Senate Bill 711 was introduced to the legislature in 1965, Miami was not the only “new” Florida location to have a public university.

10 Charley Johns to Dr. John S. Allen, November 9, 1961, box 4, folder 13, Papers of John S. Allen (cited hereafter as Allen Papers), Special Collections Department, University of South Florida Library, Tampa.
11 George B. Stallings to Charley Johns, November 28, 1961, box 2, folder 17, FLIC Papers.
12 Ibid.
14 Box 4, folder 15, Allen Papers.
17 www.fiu.edu/docs/brief_history2.htm.
Orlando, and Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, sixty miles north of Miami, had opened its doors in 1964. These developments were a clear indicator to Johns and the Pork Choppers of the inevitable swing in power and influence from North to Central and South Florida. Therefore, the FLIC, acting to advance the interests of the Pork Chop Gang, made a point to attempt to shield USF from liberal and “deviant” infiltration.

As Johns formulated his plans for the new school, Jane Smith, along with three other parents, requested a meeting with Sidney French, dean of Academic Affairs at USF, and alerted French to the “vile approach to sex, destruction of faith in God, and extolling of ideas that are of socialist and communistic origin” taken by the faculty. French dismissed the group as “crackpots” perpetrating a witch hunt and also referred to them as a “pressure group.” The group had objected to what they felt were “immoral teachings” in the university, mainly in the English Department, where faculty were accused of using profanity and other objectionable language and espousing anti-Christian ideals. Furthermore, the students were offended by the selection of *Brave New World*, *Grapes of Wrath* and *The Immense Journey* in their Functional English course, which they felt were not suitable for young impressionable minds. After being shunned by French, a now irate Smith took matters into her own hands and penned a letter and mailed it to fifty families in Tampa chosen because of their reputation as “responsible citizens, interested in the affairs of our community.” At the conclusion of the letter, she invited them to a meeting at her house. Twenty-five people attended, including the mayor of Tampa. They listened to Smith rail against USF for harboring extremist professors bent on passing their radical liberal views on to a vulnerable generation of America’s youth. The meeting concluded with the group voting to formally invite the Johns Committee to Tampa. They determined that they were “up against many weighty problems serious enough to warrant investigation by those with knowledge

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18 “Report by Jane Stockton Smith,” box 1, folder 1, John Egerton Papers (cited hereafter as Egerton Papers), University Archives, University of South Florida, Tampa.
21 “Report by Jane Stockton Smith,” box 1, folder 1, Egerton Papers.
22 Ibid.
and ability to achieve results, namely, the investigating committee.” Unbeknownst to the Smiths was the fact that the FLIC had already decided to undertake an investigation at the University of South Florida. Both Strickland and Mark Hawes arrived in Tampa on April 10, the day after the meeting.

The parents were especially appalled at a proposed speech set to take place on the university’s campus. Dr. Jerome Davis, a political scientist who had been blacklisted by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) for his strong left-wing leanings, had been invited to the university to give a speech concerning different forms of government. After it was announced, Allen was bombarded with letters, phone calls, and complaints from around the state, including a letter that stated, “communists were infiltrating the American universities and having a forum to expose college students to communism.” Allen, after a visit from Governor Bryant, capitulated and rescinded the invitation, referring to Davis as being too controversial and inappropriate.

Many USF professors and students were outraged at Johns, Smith, and her “pressure group.” At the center of the disagreement was the question of academic freedom. The Pork Choppers and their allies maintained that they supported academic freedom, as long as this did not include ideas that countered their belief system, which would threaten the supremacy of their values in the state. Six students composed and signed a letter to Allen in which they maintained that the “principal [sic] of intellectual freedom must not be compromised at USF.” Allen was not swayed. He had what he felt was the best interest of the university in mind and did not want to draw the ire and wrath of the FLIC.

Allen’s decision pushed the USF chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) into action when they decided that academic freedom was at stake. Thus, the chapter president, Donald Harkness, noted their concern and publicly protested Allen’s actions. They issued a statement that read, “If in the judgment of an instructor a person not on the university staff can make a unique contribution to the course, we feel that the instructor should be free to invite this person to speak to his class.” They also claimed that the “integrity of education demands that it be free from tendentious criticism and pressure from the outside.” The parents, feeling betrayed by the AAUP, retaliated:

Because there will be so many organized efforts on the part of outright communists to attack you for refusing to allow a person of such obvious disloyalty as Jerome Davis on the campus, I offer you my gratitude for your...

28 Ibid.
honest good sense. Believe me, thousands of parents feel as I do; and we aren’t organized so you won’t hear from us.29

While the FLIC was quietly setting up their operation in Tampa, word quickly spread of their presence in the community. As expected, the AAUP did not warmly welcome FLIC to Tampa but instead of protesting, tried to reach a compromise and soften the inevitable blow to the academic community. They drafted a list of requests and compromises and asked for five concessions from the FLIC.

First, with the investigation of the University of Florida fresh in their minds, they insisted that professors be interviewed on subjects and matters that were considered legitimate by those concerned. Second, they challenged the tactics Johns had employed in Gainesville in keeping the investigation secretive. They requested that the hearings at USF be conducted openly on campus as a safeguard for those interrogated. The AAUP, trying to cover as many bases as possible, also demanded that legal counsel be provided for those interviewed if they so desired and, last,

29 Margaret Jefferson to President Allen, March 1962, box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.
that the information gathered in the investigation was not to be published without “mutual agreement between faculty and University.” President Allen agreed with the stance taken by the AAUP and decided to meet with the FLIC members before they officially started their investigation. He personally took the demands to the hotel where the FLIC members were staying and chose to formally invite the FLIC to USF. In being proactive, Allen hoped to limit the publicity surrounding the event. Unfortunately for Allen, Professor Wenner had already given an interview with the *St. Petersburg Times* in which he divulged that the FLIC members were in Tampa to investigate homosexuality at USF. Johns refuted Wenner’s claim that the professor had been instrumental in bringing the committee to the Bay Area. At the same time, he admonished Wenner for publicizing the FLIC’s investigation, stating: “It is a policy of this committee to carry on our activities quietly and with as little publicity as possible.”

Other rumors soon circulated concerning the FLIC’s presence in Tampa. One dealt with the rabid segregationist and 1956 Democratic gubernatorial primary candidate Sumter Lowry, who hailed from Tampa and was conveniently embroiled in a heated Democratic congressional primary with state senator Sam Gibbons. The *St. Petersburg Times* charged that Hawes had announced that the hearings would commence on May 28 because that date fell one day before the primary between Lowry and Gibbons. Gibbons had been instrumental in bringing the university to Tampa while Lowry was opposed to the creation of a new university. Lowry was also a member of the Florida Coalition of Patriotic Societies, a right-wing organization that had derided USF over the invitation it had extended to Jerome Davis to speak on campus. Conservatives throughout the Cold War often targeted Davis, who had been blacklisted by theHUAC in the 1950s for “socialist leanings”. The *Times* accused Lowry of using them to taint Gibbons’s reputation since he was a proponent of the Tampa school. In denying the charges, Lowry claimed, “I had nothing whatsoever to do with the investigation and knew absolutely nothing about the charges until I read them in the paper.” Johns put out the fire by announcing that Hawes had provided the wrong date and that the hearings would commence on the May 30, not two days earlier.

Reminiscent of the operation Strickland had run out of the Thomas Hotel in Gainesville, the FLIC set up their Tampa headquarters in room 170 of the Hawaiian Village Motel. The investigators quickly gathered from their informants a list of names of students and professors who were alleged communists, left-wing liberals, or

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31 *St. Petersburg Times*, May 18, 1962.
33 Ibid., May 23, 1962.
34 Ibid., May 29, 1962.
homosexuals. Based on this list, which was provided by local high school principals, current and former USF students, “concerned” parents, and faculty members, the FLIC compiled specific questions to ask each “witness” who was to be questioned.36

Initially, as in Gainesville, the investigations focused on homosexuality. The investigators soon focused their inquest on four professors and staff members: James Teske, an educational resources staff member; English professor John MacKenzie; theater professor John Caldwell; and music professor R. Wayne Hugoboom.37 Teske’s name had been brought to the attention of the committee by a former South Florida student who disclosed that two years earlier, he and his girlfriend had been invited to Teske’s house with other students, where they were offered alcohol and provided with pornographic photographs; he also alleged that MacKenzie had sexually propositioned one of the students.38 MacKenzie was also accused of “performing homosexual acts on students.”39 Both Teske and MacKenzie had their contracts terminated, and they left USF, while Caldwell and Hugoboom were suspended. Both chose to appeal their suspensions; Hugoboom did so successfully and returned to his teaching duties.

Caldwell’s case was not as simple, and it centered on a student named Charles Hadley, who himself was identified by other students as a homosexual. Hadley had complained to Dr. Margaret Fisher, director of student personnel, that students around campus had wrongly labeled him homosexual. With controversy swirling around him, he married another USF student, Judy Graves. Hadley himself chose to speak to the committee, possibly in an effort to deflect suspicion away from himself.40 He told FLIC that the problems stemmed from a theater trip to Tallahassee. Supposedly Caldwell had informed Hadley to “stay away” from the theater program because Caldwell “did not want any fairies” involved in his program. Soon after this exchange, Hadley did travel to Tallahassee with the group and shared a hotel room with Caldwell. It was in the room, according to Hadley, that Caldwell made an unwanted sexual advance, telling the student, “If a homosexual friend of mine came to me for homosexual action, I couldn’t turn him down.”41

Caldwell vigorously denied the accusation and insinuated that he shared a room with Hadley in order to keep an eye on a student whom he considered to be a homosexual and also to protect the other students on the trip from any unwanted homosexual advances. The committee also noted that Caldwell consistently made comments and remarks in which he referred to his theater program as being “free

36 Ibid.
37 H. P. Stallworth to John Allen, June 4, 1962, box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.
38 “Testimony”, May 8, 1962, box 10, folder 6, FLIC Papers.
41 Committee for Evaluating Mr. John Caldwell’s Suspension, Report to President John S. Allen, August 9, 1962, box 4, folder 12, Allen Papers.
from homosexuals” and “the cleanest theatre in the United States in this regard.” Caldwell’s defense was bolstered by the testimony of several of his other students who accused Hadley of being a homosexual, one of whom claimed to have once been accosted by Hadley. According to Paul Morton, the student who defended Caldwell, the only reason Caldwell shared a room with Hadley was that they were the only two left without a roommate and did so out of necessity. Caldwell’s defense was also bolstered by testimony on his behalf given by his priest and another faculty member in addition to Dr. Fisher. Fisher provided a character analysis of Hadley and described him as “irresponsible”, “inconsistent” and “unsavory,” noting that Hadley’s only character witness, a fellow student, was in jeopardy of failing out school himself, had stolen and destroyed school property, and therefore was an “unreliable witness.”

When the committee finally questioned Hadley, he seemingly changed his story and claimed he was not privy to any information concerning “homosexual activities

42 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
In August 1962, the university reversed its original position and recommended that Caldwell be reinstated. Johns was not pleased with the findings and publicly lambasted the university for not taking action against Caldwell, despite the defamation of Hadley. Johns was also miffed at the fact that power had been taken out of his hands.

Caldwell, while vindicated, was not satisfied. Thus, in spite of the overturning of his suspension, he tendered his resignation to President Allen due to “extended and continuing harassment” from the committee. In his public comments, he declared: “I can’t take any more. . . . I won’t subject myself to further indignities from that man [Johns] and what he’s doing to destroy teacher morale at the university” and that Johns would “never give up, but keep on hurting people to save face politically.” It must also be known that, in spite of the reinstatement, Allen had privately decided not to extend tenure to Caldwell because he was deemed too controversial, and he

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45 Confidential Report to President Allen from James A. Parrish on the John W. Caldwell Hearing, August 28, 1962, box 4, folder 14, Allen Papers.
46 Tampa Tribune, September 21, 1962.
47 Ibid.
was expected to continue teaching at USF for only six more months.\(^{48}\)

The committee continued its investigation of USF, and the initial week of interviews and interrogations also focused on supposed inappropriate classroom discussion and assigned readings. The testimony obtained revealed that many of the female students were uncomfortable with comments made by their male professors as well as the fact that reading material was deemed “trashy” and laced with profanity, and “a great deal of sex [was] brought into the book.”\(^{49}\)

With the conclusion of the interviews at the Hawaiian Village Motel, the hearings moved to campus. To prepare the students and faculty for the expected onslaught from the FLIC, Allen addressed the university, urging them to cooperate with the committee and to remain calm, attempting to assure them that they did not have to answer questions that they deemed irrelevant and unjust.\(^{50}\) Despite Allen’s reassurances, the students’ fears were not allayed, and they took matters into their own hands led by the Executive Council of the Student Association, who obtained the signatures of more than half of the university’s students in an effort to halt the proceedings.\(^{51}\) In spite of the petition, the hearings began in the conference room of the Administration Building. Charley Johns, Mark Hawes, and R. J. Strickland were present, along with committee members George Stallings, Richard O. Mitchell and William G. O’Neill, with Dr. Herbert Stallworth representing the Board of Control.

The first day focused on reading selections from a specific course entitled “The American Idea,” and they called its professor, John Warner, as the first “witness.” The readings in question were *The Razor’s Edge*, by Somerset Maugham, and J. D. Salinger’s *Nine Stories*. Johns soon lost his patience with Warner and attacked the professor, assailing him for his choice of assignments. Johns’s tirade centered on Salinger’s book as he exclaimed: “Doctor, I want to ask you if the literary field has got to such a low ebb that you all couldn’t find anything to put in your library but this trash. . . . [W]ill you advise me what is literary and a genius about writing such crap as he just read?”\(^{52}\) Warner responded to Johns’s diatribe by maintaining, “I don’t rate this trash myself, sir, and I think that, with more time and studying it and analyzing it with one of our good teachers, you wouldn’t either.”\(^{53}\) Senator Mitchell continued the harangue, informing Warner that he had attended the University of Florida in 1950 along with Stallworth and Hawes, and he sarcastically asked the USF professor: “will you tell me how, from 1950 to 1962, this world had changed so much that it is necessary to have such kinds of books as we are talking about as recommended

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\(^{48}\) Report on Investigation Conducted by President Allen on the John W. Caldwell Case, September 11, 1962, box 4, folder 12, Allen Papers.

\(^{49}\) “Cheryl Beckner Testimony,” May 15, 1962, box 10, folder 24, FLIC Papers.

\(^{50}\) *Tampa Tribune*, May 21, 1962.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., May 20, 1962.

\(^{52}\) “John Warner, Testimony,” May 23, 1962, box 5, folder 6, FLIC Papers.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.
reading, or suggested reading, or as a reading list delivered to the young people of this University? Tell me how in twelve years that has changed." Later in the day, Hawes inserted the question of morality into the equation. The chief counsel asked if it was appropriate for faculty to influence their students by shoving their own morals down their throats. Warner responded by stating, “Surely we want them [students] to be sound and sane,” to which Hawes countered, “When did the University and the educational systems take this over from the homes?” When Warner replied, “I think we have always shared it with the homes,” he underscored the greatest fears of the conservatives.55

After the first day of hearings, Johns spoke to the media, affirming that the FLIC was “trying to be as fair as humanly possible” with the hearings.56 Warner saw things differently. The professor penned a “memo” to President Allen in which he voiced his concern and alerted Allen to what he felt were the committee’s true intentions. Warner stated, “The purpose appears to be either the usurpation of control of the university from its heads and the Board of Control, or its harassment, demoralization and possible destruction.”57 Further, Warner strongly urged Allen to create an investigating committee comprised of faculty members to study FLIC’s accusations and findings. Allen complied, and a committee was formed.58 However, as the week progressed, the FLIC continued to harass faculty members, including the human behavior professor Henry Winthrop for his use of the words “Christ,” “hell,” and “damn” in his lectures. The hearings concluded in early June with Johns issuing a final statement to the university. According to Johns, in spite of the Caldwell case: Your [USF] homosexuality is at a minimum. You practically don’t have any at this institution at this time, but let me give you some fatherly advice. You can take a hard boiled attitude against it, and keep it out of here, and build an institution that this state can be proud of, but . . . you can’t take the attitude you have got.59

Nevertheless, the Johns Committee was extremely critical of the “other” problems at USF, mainly the “immoral” teachings and materials presented in the classroom by the faculty coupled with allegations of “communistic” leanings on the campus. The report of findings issued by Johns placed the onus on the Board of Control, pushing them into immediate action in August. During the summer break, with many of the faculty and staff on vacation, including President Allen, Johns released the entire text of the investigations to the Tampa Tribune without censoring the names of the professors questioned. Johns had previously promised to keep them private until after the Board of Control had met and acted on the findings.60

54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
the release, Johns condemned USF for being “soft on Communism,” denounced the faculty for “using anti-religious and pro-communist literature in their classes,” and finally announced that the FLIC had “uncovered four professors who were accused of homosexual behavior.”61 In addition to these findings, Johns brought to light another controversy that had plagued President Allen and his school: the debate over Professor D. F. Fleming and his consideration for a position at USF.

Fleming had taught at Vanderbilt University but was accused of assigning readings labeled as “communist propaganda” by the HUAC, and the FLIC maintained that he had subsequently been blacklisted. Allen had approved Fleming’s hire and was, then, publicly chastised by Johns for not conducting a thorough background check. Allen immediately rescinded the offer to Fleming despite the fact that Hawes later admitted that the FLIC had been “mistaken” and that HUAC had not blacklisted Fleming.62 In spite of the fact that Hawes had recanted, the incident highlighted a problem in the hiring practices of the university and other Florida institutions.

The majority of the larger state newspapers responded to the investigation by defending the young institution. The local Bay Area papers were adamant in their defense of the school, with the *St. Petersburg Times* maintaining: “Florida higher education has suffered a severe blow by this irresponsible action. No professor of stature would risk accepting a post with our university system while the Johns Committee is in existence.”63 The *Tampa Daily Times* surmised that USF had no more problems than any other university in the nation, while the *Daytona Beach Evening News* charged the FLIC with “acting as a prosecutor condemning a man without a hearing.”64 The editor of the *Gainesville Sun*, whose community had still not recovered from the Johns-led witch hunts less than five years before, sent a letter extending his support, as well as that of his newspaper, to the embattled President Allen.65 Allen also received letters in support of the school from the presidents of the University of Florida, Florida State University, Jacksonville University, and Florida

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
Southern College. Ovra Lee Ice, a minister from the Tampa suburb of Temple Terrace, took his case directly to Governor Bryant. In a letter, he beseeched the governor: “How shall we be able to secure able professors to join this new faculty if they read this scurrilous [sic] attack? How shall we enlist students to enter classes here. . . . We must not abet the already growing opinion that Florida is after all a state of crackers.” Bryant immediately responded to Ice, defending his conservative allies by noting, “I have neither the authority to hamper activity because the overall result of the legislative investigations is good.” Bryant finished his remarks by stating that he himself was a “cracker” and that he was “not offended by that opinion, but I don’t think anything will be done that will destroy the wonderful image that Florida has.”

The perception of Florida was also on the minds of others in the state, including the anonymous author of a letter to the editor of the *Tampa Tribune*. The letter lambasted Johns and called on the Board of Control to be the final arbiter in matters concerning the universities by intimating that, if they did not assume control, “the asinine, stone age pronouncements of Charley Johns and his barbarian pork choppers on such matters as philosophy, literature, and good taste, will make a laughing stock of higher education” in the state.

Allen, buoyed by support he had received from around the state, lashed out at the Johns Committee by proclaiming that it had “generated an endless flow of unfair and harmful publicity. It has probed beyond its legislative mandate into the university’s curriculum, its choice of assigned reading material, the religious and political beliefs of the faculty, the professional judgment of its administrators, and even into the private lives of its staff, seeking to build the most one-sided and damaging case it could against the institution.”

During this “war of words,” the Board of Control met to discuss the issues raised by the Johns Committee after receiving twelve volumes and over 2,500 pages of testimony from the University of South Florida. They dealt with four major issues: homosexuality; communist teaching; obscenity in books; and a challenge to students’ religious beliefs. Dealing with the question of homosexuality, the board noted that Johns had presumed the “problem not to be of great magnitude . . . at the present time” and highlighted that the board had previously adopted a policy on December 9, 1961, titled “Policy on Morals and Influences.”

Studying the section entitled “Attitude toward identified Communist teaching
and/or lecturing on campus,” the board revealed that the “testimony did not reveal any Communists or any Communist sympathizers among the permanent employees of South Florida.”

They did acknowledge that the campus was not free from “outside” political views and added that they had been “cognizant for some time that its employment procedures throughout the System could be improved,” and in this regard, they called for the fingerprinting of personnel to be “implemented in the near future.”

The board did not agree with the FLIC’s crusade to ban books from college campuses, noting that for them to “establish themselves as a censorship group would strike at the very heart of academic freedom.” In addition, they felt the selection of books should remain in the hands of faculty as long as they displayed good judgment by ensuring that reading materials would be “pertinent to the subject being taught; The best available and obtainable; and within the purview of good taste and common decency.” At the meeting, the Board of Control deemed the religious questions raised by the committee to be the most difficult to address but also found that the testimony provided to the group by FLIC did not point to any evidence that students had their religious beliefs compromised by the faculty at USF.

In concluding their report, the board maintained that they were the “proper body to receive, investigate, and take action upon any and all complaints directed toward or against the institutions under its authority.” They aimed this section at “all branches of State Government” and all Floridians firing an apparent salvo at the Johns Committee and the Pork Chop-dominated legislature, whom the board felt had overstepped their bounds. The Board of Control’s executive director, J. B. Culpepper, further addressed the problems when he wrote that the board needed to create “plans for protecting the Universities against homosexuality, moral turpitude, drunkenness, profanity in the classroom, personality instability, and other behavior deemed to be detrimental to the institutions.”

In compliance with Culpepper’s statement and the board’s wishes, university presidents throughout the state became proactive in suggesting and implementing policies to deal with the findings and recommendations. President Allen composed a proposal dealing with the selection of speakers and guest lecturers on university campuses. Allen’s final document seemed to defy Johns as he proposed that “controversial” speakers should be invited and allowed to speak on campus on the condition that time was allotted at the end of the talk for questions from faculty and students. He also took a shot at the committee by claiming that further study of communism, fascism, and other “ideologies” should be undertaken to fully understand

73 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 “Board of Control Memo,” July 17, 1962, box 1, folder 1, Papers of J. B. Culpepper (cited hereafter as Culpepper Papers), Florida State Archives, Tallahassee.
them before passing judgment and, more importantly, jumping to conclusions.79

The Board of Control issued its recommendations on September 14, 1962. The first section dealt with the selection of faculty and students and broke each down further. The subsection on faculty charged the president of each state university with maintaining a file on each candidate considered for a job containing information required by the Board of Control. The universities would be forced to attach recommendations from the dean or the department or institute head, along with the names of at least two individuals “who have vouched for the candidate and have a personal knowledge of or concrete information as to the qualifications of the candidate; including academic background, loyalty, attitudes toward communism, moral conduct, and general teaching ability (emphasis in original).”80 It was also decided that guest speakers and lecturers, the root of one of the controversies at USF, were to be approved beforehand by the president of the respective university. The subsection on faculty concluded with the most contentious policies calling for the fingerprinting of all university personnel by 1963.81

79 “Statements of position submitted by the Presidents of the State Universities,” September 1962, box 1, folder 1, Culpepper Papers.
80 “Implementations of the Recommendations Approved by the Board of Control on 14 September 1962,” box 1, folder 2, FLIC Papers.
81 Ibid.
Following the guidelines set down for the screening and policing of faculty, the subsection on students called for their applications to be bolstered by a letter from a “responsible” official vouching for their moral fitness and character. Each individual university was further ordered to maintain files on students who applied, even those denied admission, for future use by other schools. Section #3 empowered the school to conduct an investigation into students from whom they detected even the slightest indications of “antisocial or immoral behavior, such as communistic activities or sex deviation.” Upon uncovering any such impropriety, the official was obligated to report the incident or evidence to the president, who was charged with conducting a more thorough investigation. The information would also then be passed on to presidents of the other state universities, by way of a confidential memorandum. Any applicant who applied to more than one state institution would not be granted admission until the investigation ran its course. In regard to homosexuality on the campuses of Florida’s universities, the board adopted a policy in which the president of each school was forced to file confidential quarterly reports on any incidents and action taken to correct them in “regard to the elimination of sexual deviates.”

As expected, the new policies and procedures adopted by the board were welcomed in the more conservative circles of the state, although some Pork Choppers did not feel they went far enough. At the same time, many liberals lamented the further loss of academic freedom. The new policies were officially approved and lauded by representatives from the state’s four public universities; Dr. Fred H. Hartman from the University of Florida, Dr. Michael Kasha from Florida State University, Dr. Thomas Stovall from the University of South Florida, and Dr. Charles Smith from Florida A&M University.

