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## Full Issue

Sunland Tribune

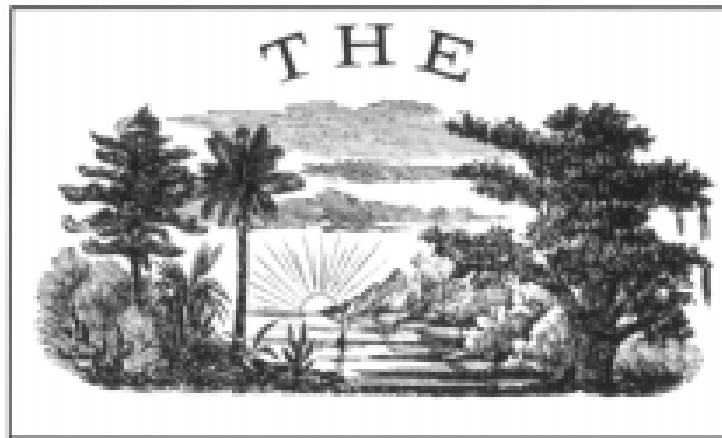
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# SUNLAND TRIBUNE

Journal of the Tampa Historical Society

Volume XXIV

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## The President's Report

I am very proud that as we move into our twenty-eighth year, that the wishes and purposes of our founders still serve as the foundation and clear vision for the Tampa Historical Society. Our Mission, as adopted in 1971, is in part "To bring together those people interested in history, and especially in the history of Tampa and Florida." We recognize the importance of publishing a journal of history as the principal means to, ". . . disseminate historical information and arouse interest in the past . . ." *The Sunland Tribune*, first published in 1974, is today a widely respected journal of history.

We have enjoyed a very successful year. Our Society is in sound financial condition. The historic Peter O. Knight House is owned and maintained by the Society and has served as its headquarters since 1977. A well-attended Open House was held this past Spring during the City of Tampa Mayor's Archives Awareness Week. A week later, joined with the Hillsborough County Sheriffs Office and proudly hosted the annual Oaklawn Ramble in Tampa's oldest cemetery. Julius "Jeff" Gordon, the 1992 recipient of the D. B. McKay Award, was presented with a well-deserved "President's Award" for his many years of preservation and maintenance of Oaklawn and St. Louis Cemeteries. Also, the Society proudly hosted to annual meeting of the Florida Historical Society in May. Their program focus was on the events of 1898 and the centennial observance of the Spanish--American War.

We continue to place historical markers and several significant ones were dedicated this year including ones honoring Jessimine Flowers Link, founder of Tampa's first Girl

Scout troop, and Charles Lafayette Knight for his long commitment to the development of the land known today as Harbour Island. In December a marker will be dedicated to honor pioneer developer William Benton Henderson.

Interest in Tampa's history, and the area known as Historic Hillsborough County, has never been greater. Recognizing the tremendous need for a local museum of history, the Tampa Historical Society has reiterated its formal approval and support of the mission of the Tampa Bay History Center. Funding will be used to bring to reality a much needed, and long overdue, regional history museum. As this volume of the Sunland goes to press, the hope is that the dedicated officers, board of trustees and staff of TBHC will be successful in receiving the necessary commitments and funding.

Your board of directors worked very hard in 1998 to present a variety of interesting and informative programs, events and publications. I owe each member of the board of directors my gratitude for their personal commitment of time. I know and appreciate the sacrifices it can mean. Special thanks to Richard Jacobson and his staff for making certain that each issue of the newsletter, *Historical Horizons*, went to press on time. And as always, Lois Latimer, a founding member, and long-time officer of our board. I offer my sincere thanks for always being there for the Society. The time and attention you give the Society is truly priceless. You are definitely our most committed "Member for Life!"

When I took over the editorship of The Sunland Tribune editorship year, I never imagined the time or depth of involvement the job would entail but I can say without any hesitation I have enjoyed the experience more than I would have ever imagined. The opportunity to work with the fine group of writers, historians, and staffs of our local history organizations has been very rewarding. I must thank our great friends at the H. B. Plant Museum and Tampa Bay History Center for the loan of historic materials, invaluable council and assistance all year. The history community and all the citizens of Tampa benefit from our cooperation and collaboration.

It has been a successful year and I thank you, the members, for your tremendous support of the Tampa Historical Society. I have gained so much from being your president. Thanks!

Frank R. North

# HAMILTON DISSTON and the Development of Florida

Dr. Joe Knetsch

One of the most enduring mysteries in the history of Florida is the “man”, Hamilton Disston. Little has ever been published about this individual's life or his many accomplishments. What is “known” is based upon few primary sources, and those have not been evaluated for accuracy. None of the few works that discuss the "Gilded Age" politics have ever delved into the life behind the man who bailed Florida out of its worst financial embarrassment. Even the story of his death is questionable, if, in fact, not totally erroneous. It is the goal of this article to shed some light onto this unknown individual and maybe encourage greater primary research into the background of those who have helped to shape our destinies.