In conclusion, the Board of Control presented its new “Statement on Policy on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities.” They noted that Florida could only achieve its “full potential for greatness” with an exemplary public university system and that the faculty and students must be free from outside constraints in their efforts to “cultivate a spirit of inquiry and scholarly criticism and to examine ideas in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence.” While seemingly defying the FLIC, the rest of the “Statement” read like a blueprint for conservatism, calling on university employees to “exercise appropriate restraint and good judgment” while also defining their roles as a “citizen” and how they should conduct themselves in a professional academic environment. In one breath, the board declared their independence

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82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
85 “Statement by Faculty Committee which Participated in Drafting the Statement on Academic Freedom and Responsibilities,” December 7, 1962, box 1, folder 2, FLIC Papers.
87 Ibid.
from Pork Chop and conservative control, only to subvert the declaration in the
next statement or paragraph by limiting the true “academic freedoms” of university
personnel, all the while maintaining that was exactly what they were protecting.

While the report issued by the board was meant to close the door on the
FLIC’s role at USF, the damage had been done. The committee’s actions had lasting
effects on the Tampa school. USF soon found that the lingering doubts over academic
freedom raised by the Johns Committee’s investigations hurt recruiting of potential
faculty members. Candidates openly admitted that they were concerned over the
level of control the government seemingly held over the state’s universities. USF’s
director of educational resources, Dr. G. C. Eicolz, notified Allen that a potential
candidate informed him of the reservations he had in accepting a job in Florida:

Candidates I interviewed received advice from faculty members not to accept
positions at our institution. The reason given was that the Johns Committee
investigation was an infringement on academic freedom and the state Board
of Control refused to intervene and protect the university.88

The Johns Committee’s investigation at USF was a partial victory for the
conservative attack group; however, the negative responses from around the state
coupled with opposition from organizations and faculty members alike highlighted
chinks in the conservative armor and spelled the beginning of the end for not
only the FLIC but, more importantly, the Pork Chop Gang and their historically
powerful grip on the state of Florida. The early 1960s saw the continuation of the
shift in power to the southern portion of the state, where more progressive values
threatened to undermine the power of the Pork Chop Gang. As the 1960s wore on,
the conservatives from North Florida came under increased scrutiny and attacks from
opponents, especially in the legislature, which ultimately culminated in the state
constitution of 1968 and the death of the malapportioned state government that had
been the final redoubt of the Pork Choppers, effectively ending their domination of
Florida politics.

88 “Dr. G. C. Eicolz, Memorandum on Recruitment,” box 4, folder 13, Allen Papers.
At her death in 1950, Katherine Bell Tippetts was remembered as a woman who wore many hats: a St. Petersburg, Florida, businesswoman, clubwoman, community leader, political candidate, writer, mother, and wife. But she was most lauded then—and continues to be now—for her passion and action to save Florida’s birds from the threat of hunters who supplied their plumes to the international millinery trade, farmers who wanted to protect their crops, and roaming cats. In an era when women were just entering community work and seeking political clout in the state, she led campaigns that extended from clubwomen meetings to the halls of the state legislature to national publications, fighting for avian protection and appreciation. “[W]e, today, owe her a debt of gratitude for the no small part she had in making possible, with others, the glorious heritage we now enjoy,” eulogized the *Florida Naturalist*, the publication of the Florida Audubon Society.¹

Under her leadership, bird sanctuaries were established throughout Florida, laws were enacted to protect a variety of state and migratory birds, and Florida named the mockingbird its state bird. In addition, Tippetts led the national campaign to encourage all states to name state birds. Although her work focused in large part on birds, it also embraced a variety of issues in the budding conservation agenda, including the establishment of parks, protections for imperiled plant species, and pressing the state to empower a game commission to oversee wildlife issues. In many ways, Tippetts planted the seeds for the late-twentieth-century environmental agenda that included concerns about Florida birds and plants, but with a new and more far-reaching threat—habitat loss caused by rampant development. During Tippetts’s

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¹ “In Memoriam: Katherine Bell Tippetts,” *Florida Naturalist* 24, no. 3 (July 1950): 76.
lifetime, Florida began to change from a wintering ground for rich northerners to a hotbed of suburbia. The state’s unprecedented population growth, from a little more than a half million at the century’s dawn to 2.8 million by 1950, would have resounding impacts on the state’s flora and fauna, resulting in challenges Tippetts could hardly have foreseen. Conservation and boosterism, seemingly compatible in the early century, would collide decades later as urban sprawl and the environmental problems left in its wake steadily consumed the state.

When they arrived in St. Petersburg from New York in 1902, the Tippetts family was seeking the promises claimed by city leaders—sunshine, health, and commerce. William H. Tippetts, Katherine’s husband, had experienced a career as a European correspondent for several New York papers and had been the editor of the *Lake George (N.Y.) Mirror* for a decade. William Tippetts was in poor health, and the family hoped the new climate would help. Although it is unclear what William Tippetts’s health issues were, St. Petersburg, with a population of 1,575, had long been claiming that its location might offer a cure for a variety of ailments, particularly those of the respiratory system. A booklet published in 1896 offered concurring testimonials from doctors:

*Suffice it to say that there seems to be a universal feeling among medical men all over the United States, and, it may be said, all over the world, as to the superior healthfulness of this region, for the clime is practically a specific for consumption and pulmonary diseases.*

*A poem at the front of the booklet also touts that in the area, “pleasure and prosperity go hand in hand; Where singing birds and flowers are gay.”*

St. Petersburg was the fifth-largest city in Florida at this time, far smaller than the largest, Jacksonville, with 28,249 residents. Florida, with a population numbering 528,542, was mostly rural and had the smallest number of residents east of the Mississippi River. While technological changes were bringing modern industrialization and massive urbanization to many U.S. cities, St. Petersburg relied instead on its natural features to draw business and tourists, according to Raymond

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7 Ibid., 1.
9 Ibid.
Arsenault. “Blessed with an abundance of sun and sea, the city’s major product has always been itself,” he wrote. “Mass culture would eventually make almost all American cities centers of consumption as well as production. But St. Petersburg was consumption from its very beginning.”

In the late 1800s, development of the city’s port, which fed into Tampa Bay and then the Gulf of Mexico, became the focus of local business leaders, who expected “industrial growth would surely follow,” Arsenault wrote, adding that the downtown waterfront stayed busy with shipping and a railway line that ended there. However, a decade into the twentieth century, St. Petersburg was still rather isolated, with few paved roads, although the city’s tourism had gained it some visibility.

Into this setting came the Tippetts family, which included three sons and a daughter. The Tippetts, who left behind a devastating house fire in New York, bought the Lake View House hotel in downtown St. Petersburg and renamed it the

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Photo of the Belmont Hotel, originally the Lake View House hotel, located at Sixth Avenue (now Central) and Sixth Street in downtown St. Petersburg. William and Katherine Tippetts purchased the hotel shortly after their arrival from New York.

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11 Ibid., 79.
12 Ibid., 146-47.
Bellmont Hotel in honor of Katherine Tippetts’s family plantation. It would become commonly known as the “Belmont” Hotel. 13

Tippetts was born Emily Katherine Bell in Somerset County, Maryland, weeks before the end of the Civil War, and traced her ancestry to one of the signers of the Mayflower Compact. She studied with tutors and at private girls’ schools, majoring in foreign languages, and was fluent in French, German, Spanish, and Italian. 14 She married in 1890 and later traveled in Europe, Asia, and Africa with her journalist husband. 15 In 1892, she used the pen name Jerome Cable to author a novel, *Prince Arengzeba: A Romance of Lake George*, which was published by her husband. The book, which first appeared as an article in the *Lake George Mirror*, is a light romance about “that which is likely to happen to any party of gay young people on the lake,” featuring mistaken identities, the activities of the summering social set, and the landscape of the Lake George area. 16 “Not only the mountain sides, but the vales and banks flaunt their holiday attire and hang close to the crystal waters, as if to catch a glimpse of their finery,” Tippetts wrote. “Lake George thus attired is a roseate paradise.” 17

Scenes that promote the natural beauty of the area and perhaps show a glimpse of Tippetts’s aesthetic are woven throughout the novel. As one character comments: “I love this lake. It makes one think such noble things, with its impressive grandeur. I think one’s nature becomes warped, surrounded always by brick walls in a city.” 18 The book concludes with an essay titled “Beautiful Lake George,” by W. H. Tippetts, about the natural features and history of the lake and is followed by advertisements placed by Lake George area businesses, including hotels and a steamboat company. 19 W. H. Tippetts identified himself in the book as the editor and publisher of the *Lake George Mirror*, the *Citizens’ Line Gazette*, and as the “General Press Representative” of Lake George and the Adirondacks. 20

When William H. Tippetts died in 1909, Katherine Bell Tippetts took over the hotel operations and real estate interests. 21 She raised her family, sending all four children to college, but never remarried and ran the hotel until her death. 22

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16 Jerome Cable [Katherine Bell Tippetts], *Prince Arengzeba: A Romance of Lake George* (Lake George, N.Y.: W. H. Tippetts, 1892), 5. Although Katherine Bell Tippetts is frequently described by historians as the author of more than one book under the Cable name, a search of various sources, including WorldCat, did not show any other books.
17 Ibid., 90.
18 Ibid., 103.
19 Ibid., 124-57.
20 Ibid., unnumbered page at front of book.
22 Hartzell, *Voices of America*, 45.
meantime, as many women of the Progressive Era did, she became involved in a number of community projects, earning the moniker “The City’s Queen,” from Scott Taylor Hartzell. Her life, wrote Karl H. Grismer, was “one of service to St. Petersburg, Florida and the nation.” Lucy Worthington Blackman, a contemporary of Tippetts who served in many organizations with her, wrote: “She has the gift for organization and leadership, not only as it is seen in connection with public offices, but in any sphere of activity. It is significant of the depth of her character that she lives her life in accordance with the highest ideals of charity and human understanding.”

The year she became a widow, Tippetts charted a new course for herself and her community, founding the St. Petersburg Chapter of the Audubon Society, later named the St. Petersburg Audubon Society (SPAS), at a meeting at the Belmont Hotel. In doing so, she joined the rapidly growing American conservation movement, which began as an effort to use wisely the nation’s dwindling natural resources, according to Samuel P. Hays. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the movement had changed shape and become a moral issue—“an attempt to save resources from use rather than to use them wisely.” Americans who had never imagined an end to the country’s natural resources had witnessed the destruction of great forests, threats to water resources, and a dwindling number of native species. The North American bison, whose population was once estimated at 40 to 60 million, was near extinction by the 1880s; the last passenger pigeon, a species that once numbered about 5 billion birds, died in captivity in 1914.

With religious fervor, conservationists responded by working to preserve acreage across the country. Women were a vital part of this effort, which included creating parks and recreation areas and eliminating advertising billboards. Hays described the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), which organized forestry and park campaigns, and the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), which had a conservation committee, as “especially enthusiastic about conservation.”

Groundbreaking work in the history of women’s conservation efforts came with Carolyn Merchant’s 1984 article “Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement: 1900-1916.” Although the role of women as environmental protectors “has been rendered all but invisible by conservation historians,” Merchant wrote, women transformed the crusade from an elite male enterprise into a widely based movement. In so doing, they not only brought hundreds of local natural areas under

23 Ibid., 44.
legal protection, but also promoted legislation aimed at halting pollution, reforesting watersheds, and preserving endangered species.29

The progressive spirit inspired female conservation work. Upper- and middle-class women’s increasing interests in “botanizing, gardening, birdlore, and camping,” along with a “growing consciousness of the panacea of bucolic scenery and wilderness, coupled with the need for reform of the squalor of the cities,” drove them into the crusade.30 Of particular note is Merchant’s brief history of the Audubon movement that joined men and women together to stop the large-scale killing of birds that were used to adorn ladies’ hats. Together they pressed for federal, state, and local bird protection legislation. Women held leadership roles locally and made up more than half of Audubon’s membership by 1915, and also exerted pressure through women’s associations. Although the national conservation movement slowed by the 1920s, women’s interests continued, manifested in parks and bird protection, according to Merchant.31

Much of the female conservation work was born of an aesthetic love of birds and reports of the devastation left behind by hunters seeking bird plumes for the latest fashions. Women had begun wearing hats and clothes adorned with bird wings,

30 Ibid., 58.
31 Ibid., 69-73, 79-80.
heads, and bodies in the post–Civil War era. By the 1880s, these fashions had led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of birds, particularly waterbirds such as flamingos, ibis, roseate spoonbills, and egrets that display showy plumage during nesting season. These birds nested in large numbers in Florida’s swampy rookeries, making them easy targets for hunters who shot them and left the birds’ bodies and crying chicks behind. The greatest horror was the destruction in the late 1800s of a southwest Florida rookery that sheltered an estimated 1 million birds. Feathers and bird parts gathered by hunters were shipped to northern markets for processing and big profits in the $17 million a year industry that included trade with European countries.32

Although there had been some early efforts to curb the plume trade by an Audubon Society that survived only two years, public pressure for legislation and protection was not largely effective until the Audubon movement was revived in the late 1890s. Of particular note was the Massachusetts Audubon Society, founded in 1896 by Harriet Hemenway, a wealthy Bostonian. Its goals were to encourage bird protection and to “discourage the buying and wearing, for ornamental purposes, of the feathers of any wild birds,” according to the Audubon historian Frank Graham Jr.33

A number of Audubon Societies were formed in different states, with Florida’s organized in 1900 during a meeting in Maitland, a suburb of Orlando. The Florida Audubon Society (FAS) founders, six men and nine women, assumed a variety of duties that included writing and distributing articles and information about birds, developing school classes, encouraging the development of local chapters, and fighting for state bird-protection laws.34 From its 1909 inception, SPAS became a dominant chapter in the state, setting the example for others about how to win protection for birds.

Tippetts was the founding president of SPAS and would remain in that leadership role for the next thirty-three years, guiding a number of efforts and joining with FAS in statewide initiatives. Her passion for birds had begun before her move to St. Petersburg, according to a 1910 article she wrote for a local newspaper describing the founding of the group and its first year of work.

“To be sure, I had been spending my summers studying bird life on an island in the north peculiarly fitted by nature to attract both land and aquatic birds, and where the people looked upon them as one of the charms of the place, along with the flowers, the sunsets across the tinted marshes and the glorious downs,” she wrote. “When I was

destined to spend a summer in the South I still kept up my bird notes." Although Tippetts does not identify the island, in a December 1909 article for *Bird-Lore*, the national Audubon magazine, she describes a birding trip to Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts, in which she and another “bird student” sought and found the heath hen, whose numbers were imperiled. Thirty years later, while speaking about rare birds at a 1936 SPAS meeting, A. E. Hylan, associated with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, recalled stalking the heath hen with Tippetts and noted that the bird had since become extinct.

In her article about the SPAS founding, Tippetts describes at length the numerous birds (and their songs) that she discovered in the South, and an incident that led to the group’s genesis. One day she saw a boy shoot a cardinal and when she reached him, she found four additional birds that had been beheaded and skinned. “Five beautiful song-birds killed in one short afternoon and no means of redress,” she recalled. “It was at this crises (sic) I resolved

35 Katherine B. Tippetts, “What Has the Local Audubon Society Accomplished?” (likely the *St. Petersburg Times* or the *St. Petersburg Independent*), handwritten date of Summer 1910, scrapbook of St. Petersburg Audubon Society, 18-19, Florida Audubon Society, Maitland, Fla.  
37 “Rare and Extinct Birds Are Discussed by Speaker,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 19, 1936, n.p.
to organize the Audubon Society if only two persons could be induced to help me. I may not have talked to the right persons, for although I met with sympathetic attention I found no one willing to undertake the experiment.”

Upon her return from a trip to the North, Tippetts learned of another person interested in Audubon, John E. Ennis, and together they organized SPAS in November 1909 and formally met the next month at the Belmont. “Special invitations had been given for this first meeting, and many interested citizens came in to learn more about the new society; many pledged their support; public sentiment was awakened, and a love of birds, and a desire for their protection instilled,” she wrote, adding that the group worked diligently during the winter with “an untiring striving for results, and they came.” In its inaugural year, SPAS posted summaries of state bird laws that warned against “killing songbirds, or game-birds out of season” and listed penalties. The group wrote to a Chicago publisher of a Sunday school paper, *Boys World*, successfully urging him to remove air-gun advertisements from the same. Its members suggested that wandering cats be euthanized or their owners taxed. SPAS fought for protection of the meadowlark and the robin and encouraged its members and local boys to build birdhouses.

In the same article, Tippetts also signaled a coming fight against agricultural interests that had been seeking to rid their fields of birds they considered nuisances and whose fields deprived birds of natural nesting spaces. “The sooner the up-to-date farmer learns to leave a corner of his domain in the natural state to attract the birds, the sooner he will derive the benefit accruing from their invaluable aid, for ‘the birds are the natural allies to agriculture, forestry and fruit growing as has been proved’,” she wrote.

This is not an appeal to the aesthetically-minded, but a plain statement of facts, given to all in the hopes that it will be read with thought and will induce an awakening of public sentiment toward making St. Petersburg known for its myriad song birds. I long for the time to come when the passion for bird-protection will have become so commonplace for that state only can be reached when all humanity assists in the work.

The article also links Tippetts’s concerns about birds to the growing conservation movement in the United States and in Germany. “The inception of conservation of our own resources: forests, lands, mineral and water, [illegible] one of the three things for which the [President Theodore] Roosevelt administration will probably be longest remembered,” she wrote, wondering “why birds were not included in this practically new movement of his in this country.”

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38 Tippetts, “What Has the Local Audubon Society Accomplished?” 18.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 19.
43 Ibid., 18-19.
By 1912, SPAS was deeply involved in efforts to get state laws to protect the robin. FAS developed a bill outlawing the killing or capture of the bird, punishable by a misdemeanor charge for each bird harmed. At the time, Tippetts wrote in a *St. Petersburg Times* article, SPAS had sent many letters in favor of placing the robin on the state list of protected birds. She argued that the robin had agricultural value as “a destroyer of injurious insects” and argued for their aesthetic value as well, citing literary and musical sources. “We, the Audubon societies of Florida, feel it our special privilege to create public sentiment through the Press, the clubs and individual work, by appealing to the citizens, the school children and tourists who make Florida their winter home, asking them to put their names to a petition for robin protection” for presentation to the state legislature, she wrote, adding that she hoped the petition would be so full of signatures “that our representatives there will need no further argument to prove the wisdom of protecting the robin.” Tippetts did just that. A photograph, hand-dated March 1913, in the SPAS scrapbook shows Tippetts with three other women and two elementary school girls, all in long white dresses, holding a 70-foot petition and signatures that were sent to the state legislature to support robin protection, which passed two months later. That same legislature also passed a law, at the urging of FAS and Tippetts, to establish the Florida Fish and Game Commission.

Concerns about local bird populations also led SPAS to press for municipal ordinances to control St. Petersburg’s stray cats. By 1915, SPAS had engaged legal help in drawing up an ordinance that would include taxing cat owners, making the city the second in the world to do so. The ordinance was on its third reading when the city changed the format of its governing body from council to commission and in the process the “cat ordinance was lost and nothing was accomplished,” Tippetts told the local newspaper in 1921 at the announcement of a renewed effort to enact the measures. “This year we will wage the campaign seriously as it is really a serious question.” Tippetts said winter visitors often adopted and later abandoned cats, which became a nuisance “carrying disease and destroying the birds of the city.” As to the state of wildlife in Florida, Tippetts added, “Something must be done at once

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45 Ibid.
48 Ibid. “Activity of the Audubon Society Spells Death for Vagrant Cats Slinking about Saint Petersburg; Berlin First City in World to Take Initiative in Taxing of Cats; This City Second to Attempt It,” headline from *St. Petersburg Daily Times*, January 10, 1915.
49 “Death for All Alley Cats Sought by Audubon Society,” *St. Petersburg Times*, October 9, 1921.
50 Ibid.
This photograph, dated March 1913, shows Katherine Tippetts, three unidentified women and two unidentified school-age girls with the seventy foot long petition urging the state legislature to support the protection of robins.
or the wild game birds in Florida will be as scarce as the Dodo.”

Tippetts and SPAS also were leaders in the move to create bird sanctuaries in Florida. By 1920, Pinellas had eleven cities declared bird sanctuaries, “a banner achievement in the United States,” according to Blackman. Among her other efforts for SPAS and FAS, Tippetts helped support the federal laws to protect migratory birds; worked to stop a “bounty being placed on the head” of black and turkey vultures; crusaded to save the pelican (fishermen claimed they were competing with their business); and stopped the use of the pied-billed grebe (also known as the Hell-diver) in water sports (a St. Petersburg hotel wanted to give prizes to children who could catch one in its pool). SPAS also helped fund a warden to protect bird colonies in local islands until they received federal protection in 1921. For several years, Tippetts also served on the FAS executive committee and was vice president in 1920, when, in recognition of her work and leadership, she was elected the first FAS woman president.

“Conservation was the watchword of her administration,” summarized Blackman. She “emphasized the municipal and private sanctuary movement in Florida, and her familiarity with legislative requirements and her close touch with National conservation groups made her a very valuable leader for the Audubon Society.” By 1921, there were twenty sanctuaries in Florida, a number that would grow to thirty by Tippetts’s third year of leadership, and Volusia County had become the first countywide sanctuary in the United States. Tippetts also was aware of issues beyond bird life. In a letter to Tippetts, her friend May Mann Jennings, who was involved in women’s club and conservation issues in the state, worried about the enforcement abilities of local game wardens and suggested that hunting season should be closed for turkey and deer, “otherwise, in a few years more we will not have any of either.” She also expressed concern about disappearing forests: “You know as well as I do that we are right up against it as far as our forests go. Our orange and truck crops are increasing each year and the forests are decreasing. In twenty years where are we going to get the box material with which to ship these fast increasing crops?” Three days later, Tippetts replied, noting proposals involving the state game commission and bird laws: “Of course I am looking out specially for Bird Protection-

51 Ibid.
52 Blackman, The Florida Audubon Society, 33.
54 “U.S. Will Protect Tarpon Key Birds,” Miami Herald, August 21, 1821.
56 Ibid.
57 May Mann Jennings to Katherine Bell Tippetts, dated Feb. 18, 1921, Box 17, File: 1921: February-April, May Mann Jennings Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.
58 Ibid
FAS placed a large emphasis on bird studies in schools, engaging speakers to visit schools, and persuading the 1923 legislature to make bird study required in public education. In order to prepare teachers, FAS offered college courses with credits.60 In 1924, Tippetts resigned from FAS to become vice president at-large of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs (FFWC).61 Here she would continue her conservation interests and enlist the state’s activist women in the bird and conservation cause.

FFWC had a lengthy history of interest and activism in state conservation and had many committees that focused on different related topics, making it an important player in state issues. Many women joined the group because of its “strong and effective” response to the state’s “environmental issues,” which included committees and campaigns directed at bird preservation, forest conservation, and tree planting, wrote the FFWC historian Jessie Hamm Meyer. “Their efforts intensified as they witnessed the future degradation of Florida’s natural beauty and resources.”62

By the early twentieth century, women’s organizations were gaining in status and political clout throughout the United States. As Anne Firor Scott notes, many women of the era found this arena offered new opportunities to redefine their place in the world and move into the public sphere. “Within this network, women learned how to conduct business, carry on meetings, speak in public, manage money,” according to Scott.63 She notes that most club leaders were “mothers of several children” and being “widowed or divorced often set a woman on the road to achievement,” a description reflecting the circumstances of Tippetts’s life. “Able, ambitious women gravitated to voluntary associations where they could create impressive careers,” stated Scott.64

“My children come first, my business second and my club work is my recreation,” Tippetts told a historian in 1923, adding her firm belief that club activities should address wide issues. “The day is past when the up-to-date woman considers purely social or cultural clubs. She deals in social and civic betterment, in educational methods leading to health and mental attainment. This is not as mechanical as it sounds, for the vision is implanted in all movements which call for ideals, and thus the task never becomes drudgery.”65 The Tourist News, which dubbed her “The Busiest Woman in St. Petersburg,” stated that Tippetts and “an ever increasing army

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59 Katherine Bell Tippetts to May Mann Jennings, dated Feb. 21, 1921, Box 17, File: 1921: February-April, May Mann Jennings Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida.
60 Blackman, The Florida Audubon Society, 33-34.
61 Ibid., 34.
64 Ibid., 155.
of club woman, is making what was once nobody's business theirs, working without pay--often without thanks--that more people may enjoy the good things of life.66

The FFWC, founded in 1895, gathered thousands of women like Tippetts and those described by Scott and created a powerful force for change in the state. By 1927, there were fifty-eight clubs in the association, and its leaders regularly knocked on the doors of state politicians, who often endorsed and passed their proposed legislative bills.67

The 1914-17 FFWC president May Mann Jennings, wife of former Florida governor William Sherman Jennings, had been a driving force in this movement, earning the title of “Mother of Florida Forestry,” and her leadership of FFWC made her one of the state's most powerful women.68 Jennings’s FFWC tenure, during which membership numbered more than nine thousand women, was highlighted by the preservation of Royal Palm Hammock located on south Florida’s Paradise Key. The hammock, which was under threat from nearby railroad and highway development, would be renamed Royal Palm State Park under the auspicies of FFWC and later was included in Everglades National Park.69

For many years Tippetts served in local women’s clubs and organizations, including the Woman’s Town Improvement Association, which had planted numerous trees in St. Petersburg.70 She also had worked with Jennings in state club efforts, at FAS, in sales of World War I savings stamps, and joined with her in founding the Florida Legislative Council, a group of women (Jennings was president, Tippetts vice president, and the FFWC was a member) dedicated to fighting for legislation of interest to women.71 Together they were part of what Samuel Proctor called an “old-girl” network that worked on many public issues such as education, conservation, suffrage, and Seminole Indian welfare.72 The women's club movement and its networks throughout the state helped raise awareness of these issues and produced activists for change. During her 1926-28 tenure as FFWC president, Tippetts dealt with a number of conservation issues, including a hurricane that hit Royal Palm State Park and badly damaged the lodge that had been erected there. The next year, the state legislature provided ten thousand dollars to help restore the park and lodge.73

73 GFWC Florida Federation of Women’s Club Past Presidents 1895-2006, 18, publication of FFWC, at FFWC Archives, Lakeland, Fla.
women, this is your park, and we have every reason to feel proud of the possession of such a rare hammock of tropical growth,” Tippetts wrote in her presidential message to FFWC members.74

During Tippetts’s presidency, the FFWC had a Standing Committee for the park as well as a Department of Conservation, with divisions focusing on forestry and wildlife refuges; parks and natural scenery; birds and flowers; and state beautification.75 A 1927 report from the conservation chair noted that at the previous session of the legislature a bill was passed with “the efforts of our own Mrs. Tippetts” for protection of certain wildflowers and ornamental trees and shrubs, in particular hollies, which apparently were in demand during the Christmas season.76 A year later, the FFWC pushed for protection for more plants including the magnolia, sweet bay, and wild crab apple, reminding its members that it was their duty “to create public sentiment for the enforcement of this law.”77 During Tippetts’s reign, two other noteworthy laws were enacted: the orange blossom was designated the Florida state flower and the mockingbird its state bird, the latter largely as the result of her Audubon work.78

Tippetts and SPAS came up with the idea for a state bird and in 1927 secured “an overwhelming vote through schools and organizations of all kinds for the mockingbird,” which she described as having a “matchless melody not only by day but in the moonlight, along the very edge of silence.”79 Tippetts then took her campaign to the nation, using her role as the chairman of the Division of Conservation for the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (GFWC), the national umbrella of clubs throughout the country, to press states and women’s groups to name state birds. She chaired this GFWC committee from 1928 to 1932, having previously served as GFWC chair of the Nature Study and Wild Life Refuges from 1924 to 1928.80 In its April 1932 issue, *Nature Magazine* included a large pamphlet titled *Birds of the States*, penned by Tippetts. The booklet, with eight pages of colorful illustrations of birds, documents different birds and state flowers that were designated as state emblems and those under consideration. The booklet later was expanded to sixteen pages and sold by special order and promoted as “of special value in connection with school Nature Study and Geography work.”81 Tippetts noted:

The mere fact that these bird emblems have been chosen is not important so far as the emblem itself is concerned. What is significant is that which led

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75 *Year Book of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, 1926-1927*, 13-14, publication of FFWC, at FFWC Archives, Lakeland, Fla.
76 Ibid., 105.
77 *Year Book of the Florida Federation of Women’s Clubs, 1928-1929*, 22, publication of FFWC, at FFWC Archives, Lakeland, Fla.
78 Ibid.
up to the selection; the discussion, study, and thought that it required: the very real educational service that it performed. And the result is that affectionate interest has been thus aroused in all birds and their protection.82

While leading the women’s clubs, Tippetts also ran the Belmont, developed some real estate interests, and was involved in a number of community activities, including the continuing SPAS presidency. She helped found the local Boy Scouts in 1910 and was involved with a host of groups, including the Pinellas County Board of Trade, the state Chamber of Commerce, the Crippled Children’s Hospital, and the Florida Educational Survey Commission; and was also a director of the National Camp Fire Girls and a member of the national board of finance for the YWCA. Her conservation work included the National Park Association, the St. Petersburg Park Board, and the American Forestry Association, where she was vice president. Tippetts was a national flower commissioner “who [helped] select, by national vote, the National Flower, the wild rose.”83 Her efforts were recognized in a number of state and local histories that featured prominent community leaders. One historian stated that Tippetts’s name was “known in every hamlet throughout Florida and neighboring states.”84

The numerous organizations that included Tippetts reveal the growth, change, and problems that had hit Florida and St. Petersburg in the early decades of the century. By the 1920s, a boom had resounded across the peninsula, born of real estate speculation, rising population, improved infrastructure and transportation, and the state’s growing reputation as a tourist and retiree mecca. Mangrove swamps and salt marshes were filled to become Miami Beach; Tampa and St. Petersburg were connected with a toll bridge; islands were dredged from the bottom of Hillsborough Bay; and cities grew in the state’s Panhandle region.85 By 1920, the state had 968,470 people; by 1930, that number had reached almost 1.5 million.86 All of it was compounded by the tourist influx into the state, estimated at 2.5 million in 1925 alone.87 Real estate subdivisions sprung up across the state and with them a number of questionable deals and outright fraud. A series of economic problems, culminating with the stock market crash of 1929, led to the bottom temporarily falling out of Florida’s economy.88

In St. Petersburg, the boom had brought a 183 percent increase in population by 1930, to a total of 40,425 residents.89 After a hurricane damaged the city in 1921,

82 Ibid., 3.
84 Cutler, History of Florida, 362.
86 Ibid., 291.
87 Ibid., 292.
88 Ibid., 296-97.
89 Stephenson, Visions of Eden, 31.
Portrait of Katherine Tippetts. She continued to work on behalf of animals throughout her life. At the time of her death, she was widely regarded as a leader among both men and women in the field of environmental conservation.
city leaders, worried about its impact on the city's image, tried to downplay it, but it was needless concern and the boom continued. “The weather was beautiful, and the sale of lots was brisker than ever now that St. Petersburg had demonstrated that it was impregnable to the forces of wind and water,” wrote Arsenault.90 City leaders concerned about preserving the natural beauty of the area considered enacting extensive planning for the city, but ultimately discarded the plans, believing they would be too expensive. Instead they put their hopes on free enterprise. “A city of dreams in the heart of Eden did not need to plan for the future; its destiny was certain,” wrote R. Bruce Stephenson.91

It was in the midst of this boom period that Tippetts, Jennings, and the clubwomen of Florida worried about the impact of growth on natural resources, particularly birds and forests. Their determination to create and preserve Royal Palm State Park in the midst of the swampy Everglades stands out as even more visionary against the dredge-and-fill mentality of the era. And with their newly won right to vote, these women set out to make their voices louder.

In 1922, Tippetts and Myrtice McCaskill, of Taylor County, became the first women to run for the Florida legislature, unsuccessfully seeking seats in the House of Representatives.92 It is uncertain why Tippetts chose to run in the Pinellas race as one of four candidates, particularly since she left the city during the campaign to serve as a state delegate at the Palisades Inter-Park meeting in New York.93 Certainly her business acumen and activist work played a role. In a speech at a St. Petersburg Democratic rally held days before the vote, a Col. J. S. Davis spoke on her behalf, noting that Tippetts was “a business woman and widely experienced in public affairs.”94 On primary election day, the St. Petersburg Times reported, “Women are expected to vote in large numbers” as a result of her candidacy.95 For years, women’s groups had been lobbying the legislature for a broad number of conservation and social issues that spanned from bird protection to prison reform to welfare. With this election, voting women had the opportunity to push their interests and elect like-minded candidates.

Allen Morris states that nothing in the Tippetts files explained her run for office but it could be inferred from her 1921 remarks to the Pinellas County Federation of Women’s Clubs that she believed she could do a better job than a male legislator, an insight gained from her frequent trips to visit legislators in Tallahassee:

The first great shock to the women new to the methods of the Halls of the Legislature is the fact that during the first weeks of the session the men

90 Arsenault, St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream, 192.
91 Stephenson, Visions of Eden, 85.
93 “Mrs. Tippetts in Race for Legislature,” St. Petersburg Times, April 16, 1922.
94 “State and City Vote Today; Candidates Address Meeting,” St. Petersburg Times, June 6, 1922.
95 Ibid., 1.
assembled to thrash out the grave problems of the state act like a bunch of boys kept unwillingly in school. The slightest mention of invitations to picnics or fish fries calls for the motion to adjourn to attend same, and it is not ‘til visions of continuous House and Committee meetings loom menacingly that the older and stricter Members are able to hold the boys in check, some of whom had rather vote to adjourn for picnics, seemingly, than for their favorite bill.96

Tippetts added, “The time is not far distant when a generous sprinkling of women will grace the two houses, to use a time-honored phrase, not as spectators, but as the people’s representatives, so let a woman with such aspirations fit herself to represent intelligently her constituents.”97 Tippetts finished second in the race to M.W. Ulmer and had to wait seven years before she saw a woman join the state legislative ranks.98 Tippetts never ran for office again, instead concentrating on community duties, many involving birds and conservation. She led SPAS until 1942, a time period that spanned many changes in Florida and St. Petersburg.99

Although this era was marked by economic depression and slower growth rates, Florida’s population continued to grow, reaching almost 2.3 million by 1950.100 By the 1930s, tourism was touted widely as the state’s biggest crop, with 2 million people visiting in 1935.101 By the 1940s, the state was experiencing a strong economic recovery, and the coming of World War II would bring a need for more agricultural production, real estate development, and beefed-up military installations. The influx of military personnel and their families would also change the face of the state in a postwar suburban boom of sprawl.102 By 1950, St. Petersburg had a population of more than 100,000 people—a number that would increase by more than 50 percent in the coming decade. City leaders continued to grapple with the growth, declaring a “planning crisis” and establishing a blue-ribbon panel to study where development should occur.103 The city’s sizable debt and unpaid taxes were symptoms, according to Stephenson, of its lack of planning.104 Still, a mix of natural areas and limited building since the 1920s made the area “one of the most unusual and biologically diverse natural environments in the United States,” wrote Stephenson, adding that clean bays and intact wetlands conveyed the Edenic qualities its early founders

96 Morris, Women in the Florida Legislature, 9-10. Tippetts’s grandson William B. Tippetts Jr. reports that her files have since been misplaced or discarded (William B. Tippetts Jr. to the author, e-mail, October 24, 2007).
97 Ibid., 10.
98 Ibid., 9-11; Morris, Women in the Florida Legislature, 9.
103 Stephenson, Visions of Eden, 106, 117.
104 Ibid., 113.
described. By the late 1940s, with a surge of postwar residents, the city experienced a housing shortage that was relieved through sales of tax-delinquent properties and marked the end of city efforts to try to contain growth within certain boundaries. Now the city would join the rest of Florida in a boom of suburban development that created monotonous mass-produced housing tracts and replaced natural areas, leading to the environmental issues of the next half century: air and water pollution, traffic congestion, loss of wetlands and bays through dredge-and-fill operations, and decreasing groundwater supplies. Birds no longer were in danger of being killed by hunters—the greater threat was habitat loss.

Although she witnessed the beginning of these issues and had fought some early problems through her battles for bird and plant protection and conservation of natural resources, Tippetts did not live to see them reach crisis proportions. On December 20, 1950, she died of respiratory failure at age eighty-five, at her home in Pinellas Point, where she had spent most of her last decade, residing in winter months at the Belmont with guests from the North. She was buried at Royal Palm Cemetery.

In her two-story stucco home trimmed with native coral rock, Tippetts would read, attend to correspondence, and enjoy the myriad bird life on the half-acre site, which included tropical plants, flowers, and a small fishpond, recalled her grandson William B. Tippetts Jr. of St. Petersburg. Katherine Tippetts had built the home in 1925 for $125,000, choosing the site several miles from downtown St. Petersburg because of its proximity to the waters of Tampa Bay and the nearby woods, long since developed into housing. Her mobility was limited by arthritis in her legs, the result of a 1920s car accident in downtown St. Petersburg. But at her home Tippetts could still enjoy her beloved avian neighbors: owls that hooted at night outside her bedroom window and birds that came every day to eat seed scattered on the sidewalk in the backyard.

“She loved to be quiet and listen to other people talk,” recalled the younger Tippetts, who was a teenager when she died. “She was always pleasant and cheerful to be around. She was not a complainer. The only time she talked about people was when she had something good to say. A love of birds and nature would give her a compassionate heart. Her life and her qualities earned her the respect she received.”

105 Ibid.
106 Ibid., 117.
107 Ibid., 118-22.
“The influence of such a woman can not be overestimated,” wrote H. G. Cutler in 1923. “In fact, it is not likely that the full measure of her usefulness will be ascertained until it is viewed in retrospect by future generations, and in the light of developments now only dimly foreshadowed.”

At her death, Katherine Bell Tippetts was lauded as a pioneer clubwoman and influential Audubon activist. Using her writing and speaking skills, her savvy as a businesswoman, and her network of women’s club contacts, she raised the local, state, and national awareness of bird preservation and became an important player in the conservation movement, laying the foundation for activists who would follow in her footsteps in confronting Florida’s environmental woes.

The acquisition of Florida by the United States in 1821 presented it with a continuation of a problem: what to do with the Native American population and the escaped slaves and free blacks living in the Territory. The presence of these populations had already been a major cause of the so-called First Seminole War (1817-18), which brought the forces of General Andrew Jackson southward into Spanish Florida as far as Suwannee Old Town. This punitive action forced the Seminoles and their allies southward to other positions on the peninsula, including those in a nebulous settlement now known as Angola, alleged to be somewhere along the Manatee or another southwestern Florida river. In addition to the problematic presence of the Indians and blacks, there were also a number of Spanish fishing rancheros along the coast from Anclote to Charlotte Harbor who often traded with the local inhabitants. This trade, of course, had a military ramification in that the Seminoles were supposedly supplied with guns and ammunition via this trade route. The United States Army had no visible presence south of St. Augustine, St. Marks, and Pensacola. If any kind of control of these diverse groups was to be effected, there must be established a military outpost closer to them.

It has been speculated that Captain James Gadsden first recommended a post on Tampa Bay as early as 1818 to keep the British and Spanish from stirring up the Indians and supplying them with arms. Nothing appears to have been done with this suggestion at the time, but when he negotiated the Treaty of Moultrie Creek in September 1823, the time for definite action had come. Accordingly, on November 4, 1823, Gadsden was ordered to run the boundary of the Indian settlement area and meet with the officer to be named at Tampa Bay for the establishment of the proposed post. The officer named for the assignment was Brevet Colonel George Mercer Brooke of the Fourth Infantry. He was ordered to communicate directly with Gadsden for the selection of the most proper location for the erection of the
Colonel Brooke took with him four companies of the Fourth Infantry and most of the supplies needed to construct a suitable establishment and faint fears of the allegedly large numbers of blacks and Seminoles south of the bay. Because of some resistance shown by the Seminoles to Gadsden’s attempt to “run” – or carry out – his survey of the territory assigned to them, the captain asked that Brooke send his men immediately and that the Navy be asked to send some vessels from the West Indian Squadron along the coast to deter any possible action or trade with the Spanish fishermen. By December 23, Gadsden had been reassured that his requests had been granted and that Brooke and his force were on the way and the Navy was sending vessels into the waters around Florida. Brooke’s command arrived at Tampa Bay on December 20, and Brooke joined Gadsden in selecting a point of land “at the mouth of North Hillsborough river, at the head of the Bay of the same name as the site for the Military Post.” Named for the commanding officer, the site was selected because of the already cleared land, the small but good body of hammock, and the high, undulating pine lands behind the post extending up the river about nine miles, which would provide most of the timber for the construction of the post. It was a judicious selection.

Trouble appeared on the horizon even before the troops arrived in the form, not of Indians, but lumbermen. Governor William Pope Duval had written to the secretary of war asking for the post to be quickly established because the Indians had reported to him that a number of vessels had landed in the vicinity of Tampa Bay and Charlotte Harbor for the purpose of cutting wood. Duval, both Indian agent and governor, also had responsibility for the public lands prior to the establishment of the surveyor general’s office later that year and had written to Brooke on January 15, 1824, asking the commanding officer to send a detachment of men along the bay and to Charlotte Harbor to arrest these men for cutting timber from the public lands without permit or grant. Brooke was to have some trouble with these timber depredators later in 1824, when he seized a shipload of ship timbers from lumbermen illegally harvesting timber on Hillsborough Bay. Given the urgency of establishing the post, it is little wonder that no military reservation had yet been made and no survey of one ordered.

There was one little problem with the selection of this location, or any location around Tampa Bay, the infamous land grants to the Duke of Alagon that allegedly gave this Spanish nobleman title to the land in question. The grant had been made,

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2 Ibid., 795-96.
3 Ibid., 817.
4 Ibid., 841-43.
5 Ibid., 834.
6 *Territorial Papers*, 23: 37.
Colonel George Mercer Brooke, first commanding officer of Cantonment Brooke, later renamed Fort Brooke. Brooke, along with Colonel James Gadsden, decided upon the location of the fort – the east side of the Hillsborough River where it flows into Hillsborough Bay.

According to the sources, after the date of the treaty, January 24, 1818. Indeed, the grant had been made in February of that year and one month after the deadline. This late action made the entire grant void according to the treaty. Unfortunately, one Robert Hackley purchased this grant from the duke, approximately 11 million acres worth, and began to market it to northern investors. As the grant had been ruled void, so too was the title transferred to Hackley and later his heirs. Not until 1904, in the case of Scott v. Carew, was the final challenge to the grant decided against the
Hackley heirs and in favor of the homesteaders in and around Tampa Bay.\(^7\)

Another Spanish land grant claim for an eight-league square around Hillsborough and Tampa bays was filed by Pedro Miranda. Basically the grant was allegedly given by Governor Enrique White on November 19, 1810. The testimony offered indicated there was a question about the signature of Governor White attached to the documents filed, but not one witness could swear for or against the validity of the signature. The question lingered in the courts for many years before being decided by the Supreme Court of the United State in the case *U.S. v. Miranda* (16 Peters, 153). The decision was against the grant based upon three points, (1) there was no attempt to settle the grant; (2) no proper survey was ever made of the property; (3) the grant was indefinite and therefore invalid.\(^8\) This unfavorable decision echoes that of other such claims in Florida and throughout the country where these principles apply.

Not until 1830, with the establishment of an Indian subagency near Fort Brooke did the United States get around to establishing a military reserve around the area. On December 10, 1830, the commissioner of the General Land Office, Elijah Hayward, wrote to Surveyor General Robert Butler that the president of the United States had approved the reservation of a sixteen-mile square of and for military purposes and that he was to review the plan offered. The plan, which is attached to the letter, includes much of both Hillsborough and Tampa bays, which occupy nearly a third of the drawing. The original survey was made by Lieutenant Gouverneur Morris of the Fourth Infantry and sent to the Adjutant General of the Army Roger Jones by Colonel Duncan L. Clinch, then commanding the Fourth Infantry in Florida. The Morris survey is dated by Clinch as April 21, 1829, and was obviously done in preparation for the final order but not because of it. The Morris survey was soon questioned and a better description of the land involved was sent to the secretary of war by Major General Alexander Macomb, who obviously had been informed of the deficiencies in the Morris survey as reported. The Macomb description of the reservation follows only the land and does not cross the waters of the bays as the Morris work did. He was careful to include the islands opposite the “Cantonment” in his description, which would be very important later as these islands were the haven for the friendly Indians at the beginning of the Second Seminole War (1835-42).\(^9\) The reasons for the reservation at this time are readily apparent in the letter of February 7, 1830, when Clinch asked that the commanding officer at the

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\(^7\)  Donald L. Chamberlin, “Fort Brooke, A History” (master’s thesis, Florida State University, Tallahassee, 1968), 12-13, 141. This very good thesis tells the history of the fortification and is useful in understanding many of the problems associated with this grant. Chamberlin maintains that the cleared land found by Brooke and Gadsden was that cleared by Robert Hackley, Richard’s son.


\(^9\)  Letters from Commissioner, 1: 540-43 (Title and Land Records Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee).
fort be “impowered as early as possible to use his discretion in preventing settlers from occupying this section of public Lands, and to remove such persons already located upon it as he may deem proper.”\(^{10}\) Obviously the commanding officer had seen the usual collection of “camp followers” gathering across the river, especially the liquor dealers and prostitutes.

The growing alarm over the reactions of the Seminoles and their allies prior to the “official outbreak” of the Second Seminole War made Tampa a veritable lone bastion in the wilderness. People from the surrounding area began crowding into the reserve area seeking protection from the ambushes, thefts, and murders attending the upheaval. Friendly Indians, too, sought shelter under the reinforced walls of the fortification. Captain Francis Smith Belton, commanding at the fort with the departure of Major Francis L. Dade’s command, had his hands filled with details and frightened inhabitants. His own force being denuded by the order from Clinch to

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 542.
send Dade northward to Fort King, Belton needed nerves of steel to withstand the pressure, especially after he learned from the two survivors what had happened on December 28, 1835. All outside buildings were leveled to clear the field of fire. Not until the arrival of the forces brought by General Edmund P. Gaines and the timely showing of the United States Marines was Tampa relatively safe from abandonment or being overrun by the enemy. It was a very harrowing time, and no one was thinking of the limits of the reservation or a proper resurvey thereof.  

The Second Seminole War opened up the area for further problems with the influx of military and civilian personnel. More of the usual camp followers, “worthless drunkards,” and other such individuals made keeping discipline at Fort Brooke very difficult. These same offending inhabitants also decided to squat on the lands of the reservation and made life difficult for the commanding officers and U.S. Marshall Joseph Sanchez. Captain Washington Seawell accused Sanchez of being lax in his duties when he did not evict a number of these people from the reservation. Sanchez replied that he needed a “just cause” order from the local judge before eviction could take place under civilian law. The conflict between civilian law and military law in the case of policing the military reservation became a bone of contention, with the end result being that some were evicted and others were allowed to stay. One can assume the choice was at the commanding officer’s discretion.

The other upshot of the controversy over the evictions was the obvious need for a clearly marked survey of the reservation boundaries. On September 8, 1842, Colonel Josiah H. Vose wrote to the adjutant general that the survey would be one of the most logical means of making the military’s case against the liquor dealers and others and requested permission to have the survey done. Surveying after the war was just beginning by late 1842, and some hostile parties were still suspected of being on the land. In return for military protection for the surveyors, Commissioner Thomas Blake offered to make surveys of the permanent military reserves when the adjutant general had supplied him with a list of such posts. Much of this communication must have been verbal, but the record is clear that if there were a perceived threat to the lives of the surveyors, application could be made to the local military commander for small escorts. It was a small concession, to be sure, but one that gave peace of mind to some of the surveyors about to take the field.

Surveying became a little more complicated with the passage of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842. In this act, the grandfather of the Homestead Act of 1862-63, the settler was allowed 160 acres free if he made improvements on the land, built a habitation fit for man, settled upon the land for a period of not less than five consecutive years, and was capable of bearing arms. As a general rule in the General

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11 Joe Knetsch and Pamela Gibson, “‘being continually in apprehension of an attack from the Indians …’; Tampa Bay in Early 1836,” Sunland Tribune 29 (2003) (Tampa Historical Society, Tampa, Fla.).
13 Territorial Papers, 26: 535.
14 Ibid., 539-40.
Land Office (GLO) for many decades preceding this act, 160 acres was equated with a quarter section of land and not some random 160-acre parcel with natural boundaries. Added to the already existing “pre-emption” lands in the area, this could spell trouble for any deputy surveyor. The act also specified that no settlement under the act could be on lands within a two-mile radius of a permanent post like Fort Brooke. The two-mile limit was an aid to the control of intruders on the military reserves in Florida but made the identifying of the boundaries a higher priority.