That Hamilton Disston was a congenial person has been testified to by many who knew the young man. Born on August 23, 1844, he was educated at home, like many children of his day, and at the age of fifteen, he became a full-time apprentice in his father's factory on Laurel Street, in Philadelphia. His father was an inventive, strong willed and talented man, whose mechanical abilities came naturally through Hamilton's grandfather, Thomas Disston, of Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, England. The adaptable Henry Disston migrated to America with his family in 1833, only to lose his father three days after their arrival. Left to his own devices, he apprenticed himself to a saw-maker and began a career that reads like a Horatio Alger tale. With a start of only \$350, he began his own manufacturing firm in 1840, and after some

early struggles with land- lords and lenders, established himself at Front and Laurel Street, two years after Hamilton's birth. The elder Disston's skills could not be denied, and he looked to become independent of imported British steel. In 1855, he constructed his own steel mill, producing some of the highest grade crucible steel to be found anywhere. This gave him the edge over much of his competition, foreign or domestic. So successful was the Disston works, that they were not affected by the severe Panic of 1857. Young Hamilton, observing first-hand many of his father's administrative touches and inventive capacity, probably made mental notes of those that were most successful.<sup>1</sup>

The Civil War brought many changes to the Disston firm, primarily the need to produce war materials for the Union Army. For the purpose of making metal plates, whose importation was disrupted by Confederate raiders, Henry Disston constructed his own rolling mill. He also erected an experimental sawmill to test his saws on various types of wood for the purpose of more efficient cutting and precision. The father also experimented with new saw types, improved the quality of the steel and any number of improvements in various war materials. In the interest of the firm and national defense, he encouraged employees to spot defects and suggest improvements.<sup>2</sup> The firm aside from it's primary business primary business, also produced scabbards, swords, guns, knapsack mountings, army curbits, etc. for the military effort. In addition to his production, Henry Disston offered each of his employees who joined the colors half as much in addition to what the government

would pay, and guaranteed them their jobs upon returning from the war.<sup>3</sup>

According to Harry C. Silcox, in his recent book on the Disston works, Hamilton wanted to enlist in the Army immediately upon President Lincoln's call for volunteers. Twice, Hamilton attempted to enlist, only to find his place taken by someone who was paid an enlistment bonus by his father, who insisted he was needed in the business. To relieve this tension, Hamilton increased his interest in the Northern Liberties Volunteer Fire Company. As the story goes, the fires became so frequent that Hamilton was often missing answering the fire bell. Hamilton's popularity among this group of young men was great enough that, in the end, his father relented and allowed him and 100 "Disston Volunteers" to serve their time. The father went so far as to equip the entire unit. When the war ended in 1865, Hamilton returned to the firm and was created a partner in the new business of Henry Disston & Son.<sup>4</sup>

Assisted by a protective tariff policy and a growing demand for saws of all kinds, the years immediately following the war were very prosperous for the firm. New lines of products were introduced, including a new line of files developed during the war. According to a handbook from the company, "During the War we were unable to obtain files which would give us satisfaction and were compelled to manufacture our own. We spent thousands of dollars in perfecting our arrangements for manufacturing files."<sup>5</sup> Hamilton lost his social outlet when the volunteer fire department was discontinued in 1870 and this led him into one of his first ventures into politics. The prosperity of the firm and the free time that this allowed the "partner" meant a change of roles, one congenial with the growing need to market the company's new products and the move

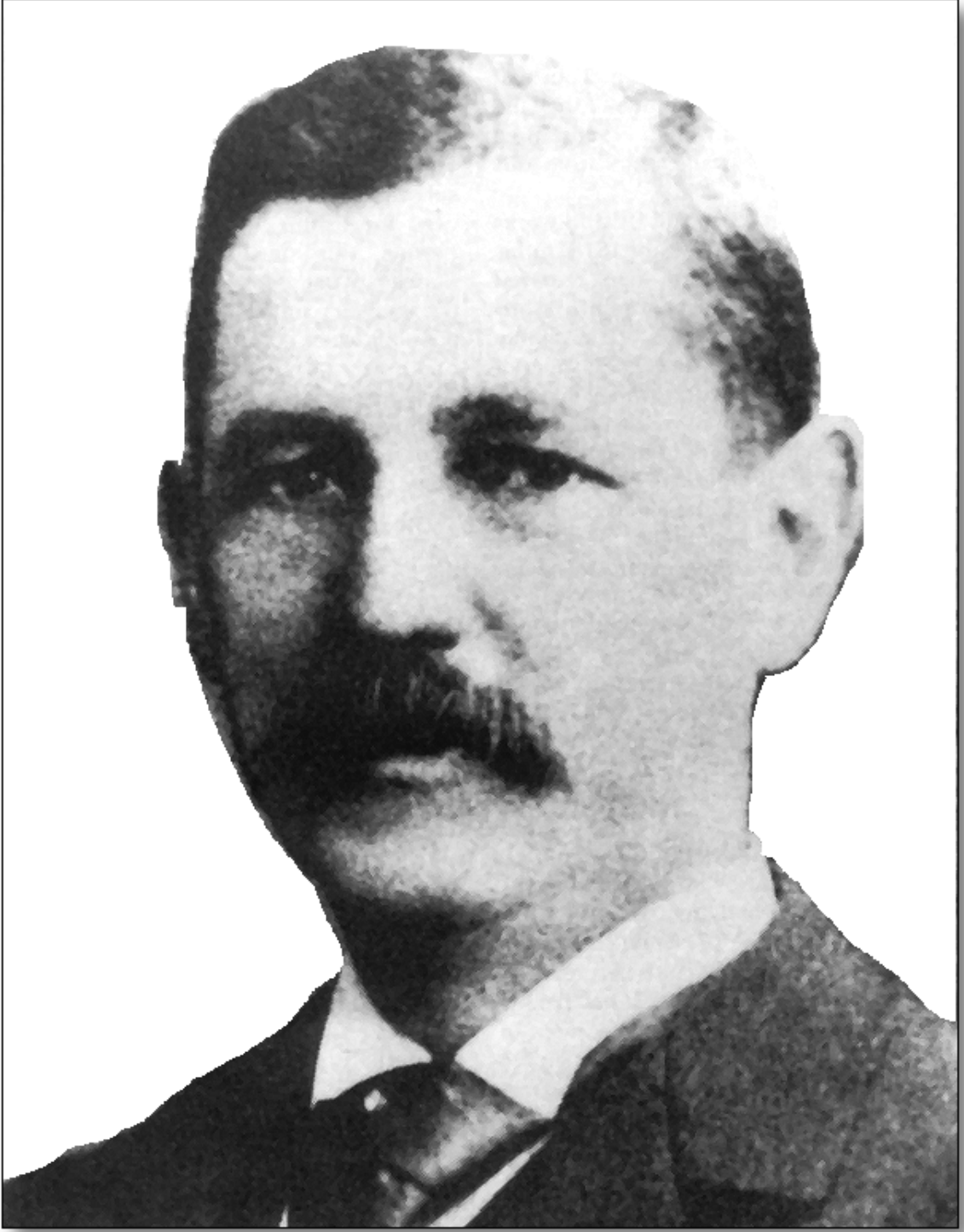
of the Disston works to the new area of Tacony.

Hamilton, like his father, was a strong Republican and favored the protective tariff. His growing interest in politics led him into the embroglio of the Philadelphia wards. In the beginning, he was allied with many of the so-called "bosses" of the wards, including James McManes (the city gas works "czar"), William Leeds and David H. Lane. He helped one of his old Northern Liberties Hose Company colleagues, John A. Loughridge, into the post of prothonotary to the Court of Common Pleas.<sup>6</sup> One-time governor of Pennsylvania, Samuel W. Pennypacker, noted in his autobiography, that, in 1875, Hamilton Disston was the ward leader in the Twenty-ninth ward, and was assisted by William U. Moyer. He also makes it clear that anything that went on in the ward, had to have Disston's approval,<sup>7</sup> Pennypacker which he claims he disliked. Pennypacker describes his group's defeat at the hands of Disston and his allies when he attempted to reform the precinct:

"We hired a hall, notified every Republican, held a meeting which was largely attended and selected a ticket. For a time it looked as though we would succeed, but we failed at the last moment through the better discipline of our opponents and the superior practical knowledge which comes with it. The evening of the primary turned out to be cold, and blasts of snow filled the air. The well-to-do citizens upon whom we relied sat at home by their fires in comfort. Their servants rode in carriages, hired by the more shrewd regulars, to the polls and voted against us."<sup>8</sup>

The future governor learned from his tactical error and soon was on the way to more





**Portrait of Hamilton Disston.**

Courtesy of University of South Florida Library Special Collections.

personal successes. Meanwhile, having learned how to control the ward, Hamilton shifted his efforts, somewhat, to the family-created settlement of Tacony, where he served innocuously as a Fairmount Park Commissioner, while controlling the town through his Magistrate (and real estate agent) Tom South.<sup>9</sup>

Disston's interest in politics also made him friends on the national level. With an ability to help finance investment schemes as well as political campaigns, Disston had the ears of some of Pennsylvania's most powerful and influential. Among those who readily listened to and cooperated with Disston were Wharton Barker (once head of the Finance Company of Pennsylvania), Thomas Scott, Jr., the heir to the Pennsylvania Railroad former president's fortune and later, a partner in some of Disston's Florida ventures, and, most importantly, Matt Quay, U. S. Senator and "Boss" of that body. Through Quay, a high tariff man in his own right, Disston sought to keep the price of imported steel and, later, sugar, high.<sup>10</sup> He shared with his father, a strong feeling of getting things done, in politics as well as business. And, again, like his father, who, in 1876, served as a Hayes elector from Philadelphia, Hamilton attended to the political interests by attending the 1888 Republican National Convention as an at-large delegate.<sup>11</sup>