In 1843, Arthur M. Randolph received the contract to survey the lands around the Tampa Bay area; included in this contract was the special order to run (set) the boundary of the Fort Brooke Military Reserve. This was the first thing that this very capable man did when he arrived in the vicinity, and by May 8, Randolph reported the boundary run. This was not the main focus of his contract, which called for sectioning a large number of townships mostly east of Tampa near the headwaters of the Hillsborough and Alafia rivers. During this survey, he suffered an attack of chills and fever that incapacitated him for nearly a week, something seldom mentioned in Randolph’s numerous letters. He did find that he had two more ranges added to his contract because of the meridians then being run by Henry Washington, and this disheartened him considerably. Because of the added work, the sickness, and the flooding of many of the rivers and streams in his district, he had to ask for an extension of time to finish the contract. The rainy and sickly season had arrived early that year.

Soon after the Randolph survey was accepted and recorded, there appears to have been agitation to have the reservation reduced and the land turned over to the General Land Office for public sale or public use. In a letter of May 21, 1844, Adjutant General Jones wrote to General William Jenkins Worth, now commanding in Florida, to ask if it were desirable to reduce the military reserve at Tampa. In this brief letter, Jones noted the efforts being made in Congress concerning the reserve and its possible relinquishment. One of those who raised the question about the reserve was John Parsons, the receiver of public moneys at Newnansville, who was soon to have major holdings in the area. Parsons appears to have written to Commissioner Blake about the reserve and the undo exercise of military authority, which probably goes back to the eviction of some of his friends from Tampa. Parsons was also aligned with Territorial Delegate David Levy (soon to add “Yulee” to his name), who was an outspoken critic of the military and much hated by Worth and his colleagues. A letter of November 4, 1844, shows that Levy was involved with the attempts to

15 Ibid., 658.
16 Letters and Reports to Surveyor General, vol. 1, 1825-1847, 319-35 (Title and Land Records Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee). Hereafter cited as “Letters and Reports,” followed by the volume number and the page number or date of letter (some page numbers are illegible in this series).
17 Territorial Papers, 25: 905.
18 Ibid., 934.
reduce the reservation and had on two different occasions requested information regarding the reduction from the adjutant general. The response to these letters indicates that there were no plans at that stage to reduce the reserve.19

By January 21, 1845, the situation had changed, and General Worth was more than accommodating to the proposition of reduction. Part of his reasoning centered on the relative sterility of the soil in much of the reservation and the unlikelihood of its immediate settlement. He also noted that “Commissioners duly appointed” had recently visited the area and selected, obviously with his knowledge and approval, a quarter section of land for Hillsborough County’s new courthouse, and that this group would soon be petitioning Congress for a grant of land upon which to build the new county facility. General Worth also noted that a number of settlers under the Armed Occupation Act, in total ignorance of the two-mile limit and the boundaries of the reservation, had begun to inhabit and improve lands in the immediate vicinity. The usually volatile general then asked that they be allowed to remain and have their titles perfected. The only inconvenience he noted was the shortage of wood for fuel and building, which he considered almost a trivial concern at that point. Worth concluded by stating: “It is unlikely that any but a very

19 Ibid., 972.
trifling garrison will be retained here after a few years. . . . Should the government assent to this proposition the convenience of the community will be promoted by an early decision.\textsuperscript{20} For whatever reasons, Worth seemed to actually be encouraging the reduction of the reserve in deference to the people of the Village of Tampa and Hillsborough County.

Part of the military’s reasoning may have been the stirrings in Texas and Mexico, which were soon to erupt into the Mexican-American War. The U.S. Army was not very large, hardly numbering ten thousand fit men at the beginning of this conflict. Many of these troops were stationed along the western frontier and in coastal defenses around the country. With very few Seminole and Miccosukees left in Florida, and they acting very peaceably, there were few reasons to maintain a large force in the new state. The Fort Brooke military reservation was reduced to a four-

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 997-98.
mile square in February 1847 and further reduced by President James K. Polk in 1848. The limits proposed by Polk’s executive order were the limits of the “present military quarters.” Polk was responding to a resolution passed by the Legislature of the State of Florida in January of 1848 requesting 160 acres of land for Hillsborough County. The language of this resolution stated that they wanted this land, adjoining to and north of Fort Brooke, on the east side of the Hillsborough river, so as to include the present town of Tampa, it being the permanent seat of justice for said county, being on unsurveyed lands reserved by the government for military purposes, but relinquished by order of the Secretary of War, and reducing the military reserve of Fort Brooke to the ground enclosed by the picket fence.21

Congress solidified the reduction by passing an act in July 1848 giving Hillsborough County its 160-acre tract.22

To survey out this new land, Surveyor General Robert Butler appointed Tampa resident John Jackson to do the work. Jackson was a native of Ireland, born at Ballybag, County Monaghan, in 1812. His early life is relatively unknown, but he did receive some education in the local schools and became the apprentice of a local engineer. In 1841, with Ireland suffering from the beginnings of the infamous Potato Famine, Jackson left his native land for the United States. He soon found work as the assistant city engineer in New Orleans, where he and his brother Thomas resided for more than a year. At that time, Jackson met Simon Turman and was persuaded to come to the new town of Tampa and apply for 160 acres of land under the Armed Occupation Act. His land was located near the Turman property along the Manatee River, where he met his future employer and friend, Sam Reid, a United States deputy surveyor and trusted founder of the Manatee Colony. By 1845, Jackson was beginning his life in Tampa and assisting Reid on his surveys for the government. When Reid realized that Jackson was not in the best of health, he recommended to Surveyor General Butler that he hire Jackson as a U.S. deputy surveyor. Butler, an old friend and political ally of Reid’s from the latter’s Tallahassee days, did not hesitate to comply with his friend’s wish. Jackson signed his first contract later that same year, 1847, and began a long and distinguished career as one of Florida’s most accurate surveyors.23

Jackson finished the work of surveying the 160-acre parcel for Hillsborough County in October of 1848 and returned his work to Butler later that year.24 Jackson’s survey was soon questioned by the new surveyor general, Benjamin Putnam, one of the leaders of Florida’s Whig Party and former Speaker of the House. Apparently Putnam was not satisfied that Jackson had followed the letter of the General Land Office, which instructed him to work with the sketch provided. Jackson answered

21 United States Senate Miscellaneous Document No. 68, Thirtieth Congress, 1st sess.
22 Chamberlin, “Fort Brooke,” 112.
24 Letters and Reports, 2: 115.
with the assurance that he was not to be governed by the sketch but to use the letter of Major L. Whiting, then commanding at the post, as his guide. In part, the letter stated: “From the point where the pales on the North side of the enclosed ground strike the East bank of the Hillsborough River running in a line with said pales to or mar[?] the first angle, thence in a more northerly direction say 1700 yards more or less to embrace the spring from which the whole Garrison is supplied with water.” If Jackson had followed what Putnam assumed were the markings, there would be a very sharp angle in the survey and further errors in the work. Putnam, who was acting on advice from the General Land Office in criticizing the work, patiently worked with his deputy and asked advice from others who knew the area, especially Arthur Randolph. The question hinged upon the meander corner set by Jackson along the bank of the Hillsborough River, which appeared to the GLO to be too far inland from the water line. Upon advice from Randolph and Henry Wells, another well-known deputy then acting as the selection agents under the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act of 1850, there was noted a mud flat that ran between the bank and the waterline of the river. The bank was a clear mark, which may or may not have been the ordinary high-water mark (in today’s nomenclature) but was a clearly defined landmark used by Jackson. With this information, Putnam justified the work of his deputy.

The survey took place during the Indian Scare of 1849-50 and the end of the buildup for the Mexican War. The War Department had little use for the fort and was almost ready to abandon it when the Third Seminole War (1855-58) erupted. This unfortunate war lasted three years and took an unusual amount of effort to secure the migration of a very few Seminoles from the state. With the end of this war, the usefulness of Fort Brooke was coming to an end. By 1860, the secretary of war had released the reservation to the Department of Interior. With the Civil War about to begin, there was a reluctance to turn over to anyone local a prime piece of military property and the fort was therefore leased to James McKay, a well-known local cattleman and shipper who would soon be captured twice running the Union blockade.

After the war, the fort was briefly reoccupied by troops until about 1869, when it was released back to the Department of the Interior. The collector of customs occupied the five surviving buildings, which were used for his work, with him becoming the de facto caretaker of the property. In about 1875, there was a move by the Florida legislature to request the use of the reserve lands for an agricultural college, but this movement did not produce any direct results. The main direction for the reserve was to have its lines reestablished by a deputy and the meanders of the river run up to the “extreme point” of the bayou to the corner of the reservation.

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25 Ibid., 127-29.
26 Letters of Surveyor General, 8: 58, 592 (Title and Land Records Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee).
27 Chamberlin, Fort Brooke, 130.
This survey of Fort Brooke, drawn in 1852, shows the reconfigured layout of the military base that occurred following the fort’s reduction in size in 1847 and the hurricane of 1848. The southern half of the Village of Tampa is also depicted on this survey.

The purpose of this was to get the land ready for homesteaders under the Homestead Acts; it was not meant to be a private survey on behalf of William W. Wall, who had requested same.28 Upon the heels of this request was the order to William Brown to reestablish the corners and the hiring of John T. Lesley to appraise the remaining property for eventual sale. Lesley completed his work on June 30, 1875, and gave an approximate value of $1,750 to the buildings.29 Surveyor General LeRoy Ball informed the GLO that, as soon as the meanders had been approved and the evaluation paid for, he would lot out the remainder of the reservation and prepare it for sale.30

30 Letters of Surveyor General, 10: 461, Ball to S. S. Burdett, dated July 3, 1875.
The commissioner of the GLO, S. S. Burnett, wanted Brown to have the premises “subdivided into legal subdivisions” and run a new meander line along the east boundary of the property. The commissioner had particularly instructed Surveyor General Ball to hire a local deputy to cut down on “the undue costs of the service which would otherwise be incurred.” Burnett also insisted upon a complete description of all improvements, buildings, or any other materials thereon, which would have to be paid for by the parties acquiring the property. The instructions to Ball appear to require that the surveyor do the appraisal of the property as part of his duties, but obviously Ball chose a more practical course of action by hiring Lesley. The tone of the commissioner’s letter is interesting in that it is almost scornful of the duty required to have this post surveyed and sold.31

Ball had difficulties finding the original field notes for the earlier surveys in his office and wrote to the commissioner for copies. Ball was obviously not aware that the original surveys of the property did not contemplate subdividing the land and therefore were only of the exterior lines of the land, not any subdivisions within it.32 A diagram of the reserve and whatever notes the department had were forwarded to Ball on July 12, 1875, along with permission for him to pay Brown a per diem of five dollars plus expenses. Brown’s plats and notes were sent to the department on the October 28 and were returned, unapproved, one month later. The reason they were returned unapproved was that Brown had not correctly run the meander line to encompass the entire reserve. However, instead of requiring Brown to redo the work, the GLO did it for him by protracting the lines desired to give the proper acreage to the reserve. It also saved time and money “without the necessitating an additional Survey in the field.”33

The War Department was not through with the reservation, and a modified map was filed in 1877, giving the acreage of the reserve as 150 acres. President Rutherford B. Hayes signed an order on May 29, 1878, approving a new reservation of 155 acres at the Fort Brooke site. By May 1880, two companies of the Fifth Artillery, commanded by Captain Jacob Rawles, occupied the old buildings. When the fort was visited by the Axtell family in February 1881, the Confederate earthworks were still visible, the soldiers were living in tents, and the old buildings that remained were in disrepair. The fort was obviously to be occupied only as a temporary measure. By January 1883, the last of the soldiers left old Fort Brooke. Homesteaders quickly took up the abandoned lands of the reservation and brought on a new problem that ended in the Scott v. Carew case decided in 1904.34 The origins of the case go back to the so-called “Hackley Grant” and the deal struck between Richard S. Hackley, a former

31 Letters from Commissioner, vol. 10, 1873-76, Burnett to Ball, June 9, 1875, 160-62 (Title and Land Records Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee).
32 Ibid., Burnett to Ball, July 2, 1875, 174-75.
33 Ibid., Burnett to Ball, November 27, 1875, 216-218.
34 Chamberlin, “Fort Brooke,” 140-41.
consul to the Court of Madrid, and the Duke of Alagon. The alleged deal was signed on May 22, 1818, which made it too late to be recognized under the conditions of the Treaty of Cession. According to James Covington’s research, Hackley sent his son Robert to establish a plantation on the property at the mouth of the Hillsborough River. This is the land Brooke seized for the site of the cantonment. The seizure of the land is the origin of the lawsuit, but it was not based upon the bogus Alagon Grant or any transfer via that instrument. When the suit was filed, this ground was covered; however, the main argument for the Hackley heir was that it was a preemption, i.e., Robert had established a residence on the land prior to the military seizure and was there in accordance with the provisions of the Act of April 22, 1826, under which he filed his initial claim. The heirs believed that they had been deprived of proper title to the land by the allegedly illegal seizure of the property by the military and that the occupation of the reserve only delayed their rights and did not nullify them.

Hackley’s attorneys were smart enough to realize that the old Alagon Grant business was not going to work and the preemption claim might give them the title. The inhabitants of the property at the time, Edmund Carew and others, were very concerned about the decision, and many were worried that the claim was nothing more than an attempt by the railroads to take the property from legitimate settlers. Horatio Bisbee, William Wade Hampton, and Edward Gunby argued for Carew and the other settlers. This talented and experienced team of lawyers argued that the government had directed Brooke to establish the post at Tampa in response to a national security need and that this action was done through the proper authority of the president of the United States acting as the supreme commander of the armed forces. Further, they noted that Hackley was on the property illegally and that his dispossession was by the authority of law. The post and reservation had been made with a specific and notorious public purpose in accordance with the law. The General Land Office and the secretary of war had all made note on maps issued and plats authorized that this land was exempt from public sale at the time. The team then closed with:

But we go further, and say, that whenever a tract of land shall have been once legally appropriated to any purpose, from that moment, the land thus appropriated becomes severed from the mass of public lands; and that no subsequent law, or proclamation, or sale, would be construed to embrace it, or to operate upon it; although no reservation were made of it.

The court agreed with this logic and noted that, while so appropriated they are exempted from the operation of the public land laws, and no right of an

35 James W. Covington, “The Hackley Grant, the Fort Brooke Military Reservation and Tampa,” Sunland Tribune 6, no. 1 (November 1980): 4-9 (Tampa Historical Society, Tampa, Fla.).
36 The Supreme Court of the United States, United States Reports, vol. 196, Cases Adjudged at the October Term 1904 (New York: Banks Law, 1905), 100-108.
38 Ibid., 110.
individual settler attaches or hangs over the land to interfere with such action as the Government may thereafter see fit to take in respect to it. No cloud can be cast upon the title of the Government--nothing done by an individual to embarrass it in the future disposition of the land.39

The settlers were free to file only upon the abandonment of the reservation, and no prior claims by private individuals could cloud their title obtained from the government. The struggle for the title to land in the reserve was now over.

Until the recent findings of the graves of some of the soldiers and others on the property, the fort and its reservation had almost totally faded from the collective memory of most citizens of Tampa. The story related above should help us to see that the struggles of the frontier were not only against a hostile enemy, but also against others who would claim the land in ways not foreseen by most. The long, hard attempt to open the reserve to the public and allow the town of Tampa to grow is a fascinating tale of perseverance. And it all began with the establishment of a military post in the wilderness. Let us hope we remember this isolated but important outpost and its reservation a little longer than did our predecessors.

39 Ibid., 114.
A month after the end of the ill-fated Tampa Snow Show, the Tampa Tribune polled readers to gain a cross section of public opinion about the event. One respondent was a woman I wished I had talked to before embarking on staging the Snow Show. Her comment was quite succinct, not requiring a lot of verbiage to get her feelings across: “Crackers and snow don’t mix!” The fact that she was right pained me; but what really hurt is the knowledge that the Snow Show was devised, precisely, to appeal to snow-deprived Florida Crackers.

When the Snow Show was all over, my costly brainstorm had amassed over forty lawsuits and insurance claims, and, on its perilous journey, had exhausted three-million pounds of ice. However, with the healing passage of time, I’ve come to treasure the ultimate humor of it all, even with all the problems.

WAS TAMPA READY FOR SNOW?

While I was advertising director of Maas Brothers, Tampa’s dominant downtown department store, I became very involved working to arrest the economic nose-dive that clutched downtown. As with most downtown areas, Tampa’s was taking it on the chin; the national buzzword of the day was that “downtowns are dying.” But our downtown had a promising, untapped asset: a handsome riverfront which was obscured and taken up by dilapidated warehouses serving an unsightly, ill-placed freight yard. It was the kind of place hobos loved to call home during the winter months.

Working with a group of six other young men, we formed a hell-raising civic-action group we called “The Tampa Plan Committee.” We started a campaign suitably dubbed “Tampa Bright or Tampa Blight?” Our first objective was to force the railroad out of this promising property. Working with other groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Merchants Association, our goal of ousting the
railroad was finally achieved, opening up many desirable acres on the riverfront for needed, upscale development. This was a vital step in the hoped-for rejuvenation of Tampa’s downtown core.

Our next objective is what got me into trouble. We started to push for a downtown pedestrian mall, collecting success stories from other cities which had transformed their downtowns into productive, attractive city centers by means of closing off main thoroughfares to vehicular traffic.

About this time, I resigned my Maas Brothers position to start an advertising agency with another Tampa Plan member, Bill Gray. We opened our doors in early July. With my retailing experience as a lever, one of the first accounts we landed was the Greater Tampa Merchants Association.

For our first assignment, they charged us with coming up with some sort of Christmas promotion. It was no secret that downtown merchants were worried about fall and Christmas sales. Outlying malls were cutting the heart out of downtown’s complacent dominance; shoppers were avoiding downtown in droves. Something different was needed to jolt and attract the shopping public.

As Bill and I kicked ideas around for a Christmas or winter promotion, I reminisced about the Winter Carnival held annually at my alma mater, Dartmouth. Suddenly, I thought, “Why not have a winter carnival in Tampa?” The idea was compelling. After all, the great majority of Floridians had never seen snow, and Yankee-transplants would probably enjoy seeing it again under balmy, sunny conditions. But where would we get the snow? Obviously, shipping boxcars full of snow to Tampa would be too expensive. And then we got to thinking about the snow blowing machines used at northern ski slopes.

My next move must have been inspired by a whimsical Devil, the only fiend capable of conjuring up such an unlikely start for such a diabolical scenario. I grabbed the Yellow Pages directory and looked up “Ice.” At random, (but it was really the Devil moving my index finger), my finger settled on the listing of City Ice Company.

Half in jest and just for my own curiosity, I dialed their number. “I’d like to speak to someone about snow for a ski jump.” A man named Emmett Stewart came on the phone, and I told him I was toying with the idea of building a ski jump in downtown Tampa. Then I asked him what he thought about it.

“Great idea! I’ll do it!”

I was flabbergasted. Do what? Before I could collect myself, he was jumping headlong into how he would love to supply the “snow.” It seems that his principal source of business was icing-down the large shrimp fleet that operates out of Tampa. His ice trucks were equipped with blowers; they grind three-hundred pound blocks into granular and shaved ice and pump it into the holds of shrimp boats. He added that the grinding mechanism regulator could be set at different levels of size, and he could, indeed, spray realistic “snow.” To my obvious question, he replied, “Don’t worry about it melting. With the amount you’ll need, your problem is going to be getting rid of it afterwards.”
With this preliminary, unexpected shove, we catapulted ourselves into working out the possibilities of using Stewart's offer. We met with an architect friend, Bob Weilage, and he came back to us with some doodles and cost estimates for constructing a ski jump, an assignment not many Florida architects can list on their resumes. At this point, the idea began to look fairly feasible.

Assuming it could be done, we put the idea in writing, working up a promotional plan to get the most out of the premise. However, rather than show it directly to the Downtown Promotion Committee at the Merchants Association, I showed it to someone whose promotional sense I respected.

Harold Wolf, a brilliant merchant and owner of Wolf Brothers Men's Clothing Stores, had a peerless reputation as an advertising innovator ... much more so than many people in the advertising business. Considered to be a creative genius, he was also “different.” He had a zany streak about him, being totally unpredictable; and he used an inborn stage-presence to bolster an already highly-effective gift of persuasiveness. So I took my idea to Harold, knowing he would listen, dissect it, and be frank with an appraisal. He did listen to the idea. Unfortunately, he flipped over it.

He was so enthusiastic that he bypassed the Merchants Association and decided to call a select meeting of the most important men in local commerce and finance. Up to this point, we had been working on the idea with no source of income to cover our expenses; we were going to catch up later when we submitted a budget. But Harold told me to relax; he would cover our developmental costs. Since our fledgling business was not heavily financed, it was a most welcome piece of news. So, we charged ahead to get ready to make a full-scale presentation at Harold's fast approaching VIP get-together. It should also be noted that, as a new agency, the opportunity to show our creative talents to the city’s most important executives was heady stuff, indeed.

Harold invited an impressive array of heavyweights for cocktails at the prestigious University Club in the Tampa Terrace Hotel. And the moguls came. I don't know whether they came for Harold's free booze or to find out just what the hell Harold was up to. The list looked like a Who's Who gathering of presidents and chairmen ... Carl Brorein of Peninsular Telephone, Tampa Electric’s Bill MacInnes, George Howell of Marine Bank, Howard Frankland of First National, Exchange Bank's Dick Griffin, Maas Brothers’ Mel Stein, Jim Council of the Tampa Tribune, and twenty more high-rollers.

Harold, already highly psyched up for the meeting, was carried one-step further by the sight of the august gathering seated in front of him. Everyone curious, most of the men listening to Harold's emotional appeal sat back with their drinks as Harold took center stage and started to emote in his rich, dramatic drawl...

Downtown Tampa is like a seedy carnival set up in a muddy cotton field outside a small town in Georgia. There are hardly any customers ... it's raining, signs are falling down and tearing apart, half the bulbs on the midway are burnt out, and the raggedy, shopworn tent is leaking. And on the sagging
stage outside the tent, mascara is running down the cheeks of the rain-soaked, bedraggled hootchy-kootchy dancers…

Most of the men listening to Harold’s emotional appeal represented organizations that had large investments in downtown property; they could hardly ignore Harold’s eloquent plea. By the time he finished voicing his prognostication of what downtown’s obituary would read like unless something drastic was done to improve business, they were primed and ready to hear our presentation of what we were now calling “The Great Tampa Snow Show.”

Our plan called for closing, to vehicular traffic, Tampa’s main downtown thoroughfare, Franklin Street. For a five-block stretch, various free-to-the-public winter activities and displays would be featured, the stars of which would be a spectacular five-story high ski jump and the nation’s tallest Christmas tree. Mental images of laughing children, who had never seen snow, romping in snowdrifts, brought smiles to our audience. And, of course, it was understood that the children’s accompanying parents were potential downtown shoppers. An hour later, every man
present had committed his organization to help finance the Snow Show.

We were going to save downtown!

**PREPARING FOR A BLIZZARD**

Even though substantial funds had been pledged, they were far short of what was needed to bring the ten day promotion to fruition. So we began wheeling and dealing to get as many freebies as possible. While we leaned heavily on our media friends for free time and space, Harold’s high-powered finance committee put pressure on business associates, raising enough money and donations-in-kind to put the show on. And a bigwig delegation descended on Mayor Nick Nuccio, convincing him to allow the closure of Franklin Street for the ten-day event.

By far the largest contribution came from Paul Smith Construction Company. Working with architect Bob Weilage, they figured out a way to build the ski jump using construction scaffolding sections. Bob had obtained plans and photos of other structures, and soon came to realize that our “ski jump” would have to be a ski and toboggan slide. The final plan called for the ski slide to be five stories high, two-hundred feet long, and fifteen feet across. When the slide reached street level, a twenty-foot wide chute of snow, with plywood retaining walls four feet high, would run for another block-and-a-half. Because the slide and ski run were more than two blocks in length, a pedestrian overpass also had to be built. Since it was elevated, we planned on using it also as a platform for the announcer and important events, such as opening ceremonies. And Paul Smith Construction offered to build all the structures gratis.

Right up there in size of donation was that of my good friend (by now!), Emmett Stewart, president of City Ice Company. In talking to a *Tribune* reporter, he described how he was going to accomplish his task, reassuring me again about a bothersome worry; he kept something else to himself which I wish I’d known at that early stage.

He told a scoffing reporter, “The ice won’t melt.” He went on to explain why: because the streets are hot and retain heat, the bottom of the long chute of snow would be initially lined with three-hundred pound blocks of ice to cool the pavement down.

After that, it would take two blower-trucks, being supplied by six ice trucks ferrying ice to them, forty hours to fill the rest of the chute with snow-like shaved ice. Based on Tampa’s average November temperatures, twice-a-day spraying should keep it in shape from then on.

Asked about the slide, Stewart explained that chicken wire, stapled to one-inch laths, would cover its entire length. The snow would be force-blown onto the surface, and the raised chicken wire would hold it in place. Snow for skiing could then be built up on that base. All in all, the event might use up to a million pounds of ice, an impressive figure by any standard.