The Disston family also had investments other than their own saw-works. Hamilton's father, Henry, saw a need to keep ahead of the rest of the industry, and, as noted before, constructed his own rolling mill, an experimental saw-mill and other smaller ventures near the family works. However, he also invested in a saw-mill operation in Atlantic City, New Jersey, which helped to supply the saw works with handles for many of their tools.<sup>12</sup> Hamilton was more

adventurous with his money and was an officer in the Keystone Chemical Company, the Florida land ventures and a railroad trust/syndicate, capitalized at \$20,000,000 in China. This last venture was in association with Wharton Barker, Samuel R. Shipley (President of the Provident Life and Trust Company), and others.<sup>13</sup> It should also be pointed out that the Disston family owned much of the land in and around Tacony and a substantial sum was earned over the years from this investment.

As a manager of the Disston works upon Henry Disston's death in 1878, in his fifty-ninth year, Hamilton had received mixed approval and doubt. The firm's history, done by two members of the family and one other, states: "The general supervision of the establishment now devolved on Hamilton Disston, who possessed the quick eye and sound judgment of his father. He, together with his brothers, ... having served full apprenticeships in the shops, and with Albert H. devoting himself to the general financial and office management, was competent from a mechanical as well as a business point of view to carry along the intentions of the founder, and the steadily increasing business was pushed to proportions perhaps unexpected by him." The story is told, in this loosely official history, that when the plant was visited by President Rutherford B. Hayes, Hamilton showed the president a rough piece of steel, which, he stated, he would convert into a thoroughly finished saw before the entourage left the building. Exactly forty-two minutes later, he presented the president with a new 26-inch handsaw, engraved with Hayes full name upon it. It had passed through twenty-four different processes in that short period of time.<sup>14</sup> Another source noted that Hamilton was, "a keen, progressive executive. Under his management the business expanded materially."<sup>15</sup> Harry Silcox, in his study of

the Disston Saw Works, states that Hamilton spent too much time away from Tacony to be any major factor in the firm's success, and that his brothers and uncle, Samuel, were more responsible for the growth.<sup>16</sup> Edward C. Williamson, in his tract on *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age*, paints Hamilton Disston as a nouveau riche Philadelphia society clubman who defied his father's wish to keep his eye on the family business and went his own way, something like the prodigal son.<sup>17</sup> Which ever the judgment, it cannot be denied that Hamilton Disston was a figure of importance and controversy.

It is generally agreed that Disston's first trip to Florida came in 1877, at the behest of Henry Sanford, who had served in various capacities in Republican circles, including a stint as Ambassador to Belgium. According to one writer, the first attraction was the "lunker black bass" found in Florida waters. However, given the lack of subsequent reporting of Mr. Disston's fondness for fishing, even while residing in Florida, this speculation may be questioned. What is clear is that Mr. Disston became very interested in the agricultural possibilities of the State, assuming it could find a way to remove the water that often covered the entire state south of Orange County. By 1879, he came to the firm conviction that the drainage of the upper portions of the Everglades, as he saw them, could be reclaimed from the morass of South Florida.

What was needed was a means to acquire title to the swamp and overflowed lands of the area and then bring in the equipment to do the job. Disston soon convinced fellow Philadelphians, Albert B. Linderman, Whitfield Drake and William H. Wright, along with William C. Parsons, of Arizona, and Ingham Coryell of Florida to invest in a corporation for the drainage of the swamp

lands of southern Florida. By the shrewd device of not paying any cash, but assuming the expenses of the actual drainage, the new corporation, known as the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Canal and Okeechobee Land Company, was able to work an arrangement with the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, the State's agency charged with the responsibility to encourage a "liberal system of internal improvements". The avoidance of payment was used to circumvent the obligations of the Trustees under the injunction placed upon them by Francis Vose and others Vose,<sup>18</sup> and his colleagues, had provided the Florida Railroad with iron and had invested in its bonds toward the end of the Civil War and expected to be paid at par, plus interest, for their redemption. After numerous legal wrangling, a New York Federal Court placed the injunction on the Trustees which forbid them to sell or bargain away any State lands until Vose and friends had been paid in full. This forced the Trustees to seek large, corporate buyers for its land and effectually stopped using land as an enticement for railroad investment. By late 1880, the sum owed to Vose had risen to just over \$1,000,000. Because the Internal Improvement Trust Fund was (and is) separate from general revenues and restricted in its mission to funding internal improvements, this injunction placed the State in a bind and virtually ended any major railroad construction for nearly a decade.

The drainage contract, which was signed by all parties on March 10, 1881, called for the company to drain and reclaim all of the swamp and overflowed lands in the area south of Township 24 and east of Peace River.<sup>19</sup> When 200,000 acres of land had been reclaimed by the company, the State would begin deeding alternate sections of the reclaimed swamp and overflowed lands to it. Thereafter, the State would issue deeds

as the work progressed. The State would benefit by getting half of the reclaimed land, which would now be worth a great deal more, and the company would benefit by gaining title to the other half of the land. Hopefully, the land would sell at a price that would allow the company to recover all costs, with some profit left over for the investors. The corporation soon issued 600,000 shares of stock at \$10 per share, and began to assemble the 20 dredges that were to accomplish the task.<sup>20</sup>

The drainage contract received some national attention that was the beginning of a new era in the awareness of Florida by the print media of the day. On February 18, 1881, *The New York Times* reported:

An immense transaction, involving the reclamation of 12,000,000 acres of land, or one-third of one of the States of the Union, has been undertaken by a company of Philadelphia gentlemen with every prospect of success. ... The project of reclaiming this wonderfully rich country has been talked of for years, and it has long been considered feasible by many noted engineers. ... The leading man in the enterprise is Hamilton Disston, a young gentleman of great business energy and ample fortune, and present head of the great saw-manufacturing firm of Henry Disston & Sons. ... Under the agreement already made with the State, the company is required to begin surveys within 60 days, and within six months to put a force equal to 100 men on the work, and continue as expeditiously as possible until it is completed.

It is proposed to drain the land by a canal from Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River, which empties into the Gulf of Mexico. Another canal

may also be constructed to the east, tapping the St. Lucie River, which flows into the Atlantic. These canals will entirely drain the swamp, and from ten to twelve million acres of the richest land in the world will be reclaimed. The company will receive for the work one half of the land recovered, and it is expected that this will largely repay all expenditure of money that may be made in the work. ... The entire property of the company is below the frost line, and there would be no such damage done to orange plantations as those in Northern Florida have suffered this Winter. ... Each share will carry with it the right to an acre of land. The stock will be put on the Philadelphia Stock Exchange, and is expected will be sold readily. Several applications for stock have already been made by prominent gentlemen in this city.<sup>21</sup>

Within a short time, after the negotiation of the purchase of these type of lands by Disston, international attention was to be drawn to Florida and the land boom of the 1880s began.

On May 30, 1881, Governor William D. Bloxham announced to his colleagues on the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund, that he had, "gone to Philadelphia and had there entered into articles of agreement with Hamilton Disston for the sale to said Disston of four million acres of land at twenty-five cents per acre, and placed said articles before the Board for the action of the Trustees." On the following day, the Trustees accepted the deal and approved the articles of agreement.<sup>22</sup> *The New York Times* reported the sale on June 17, 1881:

Philadelphia, June 16. - What is claimed to be the largest purchase of land ever made by a single person in the world occurred today, when Hamilton Disston, a prominent manufacturer of this city, closed a contract by which he secured 4,000,000 acres of land from the State of Florida. This huge transaction has been in negotiation for several months, and its success was owing to the shrewd tactics on the part of the agents of Mr. Disston. The land acquired, a tract nearly as large as the State of New Jersey, was a part of the public domain of the State of Florida under control of the Board of Internal Improvement of the State. Owing to the recent improved value of the land of Florida, this property has been anxiously looked after by capitalists of New York and Boston. ... there were renewed efforts on the part of the New York people, who were backed by a well-known German banking house of that city, and the syndicate from London, headed by ex-United States Minister to Belgium Sanford and the Boston capitalists to buy the land. ... The tract is situated north of Lake Okeechobee, and is nearly all below the frost line. ... It is Mr. Disston's intention to at once begin an emigration scheme which will result in a very large addition to the population of Florida. To this end, he has already established agencies in several places in this country, and will at once organize bureaus in England, Scotland, France, Germany, Holland and Italy.<sup>23</sup>

In fact, the emigration centers had already been ordered and people of influence contacted. One of the principle negotiators for Disston with the Trustees was the venerable John A. Henderson, one of the most influential men in the State at the time. Ingham

Coryell, whose contacts include General Sanford and James Ingraham, was also, no doubt involved in the laying of the base for this transaction, although this does need further investigation.