What Emmett didn’t tell me was that his business was in its last days, headed
for bankruptcy. It turned out later that he viewed this as a grandiose “Going-Out-Of-Business” goodbye party. In all our dealings, he only made one request: that his daughter, Joyce, a model, be used in our publicity photos. Small request indeed; luckily, his daughter turned out to be a smashing model, whom we photographed in a bathing suit, wearing snow skis, atop a hastily blown pile of snow at the ice plant. As we got closer to November, our efforts at fleshing out the event began to gel. Yet to be seen was the first hint of the problems hiding just over the horizon. Our list of celebrity acceptances grew dramatically. Scandinavian Airlines agreed to fly over one of their executives, Leif Svendsen, a Norwegian championship Olympic skier. He would have the honor of inaugurating the Snow Show with the first run down the slide.

We received tremendous help from Joe Mickler, advertising manager of the Chamber of Commerce, and executive secretary of the Gasparilla Krewe, the group which stages our annual Gasparilla Invasion and Parade. Joe, an officer in the International Festival Managers Association, contacted friends and managed to land a galaxy of notable celebrities for us. Among them was St. Paul’s “Queen of the Snows,” Sally Shields … Becky Lane Cherry, Miss USA … Quebec's “Christmas Snowman”, Noel Moisson … and so on.

But Mickler’s biggest coup came with word that the Minnesota Centennial Commission and the Arrowhead Association, northeast Minnesota’s tourist promotion group, were going to send us the nation’s tallest Christmas tree. Their objective, in honor of Minnesota’s centennial, would be a one-hundred year old monarch reaching over one-hundred feet in height. This was a newsworthy achievement, considering that our tree would be much taller than the one usually sent to the White House. Hearing this, Tampa Electric Company volunteered to supply and decorate the tree with the ton of lights which it would require.

One of our biggest concerns was whether the public was going to be as smitten by the idea of the Snow Show as we had hoped. But people, unsolicited, began showing up at our doors offering help and support. Prime among these was Alex Hurd, who was working in a downtown men's store; he had been on the Canadian Olympic speed-skating team, winning the ten thousand meter race. Also adept at figure skating, he offered to give free demonstrations and instruction.

WFLA radio geared up to stage a contest around what they billed as “The World's Largest Ice Cube.” They were going to make an eight-foot high ice cube built with more than eight-and-a-half tons worth of three-hundred pound blocks of ice. The giant cube, to be in front of Maas Brothers, would be unveiled on the opening day of the Snow Show. People would enter their guesses as to how long it would take for the cube to melt … the grand prize was a family vacation in the Swiss Alps.

Another enthusiastic donor was a local doctor, Harry Raitano, who was known for his elaborate Christmas displays. He got so excited about the event that he ordered six penguins for us, paying for their Pan Am transportation as well as for the birds, their care and feeding.

As donations and interest continued to build, we kept on trying for more.
A few times, we got a little carried away. A case in point was the eyebrow-raising reception we got from the United States Navy when we tried to get them to send an ice breaker to Tampa. When they declined (thinking we were out of our minds, no doubt), we tried again, asking them to have the U.S.S. Nautilus, the first atomic submarine to operate under the polar ice cap, drop by. If anything, their reception was even cooler.

Although there were many things for which we did not have to spend money, there were some key necessities that required cash. One of the most expensive was signing up Jack Kelly’s Ice Frolics, a twenty-member troupe of skaters. Kelly was to supply his own ice rink which would occupy a prominent spot on Franklin Street. While we were scheduling the ice show for three performances daily, the rink would be available the rest of the time for anyone who wished to skate.

Tampa had a unique children’s zoo at Lowry Park. Since Mayor Nuccio was instrumental in its being, he directed his Superintendent of Parks, B. B. Bradley, to find ways of working with us. After several exploratory meetings with Bradley, we agreed upon a cooperative effort: Bradley wanted some Disney-like deer for Lowry Park, so we agreed to split the cost. The object was to use the deer as quasi “reindeer” during the Snow Show; afterwards, we would turn the deer over to Lowry Park as their new permanent home. So Bradley took off for Louisiana to purchase six fallow deer. Prior to that, Bradley had agreed to allow us the use of two of the zoo’s seals. A hardware store had already offered a large pool, so we decided to use it for the seals, banking it with snow for an Antarctic-like touch. The pool structure was low-profile enough that children could get quite close to the playful aquatic stars.

But one of the biggest attractions for the children was bound to be “Gee-Gee and her Alaskan Huskies.” We hired Gee-Gee Powell and her dog sled team to haul children up and down the snow-filled ski and toboggan run. Gee-Gee was a healthy Sonja Heine-type, wearing an Eskimo coat with a fur trimmed hood. Not exactly Florida-fare, but she agreed to wear it anyway.

Other out-of-pocket expenses began to mount: building Santa’s Workshop and Throne destined to command a place of honor next to the Christmas tree; hiring several Santa Clauses to rotate on the throne; construction of a bandstand, where Jack Golly’s band, The Showmen, would hold forth at show times and at the opening ceremonies.

In several instances, however, we found it hard to purchase winter goods because people were suspicious that they were being put-on. The people at Snocraft Toboggans in Saco, Maine, were leery enough of our unusual order that they called us back to verify that we really did want to buy four toboggans. Filling the order would be the first Florida sale in their company’s history.

Getting down to more nitty-gritty details, it was inevitable that we succumbed to naming all of Franklin Street’s cross-streets with names like North Pole Parkway, Snowdrift Lane, etc.

With no hint of the menacing problems gathering just over the horizon,
everything seemed to be shaping up better and easier than we had expected. Even though early public opinion was overwhelmingly enthusiastic, we still covered ourselves by commencing a heavy teaser campaign of radio and television spots and newspaper ads.

All across Tampa Bay, the Snow Show was becoming the main subject of conversation … elementary schools arranged bus schedules to make the run downtown so their students could romp in the snow … the Lions Club, Rotary, and other civic clubs signed up for toboggan race competitions … so did fraternities and sororities at the University of Tampa … and high school art classes registered to pit themselves against each other in snow sculpting contests. Everything was going exceedingly well. Maybe too well.

About this time, little things started going wrong. I believe an appropriate term from this point on would be that problems started to “snowball.”
WASN’T IT A LITTLE EARLY FOR THE FIRST FLURRIES?

When a friend once told W. C. Fields he was going to the forest on his vacation, Fields replied, “When you get there, kick a tree for me.” He hated trees. This was a view which was soon to gain some sympathy from me, the Public Works Department of Tampa, our mayor, innumerable timber companies, a consortium of railroad lines, Minnesota’s Arrowhead Association, the Minnesota Centennial Commission, and its honorary chairman, the Governor of Minnesota.

The frenetic history of our alleged Christmas tree made national news wires. All reports we saw were written with tongue-in-cheek, but none of them stayed with it long enough to cash in on the final blow. Put yourself in my uncomfortable shoes for a few minutes…

When the Minnesota organizations made their promise of supplying us with the nation’s largest Christmas tree, they had no way of envisioning the ordeal it was to become. They quickly discovered that it was almost impossible to find a logging outfit that would tackle the job. The year before, a company had felled an eighty-foot tree destined for the White House; as it crashed to the ground, the top broke off. The second tree felled turned out to have an internal insect infestation, precluding it from being shipped across the state line. At any rate, for one reason or another, it took a total of five tries to finally obtain an acceptable tree for the White House. Other logging companies, remembering this expensive fiasco, did not want to get involved with our hoped-for hundred foot monster.

But because it was Minnesota’s centennial year, its honor was at stake. So, with the Governor’s urging, a crew set out into the far reaches of the North Woods to find our tree. Once found, it wasn’t simply a matter of cutting the tree down: a haul-road had to be built through the forest. Finally finding our tree, they managed to bring it down without damage. A bulldozer carefully pulled it to the nearest railroad siding, where it was laboriously loaded onto two flatcars and lashed into place. The railroad routing would eventually use tracks of eight different rail systems before reaching Tampa. Handily, in Tampa, a railroad line crossed Franklin Street at the intersection where we wanted the tree.

There was press coverage galore as the tree embarked on its historic trek to Tampa. We sighed with relief when railroad authorities phoned to tell us that our prized tree was on its way. A couple of days later, our ebullience was dashed when we received a distressing report from a small local radio station in central Indiana. They advised us that the tree, going around a very sharp bend of track just outside their town, had broken in half!

Joe Mickler, who had made the arrangements for getting us the tree, immediately called his Minnesota association contacts. They pleaded with the Governor until he finally prevailed on the reluctant logging company to try once more.

They did so. In the meantime, however, the weather had changed and the hastily-built haul-road was now a quagmire. But, despite the difficult conditions, they set out to get us another tree. After again felling a huge hundred-footer successfully,
a bulldozer started to ease the tree out of the forest. That is until the dozer sank, irretrievably, in a sea of glutinous mud. According to a spokesman on the scene, only the top of a forlorn vertical exhaust pipe was visible above the viscous muck. They wouldn't be able to get equipment in to extract their dozer until next spring, much less get us our tree.

Hearing this, the Governor had had enough and backed off from giving further assistance or encouragement to the project. News reports didn't quote him, but I imagine he probably said, "To hell with it!"

Fortunately, however, we live in a democracy. The Mayor of Duluth, purportedly a hot political rival of the erstwhile governor, heard about our plight and saw a golden opportunity to zap his political adversary. In a show of bravado, the mayor found a suitable tree in suburban Fond du Lac. Under his direction, it was felled and shipped. Although it was not quite as tall as the first tree, it managed to make the trip unscathed, and we were suitably grateful and appreciative. We were naive enough to think that our troubles with the tree were over.

The afternoon the tree arrived in downtown Tampa, a host of news media were on hand to cover the event. Our utility company, Tampa Electric, had several of their largest cherry-pickers and cranes standing by to lift the tree out of the extended flatcar (using one long railroad car instead of two regular size cars had solved the breakage problem). Once the tree was raised, guy wires would hold it in place.

We watched the tree-raising operation in fascination as the cranes carefully inched it up to a fully vertical position; and then men in the cherry picker buckets affixed guy wires to its top. This was a rather dicey undertaking since strong, capricious winds tend to roar down the funnel created by buildings along Franklin Street. Despite staunchly secured guy wires, the tree threatened to fall over. With each blast of wind, it lurched and the bottom of the tree started squiggling around. We quickly realized that something needed to be done to stabilize its base, particularly when more than a ton of light-strings had yet to be added. The tree's lowest branches stood about six feet above street-level; under them, several men stalked around the trunk studying the situation.

Soon, one of the electric company engineers came up with a solution. But it was one which would require city approval. They wanted to cut out a circle of pavement, the diameter of the tree trunk base, and remove its sub-base roadbed to the depth of two feet. Once the tree's base was lowered and wedged into the custom-cut indentation, there would be enough holding power to keep the base firmly in place.

So, a delegation tromped off to City Hall to get Mayor Nuccio's permission. It didn't seem like too big a deal to the mayor, so he gave approval. In retrospect, he should have consulted one of his department heads, but I think the Snow Show Devil was working to preclude this.

As the tree was hoisted up and aside from its designated target spot, a City Works crew commenced chopping out the circle. When the hole was two feet deep, the cranes started moving the tree back into place directly above it. When everything
was perfectly aligned, the project boss waved a leather-gloved hand to the crane operators and the tree was lowered slowly until it touched bottom.

With the base firmly settled in its new niche, guy wires were re-tightened, and all seemed in good order. The project boss signaled the crane operators to release tension on the hoist cables holding the tree so that men in the cherry-pickers could loosen and remove them.

With the tension gone, all of a sudden there was a huge CRAAAC! WHOOSH! PLUNK! Gurgle, gurgle.

Because of the weight of our giant tree, its trunk had broken through the remaining roadbed and had shot straight through until it penetrated and broke open the main sewerage line serving downtown Tampa. A surge of disgusting goo oozed up from around the tree, gushing up and swirling over the tree’s lowest branches which now rested flat on the roadway; the trunk was no longer visible at all. Unaccountably (and I thought, undeservedly), people started giving me dirty looks as the odious, repugnant glop slurped relentlessly over gutters onto sidewalks.

The cursed Christmas tree. The tree is shown here still on its flatcar awaiting a crane to raise it into its final position in the intersection of Polk and Franklin Streets. The eighty foot monster would be a bane to Hilton’s existence during the Snow Show.
When I saw a reporter and a TV news team looking down aghast at their squishy, crud-encrusted shoes, I should have had an inkling of what kind of news coverage the Snow Show would receive from then on.

At this point, I should mention that those of us from our agency involved with the Snow Show wore identifying green-and-white Afrika Korps pith helmets. Because the show covered so much ground, we wanted to be easily recognizable and accessible if problems arose. Of course, if we'd only known the extent of the problems to come, we never would have wanted to be recognizable or accessible!

After several days of street repair, street and sidewalk cleaning, and tree “refreshing,” our tree was finally in place and decorated. I tried not to walk anywhere near the tree for the remainder of the Snow Show.

It was out to get me.

* * *

With the imminent arrival of our six penguins and six deer, we had built two quaint little enclosures, standing side-by-side. For all practical purposes, they were doomed to remain vacant.

We were looking forward particularly to the arrival of the penguins. It was with dismay that we listened to the heartfelt lamentations of Dr. Raitano, the man underwriting the generous gift, as he said, “I got the bird from Lima!” According to a cable from Pan American Airways, the penguins had left Buenos Aires on schedule. But authorities in Lima, Peru, one of the plane’s stops on the way to Miami, had forced the removal of the penguins from the plane. They were now held in indefinite quarantine because of a Parrot Fever threat. So we were left with an empty penguin pen.

As disappointed as we were at losing the penguins, we knew that we would have no problem with the six Bambi-like deer from Louisiana. The reason we knew this was because they had arrived a week early. The deer had been turned loose in the fenced-in expanses of Lowry Park, to be collected later, a day or two before the Snow Show was to start.

Early on Tuesday morning, the day before the show’s grand opening, several men from the Parks Department appeared in my office. They were grungy, unshaven, and unsmiling. It seems that the evening before, four of them, in two jeeps, had set out to round up our deer. They started while it was still light, but their intention of quickly corralling the deer proved difficult. The chase went on well into the night. Two deer, frightened silly by the jeeps’ headlights, ran into the park’s perimeter fence and were so badly hurt they had to be shot. A third deer, evidently frightened far worse than the other two, ran full blast into a tree, killing itself.

At this point, the appalled and saddened men, lovers of animals, called off the chase. As far as I know, the other three deer are still happily roaming the woods of Lowry Park. And we now had another empty animal enclosure on Franklin Street.
While all of this was going on, City Ice Company had been busy on Franklin Street, lining the bottom of the ski run trough with its ice-block base and blowing snow in on top of it until snow reached the chute’s height of four feet. The last thing for them to do would be icing down the slide.

Feeling somewhat out of sorts because of the unexpected glitches, I drove downtown mid-afternoon so I could make a last-minute inspection. I wanted to make damn sure everything else would be ready for the morrow, Wednesday morning. I would just have time to do this before going to the airport to pick up our Olympic skier, Lief Svendsen.

I started my inspection tour walking north from the south end. The seal pool was in place ready for the seals, and snow was already banked around it. Next, I chatted with Jack Kelly as his crew put the finishing touches on the skating rink and stage which stood about four-feet high. A little further up the street was the band stand, where Jack Golly was busy testing his band’s electronic equipment and speakers.

As I approached the ski slide, a City Ice crew was just beginning to blast snow on the five story slide’s chicken wire covering. And the block-and-a-half run was almost completely filled with snow. Already there was a huge crowd there just to watch what was happening. TV news crews were working with isolated groups of children, capturing them while they played in small piles of snow which City Ice crews had happily sprayed on the street for them.

At the end of the ski run, I cast a wary glance as I passed by our bedeviled Christmas tree. But, in all of its beautifully decorated eighty feet, it was magnificent.

Nearby, Santa’s throne, attractively centered in a cute little elf’s house, was ready for Santa and the children.

I gave the last block of the Snow Show’s five-block run scant attention. The forlorn, empty penguin and deer enclosures depressed me. But all in all, things seemed as if they would be as ready as we could hope for. So I turned around and headed back for my car.

Coming up on First Federal’s downtown office, their Time-and-Temperature sign caught my eye. It was 4:25 PM, time for me to head to the airport to pick up our star Norwegian skier.

Then I saw the temperature reading flick on the sign. It showed eighty-six degrees. Even though I’d been pretty oblivious of the weather with so much on my mind, I shook my head in disbelief. All I cared about was that the weather forecast called for clear skies, but this was ridiculous. I concluded that the darn sign must be broken … what the heck, it was November, and late in the afternoon at that. It couldn’t possibly be right.

It wasn’t until I was in my car on the way to the airport, listening to the radio, that it hit me.

The announcer’s syrupy voice masked a bombshell.
“…and all you folks on bright and sunny Tampa Bay, just wait ‘til you hear tomorrow’s sensational forecast. The ole’ mercury’s going to top out at an unseasonable, summer like eight-nine degrees! And, you know what, guys and gals? It could even be higher!” Gulp.

HUNKERING DOWN FOR THE APPROACHING STORM

Like Lindbergh’s mid-ocean thoughts, as he made the first-ever transatlantic flight, it was also our point-of no-return. We were committed. At ten o’clock the next morning, for better or worse, the Snow Show was going to happen. Realizing there was no turning back, I decided to forget possible further problems. So when I set out to pick up Svendsen at Tampa International Airport, I geared myself to be full of good cheer and warmth when I welcomed him.

This was before Tampa’s marvelous new airport terminal had been built. All the boarding and debarkation gates were outside. As I checked at the airline counter to see what gate his plane would be using, a ticket agent asked me if I was there to see the Olympic skier. After I nodded, she puzzled me by saying, “Just follow the crowd.”

Sure enough, the gate was inundated with people of every age, kiddies on fathers’ shoulders, and some people even wearing ski masks and snow caps. I don’t know how they found out when he was arriving, but their presence gave me quite a boost just when I needed it. If this was any indication, the Snow Show would attract substantial crowds. The surge of people was packed so tightly around the gate that TV film crews had trouble getting through. TV crews? How the hell did they find out about his arrival?

At any rate, when the last of the passengers streamed down the airliner’s mobile ramp, there were murmurings of disappointment when it appeared as if Svendsen had missed the flight. And then there was an audible gasp as the crowds saw our tall, blonde, handsome Norwegian skiing star appear at the top of the ramp with a pair of skis slung over his shoulder. I got another jolt of renewed confidence as I saw him smiling, signing autographs, and adroitly handling the admiring crowd.

I drove Leif down to the Thomas Jefferson Hotel, where he would be staying, courtesy of Jack Bradford, its manager. Leif smiled when we drove up in front: the exterior of the entire ground floor had been covered with an alpine-chalet façade; and the hotel sign had been changed to read “THOMAS JEFFERSON SKI LODGE”.

That evening, a gala reception and cocktail party was held at the hotel in honor of major Snow Show supporters and our distinguished guests. It was a welcome relief to see all our stars in attendance … St.Paul’s Queen of the Snows, Miss U.S.A., Quebec’s Christmas Snowman, and, of course, Leif Svendsen. And for some reason, Georgia’s “Peach Queen” showed up. Anyhow, nobody enjoyed themselves more than my mentor, Harold Wolf, and myself. It was a good thing. It was to be the last fun we’d have for quite a while.
After the reception, a pared-down group of twenty headed out to Leo’s Steak House. During dinner, I watched the clock pretty carefully because I wanted all our celebrities to get a good night’s rest before the next day’s hectic show-opening activities. About midnight, I pulled Leif aside, we made our exit, and we drove back to his hotel alone.

On the way back downtown, Leif asked if we could stop by the ski slide. He hadn’t seen it yet and wanted to get a better idea of what it was like. Although we had mailed construction progress photos to him at his office in Copenhagen, he had not seen it in its completed form.

I parked my car on a side street and we walked up to the looming structure. At night, in shadowed, near-deserted, formidable solitude, its looming five-story height seemed much taller. As we approached, we could hear, and then see, that a City Ice crew was busy applying another coating of snow to the slide. Leif watched silently for awhile, then walked up to the trough of the ski run and took a handful of shaved ice, peering at it studiously. He brushed his hands off and then slowly walked down the length of the four-hundred foot run, scanning it with a facial expression I couldn’t interpret. Finally, he walked back to the bottom of the slide and climbed about twenty feet up the stairs which paralleled the slide. Intently, he leaned over to study the slide’s surface. He dug his fingers down into the snow until the chicken-wire base which held it in place was visible.

After staring down and examining it for a few moments, he very carefully brushed snow back into the little gouge he had made. With a serious, thoughtful look on his face, he descended to street level and started to walk up to me. I dreaded to hear what he might think about the ski slide and ski run. I know what I was beginning to think: that it was a dumb, crazy, wild, crackbrained idea that should have never seen the light of day.

Leif held out his hand to me. The horrifying thought struck me that maybe he was going to say “Goodbye!” and head right back to Copenhagen.

His deadpan expression broke into a hearty grin as he pumped my hand. In his lilting Norwegian accent, he said, “It’s not a real ski yump, but it’s wuuunnerful!”

So I took Leif to the Jefferson “Ski Lodge,” hoping he would get a good night’s sleep. I could use one, too.

**THE HERALDED STORM ARRIVES**

This was the day!

If all went according to schedule, in a few minutes, at ten o’clock, Mayor Nuccio would be standing in the center of the pedestrian overpass which spanned over the ski and toboggan run. Beside him would be Sally Shields, lovely Queen of the Snows. At the signal of the band playing a specially-arranged Christmas musical fanfare, Nuccio would hand her the keys to the city, and with a wave of her bejeweled wand, she would signal the official opening of the Snow Show.
After a few welcoming comments from the mayor and the queen, another stirring fanfare would announce the arrival of Santa Claus. Gee-Gee, commanding her team of fifteen frisky huskies, would race down the snow run, and Santa would be her passenger on the dog sled, waving to his cheering fans.

And then the highlight of the festivities would be Leif Svendsen’s daring run down the daunting ski slide to the thunderous accolades of the huge crowd.

At any rate, this was the scenario I ran through as I waited for Leif to come down from his hotel suite. Things on Franklin Street were in good hands, with my production manager, Jim MacGregor, and several others from the agency on the scene. On my rounds before coming to the hotel, I had received several messages to get in touch with Jim as soon as possible; he’d been calling from a Franklin Street phone booth. Every time I had tried to call him at that number, the line was busy. And now, Jack Bradford, manager of the Jefferson, advised me that Jim had called saying it was urgent that I talk with him.

But, I knew I’d soon see Jim on Franklin Street somewhere. I was beginning to get nervous waiting for Leif, anxious to get going, when he strode out of the elevator, skis over his shoulder, handsomely attired in navy blue ski pants, ski boots, and a knit red-white-and-blue reindeer ski sweater. Just seeing his professional, confident demeanor made me feel better.

Since the hotel was only two blocks from the stretch on Franklin Street blocked off for the Snow Show, we decided to walk the short distance.

The first thing that struck us was the number of people milling about … far and away more people than we had imagined would turn out for the opening. A captain of police, spotting me in my identifying bright green Afrika Korps pith helmet, came up to me, scowling. I introduced him to Leif, and then asked if something was wrong.

So far, he complained, there were more than twenty thousand people on hand. He berated me for not giving them adequate warning about the number of people expected. As a result, he was having trouble finding enough officers to bring to the scene. In fact, we had alerted him to the possibility of a large crowd for that evening’s festivities; but we had also, in fact, underestimated the appeal of the daytime opening ceremony. So I offered as much of an apology as I could under the tumultuous circumstances, which he accepted.

Then, just as he started to stride away, he stopped and turned around. “I guess I should apologize, too, Mr. Hilton. I’m going to have to reprimand the officers who were supposed to be guarding your slide last night.” With that, he disappeared into the jostling crowd.

Leif and I stared at each other, wondering just what in hell all that was about! We steeled ourselves and elbowed our way forward to the base of the slide. And there was Jim MacGregor sadly shaking his pith-helmeted head. I grabbed his arm, searched his eyes for some clue, and asked, “What’s wrong?”

He didn’t say a word, just pointed up at the slide.
There was hardly any snow or ice on the slide! Most of what was visible was chicken wire. Then Jim pointed to one of our four toboggans. It lay flopped over disconsolately on the beat-up snow in the ski run.

I looked balefully at Leif, only to be greeted by another of his inscrutable looks and utter silence.

A policeman, standing next to Jim, spoke. “If it’s any solace, we’ve found the perpetrators.”

My God, I thought, the Snow Show is going to have perpetrators? My wonderful, idyllic, Peace-On-Earth, family holiday-festival is going to have PERPETRATORS?