In the words of Bloxham's biographer, "No single event in Florida's history has equaled this one in economic significance."<sup>24</sup> The simple terms of the agreement required a first payment of \$200,000 and the balance at agreed upon intervals. The entire amount was due on January 1, 1882. At the receipt of the first payment, Disston received a deed for 250,000 acres of land. Upon receipt of the first payment, which was immediately applied to paying off the Vose debt, railroad companies began lining up to get Trustees approval for their schemes. No fewer than ten such firms, who had all anticipated this sale, were waiting for the release of the lands destined to develop the lands of Florida. Among the most anxious was an Englishman, member of Parliament, Sir Edward James Reed, whose interest in Florida was already well established and who was prepared, even at that moment, to purchase the ailing Florida Central Railroad. Disston made his first payment even before the due date and, by September 1, 1881, had made payments of \$500,000, in cash, with the exception of \$15,000 in coupons.

About this time, Disston was negotiating with Sir Edward J. Reed for the eventual purchase of half of the 4,000,000 acres. These negotiations were very discreet and little record of their occurrence has been left to posterity.<sup>25</sup> By December 17, 1881, Sir Edward, as he was known in England, had entered into an agreement with Disston to handle his half of the purchase and all that was left was to get the Trustees to agree to their arrangement. On the following day, Disston addressed a letter to the Trustees explaining the deal:

Sir Edward Reed, of England, as you know represents large Rail Road interests in your State. I have succeeded in interesting him more directly in South Florida. He will take Two Million acres of my purchase and as I understand him, at once arrange a Land Company in England which will rapidly send many purchasers of land to Florida. He will proceed to Tallahassee without delay in order to complete the transfer to him of his part of my purchase, and will bring with him full details of the arrangement between him and myself. He will make the remaining payments due on my purchase ...<sup>26</sup>

Reed, of course, was not alone in the deal, and had already informed Disston of his contact with Dr. Jacobus Wirtheimer and other Dutch investors. Both Reed and Wirtheimer were involved in various railroads in Florida, including the Florida Southern Railroad and the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad.<sup>27</sup> On January 17, 1882, Reed sent the Trustees a copy of the arrangement between himself, Wirtheimer and Disston.<sup>28</sup> Reed was later to ask for extensions of time to make the payments, but did complete same by December 26, 29 1882.<sup>29</sup>

The sale of so much land could not but arouse the ire of many of Bloxham's political enemies and some of the other interests who had lost out in the bidding. Politicians, pandering to the big vote, small money, medium to small farmer, screamed at the give-away to large corporations. Some noted the fact that foreigners were getting all of the choice land and leaving honest homesteaders the scrap land.<sup>30</sup> One of the most visible critics of the sale was the editor of the *Fernandina Mirror*, the scholarly George R. Fairbanks. He noted that northern

states supported education, improvements and other functions through the sale of their public lands and they did not let them go for 25 cents per acre. The negotiations for the sale, he maintained, were held in secret with no public input whatsoever. Only the extreme poverty of a misrun government could cause such a calamity as this sale. *The Sunland Tribune* of Tampa, also spoke out against the "giveaway" because its editor, J. B. Wall, feared that Disston would select all of the good land in Hillsborough County and ruin any chance of attracting a railroad to the port city.<sup>31</sup> Another group who protested the sale were squatters and new homesteaders. The former because their practiced way of life would now be seriously curtailed, the latter because the land company may claim the land before the required five years for a valid claim could pass, thereby depriving them a chance of good land.<sup>32</sup> Many of these complaints were very legitimate and real. The threat posed by the sale, did make life for some of these groups very uneasy.

Disston was well aware of the problems the sale would have regarding settlers and squatters. He understood going into the deal that legitimate settlers on the land should be allowed to purchase their land at the State price, \$1.25 per acre, and agreed to the stipulation that these settlers had up to one and a half years to lay their claims before the land office to get this price. However, what displeased him most was the fact that the language used by the Trustees was that all settlers now upon the land could get this price. All settlers, Florida Land and Improvement Company Secretary Richard Salinger noted, "includes Squatters pure and simple." However, Disston agreed to this language because, "it would be better to include this class as it might lead to complications which it were better to avoid."<sup>33</sup>

As to the cooperation of Disston with railroad interests, who may or would have claims within the lands his agents selected, Disston, himself, pointed out his total cooperation with the South Florida Railroad Company and the Jacksonville, Tampa and Key West Railroad.<sup>34</sup> Disston seldom had any major disagreement with the railroad interests of the State, except W. D. Chipley, the aggressive vice-president and general superintendent of the Pensacola and Atlantic Railroad, who claimed some of the swamp and overflowed land in southern Florida should be reserved for his, and other, railroads.<sup>35</sup> Disston's aid was vital, in the end, to the completion of the railroad to St. Petersburg constructed by Peter Demens. It was Disston, who could not reach a final agreement with Demens, who introduced the sometimes cantankerous Russian to Phillip Armour, the Drexels of Philadelphia and financier Edward T. Stokesbury, and thus provided the means to the salvation of the Orange Belt Railway.<sup>36</sup> Disston, himself, later became the builder and part-owner of the St. Cloud and Sugar Belt Railroad, and always had an appreciation for the power of the rail. It should be noted that Disston had, at first, contemplated a railroad to cover the and Caloosahatchee valleys, which was to be built under the name of "The Kissimmee Valley and Gulf Railway".<sup>37</sup>

One of the most severe criticisms of the sale was the problem created by the designation of swamp and overflowed lands as those to be sold. Much of the confusion, then and now, comes from the definition of swamp and overflowed given in the Swamp and Overflowed Lands Act of 1850. The crux of the question revolves around the language which designated lands as swamp and overflowed if they were covered with water, all or part of the time, and thus made unfit for cultivation. If the lands could be diked or leveed off and drained so as to make them

useful for agriculture, then they could be granted to the states as swamp and overflowed. This definition also applied to a section of land which could be surveyed, in which fifty percent or more of the lands in such a section were of this description. In fact and practice, this meant that many of the swamp land deeds would, of necessity, contain large portions of dry uplands. This fact was not lost on the Disston interests. On October 18, 1881, shortly after the purchase was made, Ingham Coryell wrote to Governor Bloxham suggesting that the State and the land company resolve the problem of high and dry land, before any public outcry could take place:

I now propose on the part of the Land Company, "That we select by personal inspection all the high & dry lands within the limits of the reclamation district so soon as the condition of the waters will allow it, and that the State join us in the inspection by the appointment of an inspector to represent the State, and all lands returned as not subject to overflows be taken by the Land Company. ... to accomplish the object of setting at rest finally & forever any contention as between the State & our reclamation company as to what are & what are not reclaimed lands, would be pleased to have them do so. Some mode of settlement at this stage would perhaps avoid a vexed questioning in the future. We now have all the evidences of what are or are not, overflowed Lands & plenty of reliable Witnesses to prove the fact. If affected by drainage, the proof would not be so satisfactory."<sup>38</sup>

However, the Trustees did not respond to this suggestion. Problems, as predicted by Coryell, did, indeed, plague the project from this very lack of definition. It is no surprise

that most land historians consider this act one of the most ill-designed land acts ever passed by Congress or administered by the General Land Office.

But, regardless of the criticisms, some did appreciate and defend the Disston Purchase. One of the most ardent of these defenders was Charles E. Dyke, editor of the *Tallahassee Floridian*. This newspaper, as it was known at the time, was the organ of the State's Democratic Party. Yet, it does not diminish the importance of his views, when it is known that most of the registered, white voters were Democrats. After laying out the main features of the purchase contract, Dyke wrote:

As we have heretofore stated, the sale has our heartiest endorsement as a financial transaction in every way meeting the peculiar exigencies of the case. Indeed, under all the circumstances, it is difficult to see how the Board could have done otherwise to accomplish the purpose in view. The debt against the Fund already amounted to some \$900,000, and was constantly increasing, in effect bearing compound interest. The expenses of litigation, added to the interest, annually increased the debt, notwithstanding the large sales of land and the application of the proceeds to its payment. The natural and inevitable result would have been the entire absorption of the lands belonging to the Fund in a few years, leaving nothing for internal improvements. Besides, all this, the creditors, cognizant of these facts, were preparing to apply to the courts to have the entire Fund and all its interests turned over to them, or to have some five or six millions of acres set apart and deeded to them in satisfaction of their claims. Had the

Trustees remained quiet and allowed this to be done they would have been justly subject to censure; ...<sup>39</sup>

This defense of the Trustees' action was taken up by many of the other newspapers throughout the State and helped, in some measure, relieve some of the pressure on the Governor and the company.

As to the actual work of the drainage company, it began with two dredges, one beginning the work of connecting East Lake Tohopekaliga with Lake Tohopekaliga, and the other began work on the canal which would open Lake Okeechobee to the Caloosahatchee River in South Florida. The Trustees were notified of the commencement of work on November 7, 1881, by the president of the Atlantic Gulf Coast and Okeechobee Land Company, Samuel H. Grey, who had replaced William H. Stokely. Hamilton Disston, was the treasurer of that company, but president of the Florida Land and Improvement Company, which handled the land sales transactions for much of the Purchase lands. The success of the reclamation project was noticeable in a very short time. Francis A. Hendry, one of the early promoters of the drainage project, told the *Florida Daily Times*, in early 1882, that the work on the southern end of the project was begun in earnest on January 20, 1882, and had resulted in a canal 28 feet wide and 5 feet deep and one mile in length. This short canal had already shown evidence, according to the Captain, of an increased velocity of the water headed toward the Gulf and had begun to scour out a deeper and wider channel on its own. This, he believed, would eventually result in a large canal that would help to lower Lake Okeechobee some six feet and expose some one million fertile acres to agricultural use.<sup>40</sup> The northern work experienced one of the most famous



incidents in the history of the drainage project.