After I simmered down, the policeman explained that six students from the University of Tampa had “borrowed” one of our toboggans. This happened around five in the morning. Despite warning signs on the slide stating that no one would be allowed on the slide without first signing a waiver form, they spent an hour or so making a half-dozen runs from the top of the slide. In the process, they managed to knock loose most of the snow on the slide we had so carefully prepared for our internationally famous skier. While alluding to the seriousness of the young people's
actions, the officer tried hard to mask a smile as he said, “I think they had a pretty good time.”

Tampa Federal’s carillon bells, a downtown institution, pealed out the news that it was ten o’clock. Quickly, Jim reassured me that everything was all set, everyone in place … the mayor, Queen of the Snows, Gee-Gee, and Santa Claus. All that was lacking was Leif Svendsen at the top of the ski slide.

I could hear Hank Allen, a close friend we had hired to be the Snow Show’s official announcer, patterning away over the loudspeaker system to fill time. For, nothing was going to happen until he received a go-ahead signal from me. Upon seeing that, he would introduce the mayor.

I looked at Leif and shrugged my shoulders. What should we do? It wasn’t just a matter of there being hardly any snow on the slide: the street-level length of the run was in rough condition. High temperatures, combined with the tromping around the young students had done, had turned the run’s surface into a rough, bumpy, hard, icy stretch. In fact, all of our “snow” was quickly becoming a mush that then quickly compacted into translucent ice.

Leif put a hand on my shoulder and told me that skiing down on the wire-covering would not be a problem for him. And he said he’d skied on ice before. I thought he was kidding. But he convinced me he was serious.

By this time, the crowd was getting restless. Many were from downtown offices; they had snuck away from work just long enough to see the opening ceremonies. But mostly, they had come to see the skier.

So, adding my moral support, I climbed the five-story length of stairs with Leif. I gave Hank Allen our prearranged signal to start, and the cacophonic, intermingling sounds of the band, Hank’s voice, the mayor, Sally Shields, barking huskies, more orchestral fanfares, and crowd noises swirled in my head as we trudged upward. I continued to be worried about whether to let Leif ski down the denuded ramp or not.

Once before, I had climbed to the top platform of the slide. It’s one thing to be standing on the fifth floor of a solidly-constructed building. It’s quite another to be atop an openwork structure made out of pipe-like scaffolding sections: its web-like appearance hardly assures one of stability. And today, the wind was very brisk, gusting to twenty miles an hour, making the structure (and me) shake timorously. I tried to don a brave façade for the hundreds of faces staring out at us from windows in the upper floors of nearby office buildings.

From our lofty perch, I looked down at the pedestrian overpass a block further up Franklin Street. Gee-Gee was just unloading Santa from the dog sled and Santa was hamming it up for the kids. I gave another signal to Hank, letting him know that Leif was, indeed, going to ski down the chicken-wire and snow-splotched slide. I glimpsed an ambulance parked at the corner of a side street; while I knew it was there to handle any problem with illness or accidents in the crowds, I was glad it was there in case Leif misjudged his ability to cope with our damaged-goods slide.
As Leif painstakingly strapped on his skis, a stirring, mother-of-all-fanfares quieted the growing audience. Leif smiled puckishly and suggested that he was taking much longer than usual to get prepared for the run, “To build suspense, ja?”

Hank Allen took the opportunity to enhance the crowd’s anxiety, citing facts and figures about the slide’s height, the speed Svendsen would attain on the way down, the problem with such a gusty day, and anything else he could think of to whet their appetite for disaster.

Finally, Leif stood erect, waved to the crowd below and grabbed his ski-poles. Hank put down the microphone, another fanfare sounded, and an expectant hush settled over Franklin Street.

Leif jabbed his ski-poles into the wooden platform and shot out into space, swooping down and landing on the sloping, barren, wire surface. He raced down the two-hundred foot slide to the excited screams of the crowd, hit the icy ski run at the bottom, careened unsteadily for a hundred feet or more, and then tumbled head-over-heels, skis and poles flying, to the horrified gasps of the onlookers. Despite the fact that First Federal’s Time-and-Temperature sign showed eighty-eight degrees, the sweltering crowd was frozen in shocked silence, waiting to see if Svendsen would move. He had slammed into a section of the retaining wall where it was exposed because of a low spot in the snow. Several people reached over the side of the chute to try to help him.

I bounded down the steps of the slide as fast as I could. Once down, I slipped and slid my way up the run to him. Slowly, he stood up, shook himself a little, and then gave the crowd a big smile and a wave with his ski poles. Before I could ask him how he was, he admonished me. “I wish you hadn’t done that, Howard.”

“What?”, fearful of his answer.

“You should have stayed up there. I’m going to try it again and do it right!”

And he did. Flawlessly.

If the cheers accompanying his first attempt had been loud, his second run prompted a truly deafening roar from the appreciative, sun-baked audience. We’d billed him as a “champion.” And he’d certainly proven that he deserved the title. As Leif gathered his equipment and started to return to his hotel (with a parade of admirers streaming behind him … mostly young women, of course), he asked me, “Can you get some more snow put on the slide before I do it again tonight?”

* * *

Despite the glitch with the snowless slide, opening ceremonies had gone very well. The crowd seemed happy and enthusiastic, and a large number of people stayed on to watch toboggan teams compete. We were a little apprehensive about the idea of letting the toboggans be used with no ice on the slide. But it seemed much safer than skiing down it. So we gave the first scheduled group of tobogganers, three teams from Theta Chi fraternity at the University of Tampa, the go-ahead.
The toboggan contests were not meant to be races against time; rather, the object was to see which team could make the longest run. The four-man crew of the first toboggan tipped its prow over the edge of the top platform and commenced to race down the slide. As they reached the bottom where it leveled out into the run, there was a drop in the height of the snow in the chute, since it was melting. They hit the depression and the speeding sled skittered and slued on the icy crust for several hundred feet, finally lurching over amid tumbling bodies.

We signaled for the second team at the top to wait while we checked for injuries. Seeing that all four riders were all right, we hunted down several workers from City Ice Company and had them shovel more snow into the abrupt depression, a little gully, at the bottom of the slide. Emmett Stewart, City Ice president, cornered me while his men smoothed out the trough's surface. "The wind's so strong and the temperature's so high that we're losing ice faster from melting and evaporation than we can replace it."

I was taken aback. I'd seen his blowers busy at the far end of the run and had assumed everything was as it should be. "What are you getting at?"

"I think you ought to forget about trying to ice-down the slide and just let us keep the trough filled up as best we can."

I had to think about that. Meanwhile, the crowd, as well as the waiting toboggan team, was anxious for things to get moving again. With the snow at the bottom of the slide repaired, we told the next toboggan team they could come ahead.

The second team, atop the platform, having seen how far the first group went, started their run with the assist of a large push from the last two men before they jumped on the moving sled. It tore down the slide at an alarming speed. When it hit the toboggan run, it became instantly evident that the workers had shoveled too much ice, building it up too high. The toboggan seemed to become airborne. It skittered sideways, crashing into the exposed wall of the chute. With a jarring thud, the four riders were thrown off the sled, over the wall, down into spectators, and onto the street.

The toboggan was a pitiful sight, splintered beyond repair. Miraculously, the four young men suffered only a few scrapes. Luckily, none of the spectators had been hurt. It frightened us enough that we called a temporary halt to any other activity on the slide. I hunted down Harold Wolf and several other members of the Snow Show Committee and they agreed with our thinking. We would use the time to properly build up the snow. There were plenty of other activities to occupy the crowds.

Besides, the biggest crowds wouldn't be arriving until early evening, when the mayor and Queen of the Snows were due to turn on our Christmas tree lights and the first Ice Frolics skating show would take place.

I hastened to the Thomas Jefferson Hotel and met with Leif, informing him that he had, indeed, more than fulfilled what we expected of him. We were not going to let him ski down the slide again. Even though he protested, I detected a stifled sigh of relief.
I spent most of the afternoon at our office, meeting with my partner, Bill Gray. I was glad to get away from the pressures downtown at the site of the Snow Show, knowing I would have my hands full that night. Bill, who had been very involved in the formation of Snow Show plans, was now spending much of his time holding down the fort with our other clients while I was charged with the show’s execution. His calm demeanor was a most welcome relief from the events of my calamitous morning.

Later in the afternoon, I stopped by my house to shower, change clothes, and have a quick snack before heading downtown. I was just in time to hear my children screaming that I was on the six o’clock TV news. On all three channels. Complete with tumbling skier, smashed toboggan, flying bodies, massive crowds, and lots of close-ups of dripping, melting ice and snow. The news people were having a ball.

Realizing how crowded downtown would be that night, I decided to bring my wife, Dottie, and our three young children with me, rather than have them drive down separately. Arriving there, the police were out in droves, and they had effectively sealed off the area around Franklin Street. As we approached the Thomas Jefferson, where I had a parking space reserved, we had to go through a police barricade. When I identified myself to the policeman, he had a short discussion with another officer standing beside him. Then he turned to me, raising a sympathetic eyebrow, “The captain’s been looking all over for you. You’d better find him, he’s hot!”

Dottie and I, with children in tow, inched our way through the crowds toward the slide which loomed ominously in the unforgiving glare of floodlights. The five-block stretch of Franklin Street was wall-to-wall with people, many more than had ever congregated downtown before. Despite the close quarters, people appeared to be in a gay, festive mood.

That did not include the captain. Spotting me, he took me by the elbow and ushered me under the framework of the slide’s scaffolding, probably the only spot of privacy in the entire downtown area. I was surprised to see Hank Allen following us; he was supposed to be at the microphone on the overpass. Hank shrugged his shoulders as I gave him an inquiring look.

“Look, you two,” the captain bore in on us, “we’ve got maybe fifty thousand people crammed in here already. Tonight’s show hasn’t even started yet, and we’ve made a half-dozen arrests of people throwing ice balls, not to mention several broken store windows. This thing can easily get out of control.”

He zeroed in on Hank, “You are going to have to stay calm and be very careful on the microphone … you’re our main hope of keeping things under control. With the heat and all the pressure of people being squashed together, they’re not going to stay in a good mood for very long.”

I turned to Hank, “Let’s try to get the official part of the program over as fast as possible.”

“What’s that entail?” the captain asked.

“Hank will introduce Nuccio … after that, Nuccio and the Snow Queen will
press a button and the Christmas tree will light up. Then Santa will come in again on the dog sled, just like this morning.” I turned back to Hank, “As soon as Santa arrives, introduce the Ice Frolics show.”

Hank studied his program schedule. “Hey! You’ve forgotten about the skier. That’s what most people are down here to see.”

“He’s not going to do it. It’s too dangerous.”

The captain added, “I agree. If you’ll look at the slide, you’ll see we’ve strung a rope across the bottom with a sign on it. We’ve officially shut the slide down … no more activity will be allowed on it tonight. If you’re able to get it iced up for tomorrow, it can be open for business again.”

Allen, a veteran in broadcasting, scowled. “How am I supposed to keep the crowd happy when they came here to see action on the slide?”

The captain countered, “There are plenty of other things to hold their attention.”

Hank scoffed, “Nonsense! Sure, they’ll enjoy the ice show, and there’ll be some interest in the tree-lighting and Santa Claus and dog sled rides. But the real interest is in seeing people risking their necks going down the slide.”

It was getting too close to the advertised start of the seven o’clock program for us to continue our discussion. The mayor and guest celebrities were gathered on the pedestrian overpass, and, for all intents and purposes, the crowd was as big as it was going to get. Too big. So I told Hank he was going to have to tell the crowd that there would be no skiing or tobogganing tonight.

I did this with some reservations, realizing that we had been running radio and TV spots all day long promoting tonight’s event, which included Svendsen skiing … and I was sure that the six o’clock newscasts must have created additional interest. But surely, if Hank explained to the crowd what the situation was, people would understand. After all, like the captain said, there were plenty of other things to keep people amused. Right?

* * *

Hank, plowing behind two policemen who were making a wedge through the crowd for him, finally got back to the overpass. At the appointed time, he introduced Jack Golly’s band, The Showmen, and four searchlights lit up the sky like a Hollywood extravaganza. When Golly’s “Winter Wonderland” overture was over, Hank zipped through the program as fast as practical. Celebrities were saluted, the Christmas tree lights were turned on, Santa and the sled dogs made their evening entrance, and Hank gave a showbiz build-up for Jack Kelly’s Ice Frolics.

Kelly’s twenty-skater troupe swirled out from behind the stage’s curtain, as The Showmen played the score of their forty-five minute performance. Twenty minutes into it, with almost the entire troupe on the ice, it happened. When the ice performance started, the crowd, already packed like sardines, pressed forward, trying to get closer to the skating rink’s platform. They pushed forward so hard that the
The front row of people was crushed up against the edge of the four-foot high stage. They were jammed in so tight that they couldn’t move.

This is one of the Chamber of Commerce-style photographs that the Snow Show organizers had hoped would come out of their winter carnival. These children playing in the “snow” had little idea, or little care, about the problems plaguing the event.
As skaters went into their exciting first-half finale, their sequined costumes and flashing skates twirled and spun in ever-increasing intensity. A skater near the edge of the stage, spinning in a dizzying kaleidoscope of sparkles, probably never saw the woman she hit. Just as the skater reached the height of her crescendo, a woman’s upper body was pushed forward, over the edge of the stage. The performer’s skate, like a scythe, slit the woman’s forehead. Amid shouts and screams, the skaters and music abruptly stopped. Within moments, the sound of wailing sirens echoed up and down Franklin Street. Ambulances inched forward through the crowds, flashing lights and blowing horns, blasting their way ahead. Paramedics were finally able to tend to the woman, aided by several doctors who happened to be in the audience. Quickly, she was rushed off to Tampa General Hospital.

At this juncture, the mood of the crowd was beginning to change. The upbeat, festive air had begun to disappear as people spoke in quiet voices. Initial word was received from Tampa General and Hank Allen immediately announced that the woman’s wound was not serious. The Ice Frolics, however, suspended the rest of their show for the evening, their performers—being too upset to continue. Understandably, they had no wish to continue with the audience actually brimming over onto the edges of their stage.

But Hank Allen was left with another unpleasant task. He had yet to announce that the slide would not be used tonight. We hoped for the crowd’s understanding.

The minute Hank announced that the slide was closed, a roar of disapproval rang out from the throngs. Boos, catcalls, and shouting turned Franklin Street into bedlam. The crowd started to get surly, demanding to see the action they had been promised. Responding to the uproar, Hank tried to placate the seething mass of people.

While I discussed the nasty turn of events with Harold Wolf and the police captain, Jack Golly’s band was stalling, playing every winter-oriented song you ever heard. Finally, I turned away from them and found Dottie, standing next to Jim MacGregor. I asked her for the keys to our car, which I had given to her thinking she and the children would be leaving for home earlier than I would.

“What are you going to do?” She was as nervous and upset with the tenor of the crowd as I was.

I explained that there was going to be big trouble if someone didn’t go down the slide. I didn’t go so far as to say “a riot,” but the possibility lurked in the back of my mind. Rather than waste time talking about it, I was going to do it. Despite the fact the police had closed it. Dottie was worried, but she knew I was hell-bent to do it.

I told Jim to tell Hank that there was going to be a toboggan run tonight, and for God’s sake, tell the crowd about it fast and cool ‘em down. I got the car and raced down to the estuary, a short drive away. In no time at all, I picked up three rather disreputable seamen along the docks. I offered them each five dollars to go down the slide with me on a toboggan. Based on the fumes coming from them, I thought they would be suitably relaxed.
When I got back to Franklin Street with them, I had two immediate problems. The first one was embodied in my friend, the police captain. He reiterated, forcefully, that the slide was closed, telling me that I could not go down. I knew there was no time to argue it out with him. “You know as well as I do why everybody is here.” I challenged him, “Are you prepared to handle this crowd if they don’t get their wish?”

He stared at me for a long moment. Then he walked over and untied the rope across the slide. Receiving his unstated approval, I signaled Hank Allen to announce the toboggan run. He did, and right behind that, Golly’s band played a fanfare. At this point it was already past nine o’clock, the scheduled closing time of Snow Show activities.

My second problem was more difficult. My three mercenaries had a sudden change of heart when they saw the five-story slide. It was not quite what they had imagined for a pleasant little sled ride. Since nothing was happening on the slide, the crowd started getting restless again as I argued and pleaded with them. Another futile fanfare sounded while I cajoled the sailors, increasing my offer to ten dollars each.

Looking up at the brooding structure, they still didn’t want to go up … much less, down. According to a *Tampa Tribune* article the next morning, no less than six fanfares were played before anything happened. At any rate, the crowd around us, hearing my pleading, started to taunt the reticent men. The threesome finally succumbed to this peer pressure and, pulling a toboggan behind us, we made our way up the steps of the ramp, buoyed by the cheers of the crowd.

Reaching the top, it seemed much higher to me than it had in daylight. We steeled our nerves and lowered ourselves onto the toboggan, with me in front and the men behind clutching each other for dear life. A final fanfare blared out and we shot down the slide. All I remember now is a visual blur and that it went very quickly. We made a good, straight run without tipping over or hitting anything. I was left, however, with a reminder of the experience for several weeks. In holding the side ropes which ran along the edge of the toboggan, my knuckles were scrapped raw by the chicken wire covering the slide.

Even after the run, the crowd tended to linger. The same *Tampa Tribune* article reported the situation accurately: “By 10 P.M., Master of Ceremonies Henry Allen was pleading with people to ‘Go home!’ By that hour, the workmen wanted to come in and start laying down more snow on the ski-run, but were unable to because the crowds remained.”

But we’d survived opening day.

**ANOTHER DEVASTATING FRONT BLASTS THROUGH**

Although I was exhausted, sleep was hard to come by. The eleven o’clock nightly news had treated the show very harshly, showing ambulances with sirens screaming, close-ups of the woman’s bloody forehead, pictures of policemen ushering away youthful offenders who’d been arrested for throwing ice balls, smashed store windows, and so on. It was one of those nights when you are glad it ends.
The next morning’s Tribune articles were much kinder to us. So it was with a small measure of precautionary optimism that I drove downtown. And I felt much better when I saw that Emmett Stewart’s men had, indeed, re-iced the slide. It looked like we had wanted it to look for the opening day. At least something was going right.

So the officials, seeing that the slide and run had been refurbished with fresh snow, gave us the go-ahead to resume tobogganing. The first group scheduled for Thursday morning came from Tampa Business College. For the second day, a large crowd was downtown.

Hank Allen, at the microphone once again, announced the name of the group on the toboggan and told them to make their run. The first toboggan, with four young men aboard, sped down the ramp. Reaching the run, it promptly flipped over and spewed the riders into the side of the plywood retaining walls.

It turned out that they weren’t hurt, but I’d had enough. I charged off to Wolf Brothers Men’s Store to find Harold Wolf. It didn’t take much convincing for him to agree to closing the slide again while we re-thought the entire situation. Maybe we could build some sort of channel in the chute to keep the toboggans from straying.

As I strode purposefully back to close the slide, I heard the crowd roaring as another toboggan made a run. An ominous silence followed the roaring … and then a thousand gasps swelled the air. I was too late. This time there were serious injuries.

Four Business College students, two young women and two young men, hit the bottom of the slide with a jarring thump. The toboggan went out of control, flipping and smashing into the side walls. It was immediately obvious that the two women were hurt.

Once again, the sound of ambulance sirens echoed down Franklin Street. A paramedic, with no doctor immediately available, confirmed that one woman had a possible broken back and the other had a possible concussion. The youngster with the back injury was kept flat on the toboggan and loaded into an ambulance, while her friend was helped into another ambulance.

My first concern was the well-being of the injured women. But I also dreaded what the news media were going to do with this new happening. I thanked heaven for our million-dollar Lloyds of London insurance policy.

News travels fast, and it took very little time for State Attorney Red McEwen and Justice of the Peace W. Marion Hendry to arrive at the scene of the accident. Harold Wolf, several other Snow Show Committee members, and I had no quarrel with their decision: The slide would be closed, permanently. Within a half-hour, a carpenter had nailed a wooden barricade across the slide, and a sign painter from Maas Brothers Department Store was enlisted to make signs so stating.

As if the tragic accident wasn’t enough of a worry, the temperature hit a record high for the day and our snow trough was becoming icy mush once again. It was so slippery that Gee-Gee and her huskies had a difficult time hauling children up and down the run.
And, of course, the melting snow made for great ice balls and temptation. That night, a racial situation developed between two groups of boys; it got out of hand before anyone could stop it. Before order was restored, the result was a number of broken store windows, with goods inside the stores being damaged by the messy ice balls.

I’m sure the television stations’ news departments thought the Snow Show was the greatest thing to come along in ages. Just think what it was doing for ratings and excitement.

SNOW GETS MESSIER THE LONGER IT HANGS AROUND

I was so punchy by this time, that the problems for the remainder of the show seemed ludicrous in comparison to slit foreheads, broken backs, brain concussions, and mini racial disturbances. You’ll notice that our fabled Christmas tree saga or the “case of the missing wildlife” are hardly worth mentioning at this point.

I didn’t know it before, but one gains a sixth-sense about trouble. I knew something else of note was going to happen when I noticed that the television news teams, who were seemingly making a career of following me around, suddenly departed for City Hall. As one of the cameramen rushed away, he told me there was some kind of demonstration taking place.

Sure enough, fifteen minutes later, there came Mayor Nuccio, little black hat perched atop his cigar-smoking visage, charging up Franklin Street from City Hall. He was being followed by a phalanx of about thirty women, most taller than he was, marching behind him in military precision. A sign of the times was the fact that many of the women were wearing white gloves and hats.

We were soon to find out what it was all about. By now, after so much painful TV and newspaper exposure, my face was known. And I was now the recipient of a fusillade of dirty looks from a glaring delegation of women from the ASPCA. How could we have done something to offend the local chapter of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals? Heck, we had no penguins, no deer … what could the ASPCA possibly want with us now?

Spooked by previous visits from them, we followed warily as the grim-faced, righteous delegation led our mayor to the seal tank. It seems that with all the activity and troubles, we had been neglecting one of the Snow Show’s attractions that the children loved most: the seals we had borrowed from Lowry Park Zoo. Admittedly, we had been negligent about keeping snow piled up around the pool to keep the water cool. But that wasn’t the problem. The pool was simply too shallow and portions of the seals’ backs were exposed to the sun. Unfortunately, they now had the biggest sun-blisters you’ve ever seen, resembling grapefruit halves. I felt awfully bad that we hadn’t noticed them. So, we got a bigger pool, hired a veterinarian to treat the seals, and, for the rest of the show, kept very close watch that the tank was filled with water and banked with snow.
The zoo, however, was not entirely unhappy. After all, their charges made the nightly TV news when, once again, the media jumped allover us.

Of all the problems we had, I didn’t expect that Santa Claus would be one. He wasn’t one. He was two. One morning, I got a phone call from my ex-boss, Ray Hough, vice president and sales promotion manager of Maas Brothers. Ray was steaming and asked that I come to his office at my first opportunity. It occurred to me that maybe I’d left some sort of problem behind when I left Maas as advertising director four months previously.

But no, it was the Snow Show again. It seems that one of our Santa Clauses was the problem. According to Ray, when little children sat on his lap and listed their wishes for Christmas, Santa was saying, “Of course! Pick out your gifts at Maas Brothers, that’s what you’ll get!”

I thought it was kind of funny. But Ray explained that I was missing the point. While the children were ecstatic, their irate mothers were beating Ray’s door down, complaining. The women had worked up monumental snits because, when they told their children the gifts would not be forthcoming, the children went into

City Ice Company crews worked night and day to keep pace with the melting ice, a result of the unseasonably warm weather experienced during the Snow Show. City Ice ended up using 3 million pounds of ice during the week long event.
orbit, crying, and carrying on. As one enraged mother said, “I have no intention of giving Herbie an electric train, bicycle, hunting rifle, motor scooter, and a year’s supply of comic books!” Furthermore, as unfair as it was, the mothers were holding Maas Brothers at fault.

So, I charged down to Santa’s throne and listened for a bit. Ray was right. Santa was giving the store away, being the nicest Santa that there ever was. I dethroned him as quickly and politely as possible and found a bit of privacy for us. And it became immediately apparent that he had a snootful. While making for a very authentic looking Santa, his rosy cheeks and nose were the result of nipping all day long. It was then I discovered his inventive method of accomplishing surreptitious boozing while ensconced on Santa’s throne. He had a flask stashed in his inside shirt pocket. And he had a straw, hidden in his phony beard, stuck into the flask. Sip, sip!

Egads. What next?

* * *

Crowds at the Snow Show were leveling off from the heady heights of opening day, so it wasn’t really a problem when we fired our tipsy Santa. We still had one more. That is, we had one until several days later. Joe Lima, owner of Clark’s Credit Clothiers, was kind enough to allow us to use a dressing room in his store for our Santas to change into their costumes. This particular morning, uncharacteristically strident, Joe called to say I should meet him at his store, adding that the police were already there.

If I thought the other Santa was inventive, this one was several grades ahead. Santa Number Two, supposedly changing clothes after work the previous evening, had stayed, hidden in the dressing room, until after the store was closed for the night. Then, sometime during the night, he brought out tools he had secreted and set to work.

Clark’s was next door to Hayman’s Jewelry Store. Santa had evidently been “casing the joint” and broke through the wall separating the two establishments, leaving a Santa-size hole. The jewelry store was all but cleaned out. I’m sure someone on that Santa’s list had a very merry Christmas, indeed.

* * *

A considerate man, hearing our plight when we were unable to round up our deer for the show, decided to help us in our hour of need. He called to tell me that he was the owner of an authentic Kiska deer … a real, honest-to-gosh Alaskan deer. He allowed that he would be glad to let us borrow it for the remainder of the Snow Show. With so many negative things having happened, we viewed this as a good omen.

So I accepted his offer and called to see if the people at the Parks Department, who run the zoo, would pick it up and deliver it to our empty pen on Franklin Street. They were glad to oblige since it was really their fault that we were without the deer we had paid for.
Later in the day, one of the parks people called. “Are you sure you want this deer?”

“Of course. Why wouldn’t I?”

He stammered for a moment. “Well … it’s different.”

“That’s because it’s from Alaska. It’s not like the deer we’re used to seeing.”

And I added, “Take it downtown and make sure there is plenty of water and feed in the pen.”

“Okay, if you say so.”

I thought I would go look at it the next day. But I wasn’t allowed that privilege. The phone rang and it was my nemesis, the ASPCA again. I couldn’t believe it.

“What’s wrong now?”

“If you don’t do something about that pathetic deer on Franklin Street, we’re going to have you cited for animal abuse. This time you won’t escape!”

“What’s wrong with it?”

“Go see for yourself!”, and with that, she hung up.

So I did. It was the worst looking animal I had ever seen in my life. I’m not sure exactly what mange looks like, but there were huge splotches of ugly, bare skin that resembled a major case of Scarlet Fever. What little fur the poor creature had was moth-eaten and mousy looking. In fact, several clumps of fur fell out while we looked at it.

Before I had left the office, I asked my secretary to call the deer’s owner to meet me downtown. Now, while I stood there looking at the appalling animal, the owner arrived. Like the ASPCA, I felt compelled to ask the man to explain himself about such brutal behavior to a dumb animal.

He was offended. “Hell, Barnaby is just molting. The Florida weather has his system all screwed up … he thinks it’s spring.”

“How in the world did you get the deer back to Tampa?” I was incredulous.

He reached into the pen and stroked the deer’s twitching, runny nose. “I was in Alaska on a huntin’ trip … had my telescopic sight all set on him. And then I saw those beautiful brown eyes starin’ at me. It was love at first sight.”

“How in the world did you get the deer back to Tampa?”

“In my camper. I made my wife take a plane home.”

Despite the explanation, we had Barnaby removed before any unfortunate, sensitive child could see it. Barnaby was nightmare material.

* * *

Late at the office one afternoon, I received a call from a police sergeant. He said there was a situation he’d like to discuss with me. I was so numb by this time that it didn’t faze me. So, resigned to the inevitable, I said, “Fine … when and where?” He asked me to meet him downtown in front of Maas Brothers at ten o’clock that night. As I drove downtown, I wondered what was up. The Snow Show had stopped for the
night at nine o’clock. Now, there was hardly any traffic and barely a soul in sight. So I was really curious to learn the purpose of the meeting.

The sergeant explained that they had been monitoring some questionable activity the past few nights.

Intrigued, I asked, “What kind of activity?”

He gave me an uncomfortable look. “We think one of the performers is … uh, moonlighting.” He motioned for me to follow him. He stopped short at the second cross-street and sneaked up close to the wall of the building on the corner. Carefully, he peeked around it.

He turned to me and whispered, “Come look.”
I took his place and looked around the corner. Just a short distance from where I stood on Franklin Street, several trailers were parked on the side street. I knew they were there for skaters and other performers to use as portable dressing rooms.

A light was shining through a curtained window in one of the trailers. And there was a cluster of smiling, joking men waiting outside its door. I peered again more closely. They looked like some of the men I had seen down by the docks on opening night!

I turned back to the sergeant. “You mean? … You think?”

“One of your starlets seems to have a business of her own.”

Once more, I couldn’t help but reflect about what was happening to my nice, wholesome, family-oriented festival. Shaking my head sadly, I told him, “Well, we can’t have that going on. Do your thing.”

The good news was that no media people were in sight. I could just envision the next TV newscast: “…and tonight, our news-team discovered that the embattled Snow Show was harboring yet another scandalous situation … a bordello, operating right in the heart of downtown Tampa!”

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One of the more interesting law suits (you must have gathered by this time that we were amassing them at a record rate) arose from a nasty practical joke. We weren’t responsible for it, but we got blamed for it just the same.

When Radio Station WFLA built “The World’s Largest Ice Cube,” their contest was centered on people’s guesses as to how long it would take for the cube to melt. With record high temperatures, it was melting pretty fast. But some wag(s) decided to help it along. Maybe they were just trying to help their entry win the contest and the Swiss Alpine vacation.

At any rate, one night somebody sprinkled rock salt over the entire eight-foot tall cube. Within two days, it had, indeed, started to melt at an accelerated pace. Unfortunately, it was not melting uniformly. It began to look like an upside-down pyramid. The top remained large while the base got smaller and smaller. In fact was becoming progressively teetery.

Officials of the radio station, seeing what was happening, did two things. First, they announced that people could enter new guesses, since the salting-down was ruining previous estimates. Secondly, they built a two-foot high fence around it. Other jokesters had knocked small chunks out of it, and they wanted to preclude this from happening again.

On the next-to-last day of the Snow Show, a mother and her five year-old daughter were standing beside the cube, studying it to make their guess. Suddenly, the entire cube fell over on the little girl and pinned her to the sidewalk. The cube was located just even with where one of the ambulances was parked across the street. This time, there were no sirens or flashing lights or TV cameramen.
Paramedics quickly jumped out and pulled the girl from under the massive block of ice. No enduring harm had been done, but she was a mighty frightened youngster.

Only one more day to go…

* * *

Nobody likes phone calls at three in the morning. My wife, truly concerned about all the pressures on me, answered the phone. It was for me, but she made an attempt to find out what the call was about. I had had a lot of crank calls, including threats of bodily harm, and she thought that maybe this was one.

But the caller was persistent, claiming he was from the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. When she told me this, I wondered if it had anything to do with the jinxed tree that they had brought to Tampa. Fearing God-knows-what, I took the call.

“Mr. Hilton … are you the ‘Snow Show’ Hilton?”

Reluctantly, I admitted I was. He said, “I’m a supervisor on the ACL. We had a freight train comin’ through town this mornin’ and we just had an accident that involves you.” My stomach muscles started tightening in a vicious grip.

“An accident?”

“One of the brakemen was standing on top of a freight car, when it crossed Franklin, as it was going down the Polk Street tracks.” That was the rail route on which the Christmas tree had been brought in … tracks run right down the center of Polk Street.

He continued, “You know your loudspeaker wires?” Sure I did; we had loudspeakers mounted on streetlights down the whole five-block stretch of Franklin Street … speaker cables connecting them ran the entire length.

“Well,” he said, “when the train passed through the Franklin Street intersection, a speaker cable strung across the street hit the brakeman in the neck and knocked him off onto the street.”

I really didn’t want to hear what he might say next. It had to be a fatal accident. My God, the roof of a freight car is fourteen or fifteen feet in the air … and I wondered how fast the train was going when it happened. I was stunned.

“Mr. Hilton, are you there?” Hesitantly, I told him I had heard him.

“Well, the man is all right, not hurt a bit. But we would sure appreciate it if you would raise those speaker cables another couple of feet before something bad happens.”

Dottie studied me as I hung up. “For a minute, you looked like somebody might have died.”

I sighed and nodded. “Yeah. Me.”

CLEARING UP AFTER THE STORM

At one point during the middle of the Snow Show, my wife and I ventured out
into the social world. Most of the time, when not at work, I had been prone to “hole up,” conserving energy and sanity in the welcome refuge of home and family.

However, this particular night we went to the country club for dinner with another couple. While sitting in the cocktail lounge, two other couples came up to us. One of the women asked me what all the hay was for along the length of the toboggan run. With the accidents we had experienced, we decided to pad the sides of the run with hay so that children wouldn’t get hurt if they should falloff Gee-Gee’s dog sled.

Before I could impart this information, the other woman quipped, “The hay’s to feed the asses that thought up the Snow Show.”

The event had been so dominant in the news that everyone had an opinion about it; there were no middle-of-the-readers. When it was over, the Tampa Tribune did a round-up of public opinion. In Sunday’s paper, they published a large spread of letters on the subject, entitling the page, “The Aftermath of the Snow Show.” Since I had always associated “aftermath” with hurricanes, earthquakes, and bombing raids, this struck me as a bit of editorializing by the Tribune. Nevertheless, most of the letters were positive, approving of our effort and backing the attempt of doing something to rejuvenate downtown.

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Using the Tribune’s term, the “aftermath” found Emmett Stewart and City Ice Company going out of business. While he had this intention before, the fact that we used three times as much ice as he had originally estimated probably sped up the process. In talking to Emmett later, he was happy even though he had lost money … he’d had a blast. So much so that he asked us to write up the show, and his part in it, and send it to Refrigeration magazine, an ice industry trade journal. I’m sure he was pleased with the front-page coverage of his three million pounds of ice extravaganza.

***

As the months went by, the log jam of lawsuits and insurance claims were either settled out of court or dismissed, with the exception of the young woman who had hurt her back on the toboggan. Almost two years after the accident, a date was finally set for the trial. Depositions were taken and attorneys for both sides were prepared for the trial which was scheduled to begin on a Monday. At the depositions, we had a chance to meet the plaintiff and express our regret that she’d been hurt. Her attorney, eschewing a settlement, was being hard-nosed, asking for a large award because of the extent to which the accident had supposedly impaired his client’s mobility and life-style. After all, she was still on crutches, wasn’t she?

Saturday night before the Monday trial, our attorney, Terry McNab, was cavorting at a local discotheque. While gyrating on the dance floor, guess who he bumped into? The young woman, of course, who had just proven herself to be quite
an athletic dancer. She quickly agreed that maybe a much-reduced out-of-court settlement would be in order.

The economic impact of the Snow Show was evident in increased pre-Christmas sales for Tampa’s downtown merchants. But, the greatest benefit was probably the fact that the concept of a downtown mall was proven valid. It took many years, but today, downtown Tampa has a handsome terraced mall on Franklin Street. When one visits it at noontime, it is vibrant, packed with strolling, chatting people from the many new high-rise office buildings downtown. And what had been a riverfront freight yard now hosts a library, hotel, convention center, art museum, bank buildings, and gardens.

For the city at large, the show was a publicity bonanza. In-depth coverage appeared in such diverse media as The New York Times, Women’s Wear Daily, and BBC Television Worldwide Film Reports. Probably the most talked about, however, was a series of television commercials sponsored by a cigarette company. L & M cigarettes had a popular campaign based on a reverse-twist theme of “They Said It Couldn’t Be Done.” For months on end, they ran a commercial where, while showing film footage of Leif Svendsen skiing down our Snow Show slide, the narrator chided, “Snow skiing in Tampa, Florida? They said it couldn’t be done!”

Why, of course, it could.

* * *

The spill-off on our agency from involvement in the show was considerable. We became well-known very fast. It wasn’t quite in the way that we had hoped for, but our young agency had gained recognition as well as a solid niche in the local advertising community.

When all was said and done, and I was trying to forget about the show and its problems, I received a letter from Leif Svendsen.

The last paragraph read, “In the event you are going to arrange for another snow carnival next year, it might be a good idea to make a jumping-hill and I would be glad to contact a couple of my friends who are among the top ski jumpers in the country. If this is of interest to you, please let me know so I can be making plans.”

It was one letter I never answered.
David Colburn, one of Florida’s most prolific and significant historians, has added to his already impressive list of books and articles about Florida’s history and politics. His most recent book, *From Yellow Dog Democrats to Red State Republicans*, is an impressive piece of scholarship that blends history, politics, and demographics in an effort to explain partisan transformation in Florida since 1940.

Colburn’s chronological history of Florida’s politics argues that the state gradually abandoned its southern “racist traditions” in moving from a one-party Democratic state to the one currently dominated by the Republican Party. Colburn’s effort is extraordinarily evenhanded, pointing out partisan strengths as well as warts and blemishes.

In his introduction and opening chapter, Colburn paints the portrait of demographic change that has so influenced its politics. Florida went from being the least-populated southern state in 1950 to the fourth-largest in 2000, with its Hispanic population rising from 1 percent in 1945 to 19.6 percent in 2005; with its senior population rising from 6.9 percent in 1945 to 21.8 percent in 2005; and with a population that grew by 13 million between 1950 and 2000. No other state has experienced such profound demographic change. That massive population boom resulted in Florida having only a third of its residents being born in the state, with almost 50 percent coming from other states and 18 percent being foreign-born. This has caused citizens to feel disconnected from the pressing political issues facing Florida. This lack of community leads to political isolation among the state’s voters and creates a burden for its politicians who must appeal to a continually changing electorate.

Colburn traces political change mostly by focusing on gubernatorial elections from the 1950s to 2006. Greater attention to U.S. Senate and House elections, state cabinet races, and state legislative races would have provided a broader understanding of how partisan change took place in the Sunshine State. There is no reference to “presidential Republicanism” in Florida, the process by which the Republicans began making inroads in elections first at the presidential level, then congressional, followed by state-level races and finally at the local level.

Colburn does an excellent job summarizing over a half century of Florida’s...
political history, talking about the key races, personalities, and issues. Race and reapportionment receive special attention. As the national Democratic Party became more supportive of civil rights for African Americans, many white southerners abandoned the party and fled to the Republicans. Colburn points out correctly that race alone was not the overriding reason for partisan change. Florida’s court-ordered reapportionment in the 1960s in Swann v. Adams opened up underrepresented urban areas in Florida, a key factor in the emergence of the Republican Party. I would differ with Colburn’s interpretation of the impact of reapportionment in 1992. Colburn, like others, argues that the reapportionment led to huge Republican gains. That is true, but it ignores the fact that Democrats were still in full control of the Florida legislature and the reapportionment process. Because of recent federal court decisions, Florida was under order to create as many “majority-minority districts” as possible. When Florida’s African Americans—12 percent of the state’s population but 25 percent of the Democratic vote—asked for more seats in the state legislature and congressional delegation, the Florida Democratic Party leadership said no. Realizing that the creation of black districts would “bleach” surrounding districts and make them more likely to elect Republicans, the Democratic leadership asked blacks to trust white Democrats to represent their interests. Having been denied a seat in Congress for over a century, blacks joined forces with Republicans. The three blacks elected to Congress from Florida in 1992 were the first since Reconstruction, and Republicans took over control of the congressional delegation.

There are a few other points that need clarification or correction in the book. Colburn constantly refers to “Crackers,” “Yellow Dogs,” and “native and rural Floridians,” but never differentiates those groups. The most glaring factual error occurs on page 192: In discussing the disputed 2000 presidential election and the contested overseas military vote, Colburn talks about the ongoing war in Iraq and Afghanistan as a reason to have counted military votes. Those wars had yet to begin.

Overall, this is an impressive addition to the literature on Florida’s history and politics, and anyone interested in learning more about Florida’s past or future political history would be hard-pressed to find a better starting point than David Colburn’s From Yellow Dog Democrats to Red State Republicans.

Darryl Paulson
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Scholars have been working through New Deal history for about seventy years now. Nevertheless, they know surprisingly little about the impact of New Deal policies and agencies in Florida. This edited collection of essays aims to remedy that lack by exploring the ways in which New Deal building, design, and community development programs helped to transform South Florida in the 1930s. Miami, especially, benefitted from an enormous federal investment in basic infrastructure. Construction of a well-planned public housing project brought modern living to hundreds of African American families, but it also initiated major changes in Miami's racial space. Young men working for the Civilian Conservation Corps built numerous distinctive parks that showcased the tropical environment. Distinctive architecture, colorful public art, and dramatic documentary photography reflected modernist design influences and shaped Miami's and South Florida's popular image.

The book's opening essay, an overview by coeditors John Stack and John Stuart, emphasizes the way New Deal projects merged physical and cultural goals and paved the way for South Florida's eventual emergence as a dominant Sunbelt region. Stack and Stuart build on the insights of the historian Jason Scott Smith, whose Building New Deal Liberalism (2006) makes a convincing case that New Deal public works programs emerged as powerful method for state-sponsored economic development. South Florida suffered during the Depression years, but the implementation of federal public works and other programs ultimately brought recovery and expansion of the regional economy. John Stuart's essay on construction and public works documents the vastness and variety of New Deal building projects in South Florida, including schools, parks, highways, public buildings, community centers, the Orange Bowl, and work on hospitals, airports, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the Overseas Highway linking Miami and Key West. Public buildings, especially, Stuart writes, had modernist architecture (such as art deco buildings in Miami Beach) or distinctive design using local materials, contributing to an emerging sense of community identity.

Two essays focus on documentary photography and public art in South Florida. Mary N. Woods's essay discusses Marion Post Wolcott's Farm Security Administration photographs of Depression-era people and New Deal public works projects in South Florida, both rural and urban. She argues that Wolcott's photos of Miami, Miami Beach, and Palm Beach helped to construct “a new urban identity” for South Florida—an identity invested with modernity that increasingly helped to burnish the tourist industry in the area. Also dealing with New Deal support of the arts, Marianne Lamonaca writes about the dramatic post office murals in Miami, Miami Beach, Palm Beach, and West Palm Beach. After explaining the process of selecting artists
and subject matter, Lamonaca describes four murals portraying historical episodes or landscapes from Florida’s past: Spanish conquistadors, Seminole Indians, Palm Beach County’s “barefoot mailman,” and a collage of images depicting the growth of a South Florida tropical paradise. The New Deal’s post office mural program, Lamonaca suggests, celebrated regional culture but also linked local people to their government.

Two final essays return to the subject of public works and public housing. Ted Baker details the work accomplished in South Florida by one of the New Deal’s most popular agencies, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). President Roosevelt had a great interest in conservation and the preservation of natural landscapes. Beginning in 1933, CCC volunteers advanced Roosevelt’s agenda, building numerous county and state parks in South Florida, including such popular sites as Matheson Hammock State Park and Fairchild Tropical Garden. They also worked on landscaping the Overseas Highway to Key West. Finally, Stuart’s second contribution relates the complex history of Liberty Square, Miami’s first public housing project for African Americans. Controversial from the beginning, Liberty Square was supported by white and black civic leaders, but for different reasons. Blacks wanted better housing opportunities than those in the Overtown ghetto, while white leaders expressed concerns about the possibility of contagious diseases in older slum areas spilling over into white neighborhoods. White land speculators and developers saw opportunities in the mostly empty space around the new housing project some five miles northwest of downtown Miami, or hoped to push blacks out of Overtown to make way for expansion of the downtown business district. Whites living near the Liberty Square site protested changing racial boundaries, but the project was built anyway, eventually becoming the nucleus of a new “second ghetto” in northwest Dade County.

This book is not a comprehensive history of the New Deal in Florida or South Florida, although such a study surely is needed. Each of the essays is interesting and competently written, and each makes an important contribution, but the links among them are not fully fleshed out. Nevertheless, the book’s six authors, including the editors, have made a fascinating initial foray into South Florida’s New Deal history, paving the way for the more detailed studies that are sure to follow.

Raymond A. Mohl
University of Alabama at Birmingham

All scholars interested in Florida history owe Consuelo Stebbins gratitude for uncovering, translating, and discussing the correspondence to the Spanish Ministry of Ultramar (Overseas Ministry) from a series of Spanish consuls who were stationed in Key West from the 1820s through the 1890s. Stebbins’s volume divides the material into several chapters based upon the focus of the consuls’ letters and provides a glimpse of Key West through the consuls’ eyes. These themes include the wrecking and fishing industries in the city, Key West as a port, the 1886 fire that destroyed many homes and businesses, the city’s cigar industry, and the revolutionary clubs in the community that backed the Cuban drive for independence from Spain.

City of Intrigue is an apt title for this work. Any reader expecting a picture of a relaxed, live-and-let-live Margaritaville will be sorely disappointed. By the 1870s, the cigar industry dominated the city’s economy. Cuban immigrants arriving in Key West worked predominantly in that industry and surpassed the city’s large Bahamian community by the mid-1880s. This immigration led to Key West becoming Florida’s largest city by 1880; it remained the largest in 1890. The Spanish consuls in Key West paid detailed attention to the Cubans in the Island City, most of whom strongly supported Cuban independence from Spain.

Key West during the later nineteenth century—the period that is primarily discussed in this book—was a place of intense community strife. Strikes in the cigar factories were common. Cubans were often at odds with Spaniards, sometimes due to competing perspectives on independence and sometimes because of job competition within Key West’s cigar industry. Although race relations were generally better in Key West than in most southern communities, racial conflict also surfaced.

Much material in this book will be fascinating to those interested in Tampa’s history because the history of Key West and Tampa were interwoven in a variety of ways. The most obvious example is the decision by Ybor to move his factory to Tampa and then close his Key West facility. Stebbins also discusses the several occasions where workers left Key West to relocate to Tampa during cigar strikes in Key West. The documents and analysis in this book related to José Martí and the more general push for independence from Spain make clear the important role that both communities played in this campaign.

Stebbins does an excellent job of supplementing the consuls’ correspondence with excerpts from local newspapers and other sources. She should not be expected to do more. Readers interested in Key West’s nineteenth-century history, however, will want to examine the works of other authors who have studied this fascinating community. Glen Westfall’s examination of the cigar industry in Key West is
especially important. And the work of Gerald E. Poyo provides important analysis of Key West's Cubans in elections, in the workplace, and in the drive for independence. His perspective, not surprisingly, often conflicts with the viewpoint of the Spanish consuls. It is also worthwhile to look at Jefferson Browne's reprinted volume on Key West, originally published in 1912. Finally, the scholarship of Canter Brown Jr. and Larry Rivers on black elected officials in Florida after Reconstruction is important because it documents and analyzes the fact that, compared to most other cities in Florida, including Tampa, African Americans in Key West were more successful in being elected to local political positions until early in the twentieth century.

ROBERT KERSTEIN
University of Tampa

_A Most Disorderly Court: Scandal and Reform in the Florida Judiciary._ By James A. Dyckman. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008, xviii, 204 pp. Foreword, chronology/cast of characters, preface and acknowledgments, B&W photographs, notes, bibliography, index. $29.95 cloth)

This book presents a penetrating and shocking account of a dark period in the history of government and politics in Florida, in general, and the Florida judiciary, in particular. Conduct on the part of several high-profile members of Florida's Supreme Court that, at a minimum, could be characterized as gross conflict of interest and, at worst, as scandalous seems to have engulfed the state's court of last resort during the 1960s and early 1970s. Implicit in the misconduct was the seemingly widespread complicity of a significant number of attorneys, private citizens, and business interests that expected and encouraged behavior contrary to the spirit of the judicial canons of ethics and, in many instances, was patently illegal. Moreover, it is apparent that several other justices on the court at that time were aware of this unacceptable conduct and did nothing more than "wink and look the other way." In fact, these justices (part of the so-called "Old Guard") seemed to be more interested in punishing individuals employed by the court (aides and law clerks) who had dared to reveal the court's "dirty linen" to the press than in reining in their wayward brethren.

As uncomfortable as it may be to read this sordid account of the behavior and activity of some of the state's highest-ranking jurists, the reader should come away with several important lessons (or reminders) from this ugly period. First, the reader should clearly recognize the important role played by the free press and bar associations. If it had not been for the aggressive role played by the media in pursing the truth in this matter, the Florida judiciary might still be languishing in the shadows of corruption, influence peddling, and the perception that a favorable disposition of litigation pending before the courts can be bought for the right price. All too often,
the public takes the press corps (both print and electronic media) for granted and
fails to appreciate the critical role that it plays in enlightening and informing the
public about the performance of their government and the officials who run it. In
short, a free press is indispensible to the preservation of an effective, responsible,
and accountable democratic government. Likewise, a vigilant bar association that
supervises and demands the highest level of ethical conduct from those practicing
law is essential for the unbiased and color-blind dispensation of justice. Nothing
is more likely to undermine the faith in and credibility of the judicial system than
practicing attorneys and jurists who make a habit of auctioning off justice to the
highest bidder. Unlike some other professional associations, both the national and
state bar associations do an admirable job of setting and enforcing high ethical
standards. Again, democracy is better for the part they play.

The story told in this book also reminds us of the pivotal importance of
an independent judiciary. Whereas partisan elections seem to be synonymous with
the spirit and practice of democratic government, this does not necessary apply to
the selection of members of the judiciary. While we may wish for the judiciary to
be sensitive to the issues of the day as well as to the public it serves, it is imperative
for the courts to apply the law evenly and without regard to partisan politics. As
we know, there should be no such thing as a “Republican” or “Democratic” brand
of justice. Furthermore, there is no place for “good old boy” politics in the system
of justice. Perhaps the greatest threat to an independent judiciary and a return to
the kind of court system that characterized the period that was the subject of this
book has been recent efforts to give the governor a greater voice in the selection of
District Court of Appeal judges and Supreme Court justices. Such an effort has the
potential to politicize the appellate courts in a way reminiscent of the unflattering
period of the courts chronicled in this book. Hopefully, however, this movement will
be short-lived, and along with a stronger and more vigilant Judicial Qualifications
Committee, the independence of the courts from partisan politics will be preserved,
thus assuring the public that indeed there is “equal justice for all.”

In addition, this book should serve to reinforce the expectation and conviction
that those chosen to dispense justice practice a higher calling. Simply put, there is
no substitute for the exercise of scrupulous ethics, honesty, integrity, and a sense of
fairness by those who serve on the bench. While corruption and unfairness are a
reproach to any government that purports to be a democracy, such behavior in the
judicial branch can be the death knell for governments, shaking the very foundation
upon which the legitimacy of government rests.

For all the reasons mentioned above, the book makes good reading for those
who wish to know more about the Florida judiciary, but it will especially interest
those who would like to know more about the context within which the Florida
courts were reformed. The quality of the book was certainly enhanced as result of the
approach taken by the author. Being a newspaper reporter—and therefore possessing
the “be sure to search under every rock for the truth” attitude and skills—enabled
the author to convey a story that demanded a scrupulous commitment to meticulous detail, accuracy, and honesty.

J. Edwin Benton  
University of South Florida


These two volumes represent an interesting attempt by the University Press of Florida to become engaged in publishing space history and policy in a manner accessible to the general public and those interested in exploring an important part of Florida’s recent history. These two volumes complement each other in an interesting way, combining history into a discussion of current events even though their approaches differ. The first, *A History of the Kennedy Space Center,* is a product of NASA’s excellent program in space history—an effort that combines technically oriented historical reconstructions of the past with an implicit advocacy function of convincing the public to support the space program. What occurs in these pages is an organizational history of the Kennedy Space Center (KSC), the point of the spear in U.S. civil space activities, since for NASA almost all missions begin there with the launch of spacecraft and humans into outer space. This history might be better titled “Kennedy Space Center’s History in Human Spaceflight,” since the bulk of the book deals with the run up to the Apollo moon-landing program, with less attention paid to the shuttle and beyond in KSC history. Apollo remains the lodestar for NASA—the definitive, formative experience that it continues attempts to repeat.

The growth and development of the KSC is approached through a quasi-historical chronology, meaning that specific lines of activity are pursued, and then the historical narrative doubles back to pick up another aspect of KSC’s development, and through a theoretical framework drawn from organizational behavior literature. The former is well done in terms of providing vignettes that illustrate the cultural changes that the arrival of the space program had on both Florida and the organization as it evolved over time. For example, labor unions came to the KSC and proved to be more powerful than many realized at the time. This occurred despite the fact that Florida is a “right-to-work” state. Likewise, the evolving role of women and minorities is discussed in the context of a white male-dominated organization. The
“hero” of the story of Apollo at the KSC is Kurt S. Debus, a member of Wernher von Braun’s German rocket team, who moved from Germany to White Sands, New Mexico, to Huntsville, Alabama, to the KSC. Von Braun’s vision of how a space launch should work was based on his earlier formative experiences in Germany plus the U.S. Air Force approach of contractor-based operations. This vision—and its effect even after his departure in 1974 in the afterglow of the Apollo triumph—is a major theme running through this book. What occurred was the melding of the two different approaches, the German hands-on technical approach and the U.S. Air Force reliance on contractors closely supervised by NASA. These approaches represent differences not merely in approach but of culture—one very meticulous and based on deep knowledge of the technology, and the other more distant with contractors central to accomplishment of various tasks. So, for example, at the Marshall Spaceflight Center at Huntsville, Germans rebuilt boosters received from the contractor to their more exacting standards. At the KSC, the intense political and program pressures necessitated a different approach. The result was a loss in technical proficiency because, when budget cuts came, contractors normally went first. These cuts are a fact of organizational life and devastated the KSC after Apollo, and there will be similar effects related to the cuts that will follow the shuttle’s shutdown in 2010.

This raises the other aspect of the book and its underlying thesis. At the cutting edge of science and technology, it is assumed that there exists a split between the operational (the KSC), and the design culture of NASA (the Marshall Spaceflight Center in Huntsville and the Johnson Space Center in Houston), where innovation occurs. The thesis is that: “operations have in fact been crucial to the success of NASA and the space program since their earliest days. Only the tendency to separate scientific research and technological innovation from operations keeps us from seeing this” (23). “The history of KSC, however, challenges this assumption as well. It argues against a sharp separation between incremental and radical innovation. At the level of operations, incremental improvements and knowledge gained from hands-on work can often have radical implications. Striking breakthroughs can be built on the accumulation of small but continuous improvements of the sort that happen at the operational level” (24). “Overcoming the barriers between the operational culture and the design culture of NASA has been a major challenge, and one that KSC has struggled with throughout its history” (25). At the beginning of the Apollo and space shuttle programs, the KSC was generally disparaged by the other centers as a mere truck stop. During each program, the role of the KSC personnel grew in importance as they grappled with the shortcomings of the experimental vehicle delivered for launch. This struggle has been ongoing since the Apollo program and continues into the present as highlighted by the two shuttle disasters, both critical and ultimately fatal events that occurred during liftoff even though the damage was not obvious until Columbia’s reentry from orbit. The authors continually return to the theme of operations and design, even though, after a point, the struggle between the two became commonplace, part of the background noise within the larger launch
process. The Columbia Accident Investigation Board finally recognized this reality authoritatively after the 2003 Columbia reentry disaster when the space shuttle was classified as an experimental vehicle.

*Final Countdown* is cast as a personal overview of the space shuttle program as it heads into its final years before shutdown in 2010. The author, Pat Duggins, a space reporter for NPR in Orlando, does an interesting job of humanizing the space program while weaving technical facts and human episodes into the narrative. The focal point here is more personal than in the KSC volume, as the author injects his experiences as a reporter covering the space program at the KSC into the narrative. That includes, for example, personal photographs of Columbia debris mounted on frames in order to determine the disaster’s cause. In one sense, this is an alternative view of the KSC by an informed outside observer. Duggins also works a history of the NASA space program over the last forty years into his discussion of the shuttle program’s impending demise.

Even though the two works cover much of the same ground, their perspectives are different. The KSC volume focuses on the NASA infrastructure at the KSC and beyond and the denizens that populate it, while *Final Countdown* concentrates more on interactions with the larger community in Florida within which the space program operated over the years. Both survey the same crises that impacted the space program, especially since the end of Apollo when the national drive to do more in outer space withered despite NASA’s frantic efforts to pump up the budget to levels seen during the Apollo program.

The KSC volume is well annotated and documented, reflecting its more academic and research-based approach. It is well written for a general audience but is sufficiently rigorous to meet the demands of the academic audience from whence the authors are drawn. *Final Countdown* is clearly aimed at the lay audience as evidenced by the use of limited selected references, including some official reports. As a reporter, the author relies upon his field notes taken during his coverage of the space program at the KSC. All of this is woven into a narrative that is both well written and, at times, critical of NASA and its efforts, as Duggins reflects the perspectives held by close observers of the NASA space endeavor. Both volumes meet their goals of bringing the reader, especially the layperson, deeper into the space program in the context of the KSC and its environs. The two volumes are highly recommended, keeping in mind their different goals— one more academic and policy-oriented (KSC) and the other more current events (Duggins). For Floridians, both volumes are interesting for assessing the future directions of space activities in Florida. Given the changing national view of civil space activities, Florida may find itself on the outside of the field’s growth.

Roger Handberg
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Nowhere in the United States has been more affected by hurricanes than Florida. They have been a constant in the state's history. During the early colonial period, for example, the question of whether or not France would take territorial control over Florida was decided by a hurricane. In 1565, Jean Ribault led a French armada from Fort Caroline, near modern-day Jacksonville, to drive the Spanish from St. Augustine. On September 22, a hurricane dismasted and wrecked Ribault's ships. The Spanish fleet survived. Defenseless, Fort Caroline was easily captured by the Spanish, and Ribault and his men were easily defeated. As a result, the French lost the opportunity to settle the southern Atlantic coast of North America. In October 1926, a hurricane hit South Florida, bringing an end to the area's speculative land boom and beginning the Great Depression in the “Sunshine” State.

Jay Barnes provides a comprehensive and useful history of hurricanes in Florida in *Florida's Hurricane History*. The second edition of this 1998 work includes updates on recent storms such as Charley, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne, Dennis, Katrina, and Wilma. Including over two hundred photographs, the book provides an excellent introduction to hurricanes as meteorological phenomena, their importance in Florida's history, and even something of their cultural significance (the term “hurricane” derives from the name of an evil Mayan god, the University of Miami's sports teams are called the “Hurricanes,” and so on.).

Following his introductory chapters, which deal with how hurricanes are formed; their impact in terms of winds, storm surge, and rainfall; and the tracking of storms, Barnes provides detailed chronological summaries of all of the recorded hurricanes in Florida's history. His summaries are engaging and make clear how hurricanes have been a constant meteorological, economic, and cultural force in Florida's history. Detailed maps show the path of each storm. An appendix includes tables of information on the twenty deadliest modern hurricanes to strike the United States, as well as the costliest in terms of destruction.

Barnes brings home to the reader just how massive and consuming Florida's hurricanes can be. Statistics, such as the death of approximately 2,500 people as a result of the breaking of the Lake Okeechobee levee in the 1928 hurricane, or the estimated $41 billion expense of Hurricane Andrew, are important. As the southern Atlantic coast becomes more populated, the consequences of hurricanes become increasingly significant, and Barnes argues that it is inevitable that major storms on the level of Andrew and Katrina will continue to strike the state.

This reviewer has sat through a number of hurricanes, the worst being Andrew in 1992, when winds in my neighborhood reached at least 168 miles per hour. Unless one has lived through a storm of this type, it is hard to understand
just how powerful and terrifying a hurricane can be. Equally hard to understand is the challenge of recovering after a major storm. The T-shirt that became part of the mythology of Hurricane Andrew had emblazoned on it: “I survived Hurricane Andrew. It’s the recovery that’s killing me,” and this best conveys how enormous and all-encompassing hurricanes can be. For those newcomers to Florida who have not experienced a hurricane, but will almost certainly eventually do so, few books are as useful as Barnes’s history.

On a minor note, this reviewer would have liked to see a more careful inclusion of recently published works as part of this updated volume. In the case of Hurricane Andrew, for example, Eugene F. Provenzo Jr. and Asterie Baker Provenzo’s *In the Eye of the Storm: An Oral History of Hurricane Andrew and the South Florida Community* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002) and Eugene F. Provenzo Jr. and Sandra H. Fradd’s *Hurricane Andrew, the Public Schools and the Rebuilding of Community* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) provide detailed personal accounts of the social and cultural meaning of the storm, a perspective that would have made Barnes’s excellent book even better. Likewise, recent accounts such as Christopher Cooper, Robert Block, and Robert Jeffrey Block’s *Disaster: Hurricane Katrina and the Failure of Homeland Security* (New York: Times Books, 2005) and Douglas Brinkley’s *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005) would have contributed important information and insights.

In summary, Barnes’s book is the best general history on hurricanes and their impact on the Sunshine State and should be of interest to Florida history enthusiasts and general readers.

EUGENE F. PROVENZO JR.
University of Miami

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Nature poses serious threats in Jeff Klinkenberg’s Florida. A bull shark can get close enough to the shore of the Panhandle to bite off the arm of a swimmer who is training for a triathlon, while another attack near Destin proves lethal for a teenaged girl. At the Kanapaha Botanical Gardens near Gainesville, a 12-foot-long alligator named Mojo tears the arm off an employee clearing algae from a pond. Greg (Spook) Whidden makes a living catching wild hogs by hand; the largest he captured weighed 416 pounds. A columnist for the *St. Petersburg Times*, Klinkenberg also
interviews a survivor of the 1935 hurricane that devastated the Florida Keys, leaving behind an official body count of 408. At least seventy-two species of mosquitoes have been found in Florida; and in the summer, park rangers in the Everglades are often outfitted with special clothing, including head nets. By staying down too long in deep water, sponge divers from Tarpon Springs run the risk of the bends; and the divers had to find other work when blights killed the sponges in the late 1930s and the 1940s.

Members of our own species can also be menacing. Driving on Loop Road in South Florida, Klinkenberg spots a sign he interprets as inhospitable: “My dogs can make it to the fence in three seconds. Can you?” (8). Two of the most unusual pieces in this collection consist of profiles of a pair of former Freedom Riders who now reside in Ellenton, and of a Gainesville resident haunted by his ambiguous role in his father’s death. David Stevenson was only nine years old when his father died in the drowning accident that has haunted David ever since; such terrifying guilt could not even be assuaged by drink and drugs. For several of the Floridians portrayed in this book, the danger posed is merely to themselves. There are the heavy smokers (including the author’s own mother, a difficult and frustrated woman whose life and personality he vividly if ambivalently summarizes) and the heavy eaters—of the artery-clogging pancakes, for example, that are available at the Old Spanish Sugar Mill and Griddle House in De Leon Springs. And other Floridians have taken revenge upon an often cruel nature by violating the ancient habitat of the loveliest birds and beasts, creatures that have done no harm to humanity. No chapter in this book is sadder than the cameo biography of the nineteenth-century plume hunter Jean Chevelier, who relished murdering thousands upon thousands of spoonbills. During nesting season, parent birds were seized, leaving the chicks to die in their nests.

Mostly, though, Klinkenberg makes pilgrimages to the homes and workplaces of eccentrics—like the Bradenton pharmacist who goes barefoot everywhere (no exaggeration), or the “primitive” Tampa artist who uses only bones to spur his creativity (often picked up from roadkill), or the toy-making couple near Arcadia who lack a telephone and electricity and choose to communicate with the outside world only by mail. The author is evidently something of a connoisseur of oddballs. Whether Florida harbors more than its fair share of the off-center population cannot be ascertained, but the result of Klinkenberg’s investigations is an engaging contribution to the literary genre known as “local color.” The only well-known subject Klinkenberg interviews is former U.S. Senator Bob Graham, who is allowed to reminisce fondly of a boyhood spent in the Everglades that he compares to Huck Finn’s. (One wonders if the politician ever actually read Twain’s novel, with its chilling episodes of Huck’s terror and loneliness? The author misses a chance to remind the politician of such literary traumas.) The interviewing choices that Klinkenberg makes seem somewhat weighted in favor of old-timers, perhaps to underscore his own nostalgia. Elegiac in tone, this book is an evocation of an era (the author’s own childhood) when the balance between nature and artifice was more congenial, when Miami didn’t seem so
vexingly close.

_**Pilgrim in the Land of Alligators**, which reflects Klinkenberg’s apparently insatiable curiosity and his respect for the unusual folks he interviews, cannot be fairly accused of boosterism, so the author deserves to be cut some slack for such claims as, “it is hard to imagine anything better than sitting on the sand . . . and toasting a St. Pete Beach sunset with a glass of fresh-squeezed orange juice in late January” (142). Readers will be tempted to take the bait (what about devouring fondue in Zermatt, while gazing up at the Matterhorn?). They may also wish for some comparative perspective. Of course “Florida has always been a place for starting anew” (54), but so is California; and so is the United States itself. After a while, when no argument stitches together these thirty-nine easy pieces—many of them a little too easy—into a theme that lingers in the mind, or into an analysis that demands a critical response, the appeal of local color begins to fade. This collection, for all of its charm, shows a trace of condescension toward a readership that is expected to be satisfied with entertainment but is not also challenged—at least on occasion—to think. Klinkenberg’s vocation as a journalist is no alibi. After all, the analyses of the best reporters and columnists are enviably superior to what most academics produce. The bizarre byways where the author hangs out also distract him from getting at the source of his discontents: the relentless overdevelopment that has reduced the state’s landscape to a stupefyingly banal homogeneity. In pursuit of an interesting story, he is often on the road. But his book lacks road rage.

**Stephen J. Whitfield**

Brandeis University


In May 2008, Stephen Leatherman proclaimed that Caladesi Island State Park possessed the best beach in America. Known as “Dr. Beach,” this environmental scientist from Florida International University had ranked Caladesi highly for years. With this honor, Caladesi joined its Pinellas barrier island brethren Fort DeSoto Park on Mullet Key as an award winner, now retired from competition, that can bask in the glow of surf, sand, and sunshine.

Long before Dr. Beach sifted the sand and tested the tidal flows at Caladesi, early visitors to coastal Pinellas islands sought safe harbor and abundant sources of
food. Hog Island, the name given to Caladesi in the 1800s, became a popular stopping place for fishing rancheros and small boats sailing between Gulf coast destinations. Henry Scharrer, a native of Switzerland who came to America as a young man with a sense of adventure, sailed to the island during stormy weather in the early 1890s and stayed the next forty-four years. He improved the land, married, and applied for a homestead; he also celebrated the birth of a daughter on Hog Island in February 1895 and named her after the wax myrtle trees that surrounded his remote home.

In *Yesteryear I Lived in Paradise*, Myrtle Scharrer Betz tells the story of her native island by offering a biographical portrait of her father. As she approached her eightieth year in 1981, Betz started to compile a life’s worth of adventures “without any research, purely from memory” (3) to share with her family. Originally published in 1984 and reissued in 1991, the 2007 edition published by the University of Tampa Press combines her vignettes with new sources located by granddaughters Terry Fortner and Suzanne Thorp. Readers familiar with earlier editions will appreciate the addition of copious family photographs that capture life on the remote island, Fortner’s excellent thirty-page timeline that provides context to Betz’s narrative, and the appearance of noted Florida artist Christopher Still’s *Caladesi Sunset* on the cover.

Henry Scharrer arrived in New York City in April 1883 at the age of twenty-three. In a brief first chapter, Myrtle Betz describes her father’s transcontinental adventure from his work as a farm hand in the Midwest to his travels to San Francisco. Scharrer arrived in Tampa by 1887 with plans to work for a while and perhaps visit South America. While helping to build Henry Plant’s Tampa Bay Hotel, he acquired a small tract of land near Sulphur Springs, and purchased a boat named *Anna*. After raising *Anna* from the water and repairing her, Henry sailed into Tampa Bay, past Egmont Key, and along the Pinellas Peninsula, choosing to harbor at the southern shore of Hog Island as a storm approached. The next morning, as he walked along this uninhabited coastline, he realized that he had found his Florida dreamland. He obtained citizenship, improved the land, carved a channel, and planted crops. Henry celebrated when he received a land patent from President Grover Cleveland in 1897.

After describing Henry’s marriage to Catherine “Kate” McNally in April 1894, Myrtle personalizes the narrative by referring to Henry as “Father.” Kate quickly disappears from the narrative since she passed away in 1902, when Myrtle was only seven years old. Betz described the busy, rough, and isolated life she led growing up with her father. In addition to her many domestic tasks, Myrtle became a tomboy who assisted him with fishing and tended to the livestock and crops. Though it was isolated from the coastal communities of Clearwater and Dunedin, all was not idyllic in their paradise: They regularly encountered poachers and occasionally returned from boat trips to the mainland to find their home and personal belongings in shambles. Most of her childhood education occurred on the island, though she later rowed a boat to the mainland to attend school.

Henry remained at the center of the narrative as Myrtle reached adulthood. After she married Herman Betz in 1915 and moved away, Myrtle realized how deeply
she missed the island. She returned after World War I and witnessed the wrath of the October 1921 hurricane that carved Hog Island into Caladesi (on the south) and Honeymoon (on the north). As time passed, Henry enjoyed the creature comforts of his battery-operated radio and early airboat, and he welcomed Carl Sandburg, Eddie Rickenbacker, and numerous visitors who appeared during inclement weather. Although Myrtle and Herman returned to the mainland as their daughter reached school age, Myrtle frequently visited her father. When he became ill in late 1934, they brought him to Dunedin to convalesce. Myrtle’s narrative ends with Henry’s passing on December 23, 1934, and the sad news that thieves and vandals had ransacked and removed many of her most precious family treasures from his island property.

Many early Pinellas histories emanated from the pens of settlers who witnessed the dramatic transformation of the peninsula. Notable authors such as John A. Bethell, Walter P. Fuller, Karl H. Grismer, and M. W. Moore imbued their narratives with boosterism and celebrated the developers and investors who transformed the terrain. Though Myrtle Scharrer Betz had in common with many of these authors a lack of formal academic training in history, her narrative differs greatly in its focus on the environmental aspects of coastal living in the days before tourism. In this memoir written later in life, she recalls the “snapping sound [that] came from shrimp and the splashes [that] were lady fish feeding on the shrimp” (81). A checklist documents her assiduous efforts to track and band birds that visited the island between 1918 and 1935. Long before her passing in January 1992, Betz became an advocate for preserving Caladesi and undeveloped areas of Honeymoon Island. Although she died before Dr. Beach’s proclamation about the island, Myrtle’s lifelong passion for defending her birthplace and its history preserved a landscape worthy of honor.

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Hardee County: Its Heritage and People. By Spessard Stone (St. Petersburg: Southern Heritage Press, 2007. iii, 310 pp. Preface, B&W photographs, maps, appendices, acknowledgments, selected bibliography, index. $100.00 hardcover in glazed pictorial boards)

Created in 1921, Hardee County was named for Cary Augustus Hardee, Florida’s twenty-third governor (1921-25). The new book by the Wauchula historian and genealogist Spessard Stone is the first comprehensive history of the county ever written. Although Louise K. Frisbie’s Peace River Pioneers (1974) and Canter Brown’s Florida’s Peace River Frontier (1991) contain significant information about the Hardee area, the only previous book-length publication on the county’s history was Jean Plowden’s eighty-two-page History of Hardee County (1929).

Hardee County: Its Heritage and People is the culmination of Stone’s three decades of researching and writing about Hardee County and its historical antecedents. The first third of the book focuses primarily on the period 1843-1920, when Hardee was successively part of Hillsborough, Manatee, and DeSoto Counties. The remaining two-thirds covers Hardee County proper, from its establishment in 1921 to 2007. This section examines in detail the county’s political, economic, religious, and social development. Throughout the book, readers will find biographical and genealogical information about individuals and families significant in the area’s transformation from a wilderness frontier to a twenty-first-century community.

The author’s research appears to have been extensive and meticulous, though the book’s lack of notes makes it difficult to ascertain his sources except where they are cited in the text itself. Nonetheless, Stone’s well-written, extensively illustrated history is a useful addition to any serious Floridiana collection, and should have particular appeal to readers interested in the history of the Peace River valley area and its pioneer families.

Paul Eugen Camp
University of South Florida
The Tampa Bay History Center’s new home is Hillsborough County government’s first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Certified Building. This certification is a huge undertaking in planning and construction. In keeping with our commitment to green initiatives, the text pages of this publication are printed on Finch Casa Opaque. Finch Casa is 30% post consumer waste recycled paper and is also fully recyclable. In addition, the cover is made from 10% post consumer recycled stock. The journal is printed with 100% soy inks, and all waste during the printing and bindery process is recycled.
Notes
Notes
The Tampa Bay History Center is a community oriented cultural institution that seeks to enlighten and enhance the lives of the residents and visitors of Tampa and Hillsborough County to the more than 12,000 years of Florida history. The History Center’s mission is to serve and educate the community through discovery, preservation and interpretation of the rich cultural heritage of the people of Historic Hillsborough County and the Tampa Bay region and their relation to the state of Florida and the United States.

The Florida Studies Center draws upon the University of South Florida Libraries’ extensive Floridiana collections and expertise to promote interdisciplinary teaching and research and to help the Tampa Bay community develop a better understanding of Florida’s past, present, and future.
The front page of the November 19, 1958 Tampa Times shows a photo montage of Norway’s Lief Svendsen as he skis down a ramp constructed in downtown Tampa. The nasty spill did not deter Svendsen from a second attempt down the chicken wire-covered ski slope, which ended successfully.

This was just the first of many news stories, generated by both print and television media, that the week-long Tampa Snow Show garnered. By the time the winter carnival was over, film crews and newspaper reporters covered broken bones, slashed foreheads and disrupted sewer lines.