On November 22nd, [1883] the last dams on the line of canal were cut, and vent given to the waters of the lake. A number of visitors assembled to witness the interesting event. The first rush of the waters carried away the last vestige of the dams, and accumulations in the canal, and the velocity of the current established was sufficient to scour out the softer strata composing the bed of the canal, to a depth several feet below the line of excavation. ... During the first thirty days, the lake surface fell thirty-six inches. ... East Lake Tohopekaliga, formerly surrounded by cypress and marsh margins, has developed a beautiful wide sand beach, the bordering lands are elevated and marshes changed to rich meadow lands.<sup>41</sup>

The Southport canal was the first to be completed, in 1883. In the northern area, this canal connected Lake Tohopekaliga to Lake Cypress. The canal cut off the tortuous channel, now called Dead River, and greatly shortened the length of time to ship goods southward from Kissimmee City, which was founded as a result of the company's efforts. The city of Southport, where the canal leaves Lake Tohopekaliga, was founded within a year of the canal being opened, so much had the level of the big lake fallen. Narcoosee and Runnymede were also founded on reclaimed land in the area and settled by English colonists.

Most importantly for the direct future of Florida was the establishment of the St. Cloud Sugar Plantation. Because Pat Dodson has written so well on this topic, I will only summarize its accomplishments here. After the reclamation of some of the

land near Southport, an experimental patch of 20 acres of sugar cane were planted there in land that was covered with muck and two to three feet of water the year before. The results, monitored by Captain Clay Johnson and John W. Bryan for Mr. Disston, were astonishing. Rufus E. Rose, Clay Johnson's brother-in-law, and later State Chemist, began planting on a larger scale. Disston, in 1887, personally bought half interest in the St. Cloud Sugar Plantation and increased its capital so as to allow the planting of 1,800 acres. The result was a record harvest and yield, higher than any recorded in the United States to that time. Disston soon brought down contractors to erect a sugarmill, costing nearly \$350,000. The mill had a capacity of producing 372 tons per day, much above the average of 200 tons elsewhere. The sugar produced by the plant, in spite of the lack of sophisticated machinery, was excellent and profitable. Congress, in 1890, to aid in the domestic production of sugar, helped the enterprise along by paying a bounty of 2 cents per pound. As Dodson noted: "Influenced by the bounty, advice from sugar experts, and by increasing consumer demand for sugar, Disston took in more associates, and reorganized the plantation under the name of the Florida Sugar Manufacturing Company. It was capitalized at a \$1,000,000, and an additional 36,000 acres were added to the holdings." Financially, this investment did not pan out well, even though the production was high. The panic of 1893 played a role in the financial loss sustained in this investment, but, more importantly, the bounty so gratuitously given by Congress in 1890, was removed in 1894 by a hostile Cleveland administration. With late 1894 and early 1895 came the freezes that so destroyed the citrus industry, and with it, land prices, upon which the whole operation depended, became ridiculously low. Although things picked up in 1895, it was not sustained long

enough for Hamilton Disston to realize any major profit before his death in April of the following year.<sup>42</sup>

Other problems had an impact on the whole scheme of the drainage and -land sales. For the drainage project, the problem existed of the amount of land actually reclaimed and deeded to the company. In spite of two very favorable inspections by state appointed engineers, the legislature, in 1885-86 ordered an investigation into the claims of the company and the commission appointed by the Governor found the company had exaggerated its reclamation and that it was not entitled to all of the lands it claimed as a result of its efforts.

The political nature of this commission can be seen in the appointment of J. J. Daniel, of Jacksonville, a highly skilled surveyor and attorney, who forthrightly wrote to Governor Edward A. Perry, informing him that as a president of a railroad company, with interests, as an attorney, in other such firms, he was technically not qualified to be on the commission according to law. The Governor overlooked these problems and appointed him, along with J. Davidson of Escambia County and Col. John Bradford of Leon County, as commissioner.<sup>43</sup> Indicative of the tenor of the investigation, Daniel wrote to Perry:

Dear Gov. After consultation with my associates, I write to say that we do not consider any of the lands lying South of the section line which runs two miles North of and parallel to the township line between townships 27 and 28 South, as reclaimed by the work of the drainage company. There are lands within the drainage district North of this line around Lake Gentry and Alligator Lake and in the water-shed of Reedy Creek which have

not been effected by the lowering of the waters of Tohopekaliga Lakes.

...we have not carefully examined the lands around Lake Rosalie and Walk in-the-Water and it may be that there has been a partial reclamation effected here, though from the examination we made below, that is around Tiger Lake, we are not disposed to think that the waters of Rosalie and Walk-in-the-Water can have been very materially reduced.<sup>44</sup>

Although later reports from Daniel indicated that the drainage had some impact on the removal of water from the land in the northern area, the company was forced to reconvey some lands already deeded to it and modify some of its operations in order to reach the magic 200,000 acres required by the drainage contract. Throughout the ordeal, Disston and his engineer, James Kreamer, maintained that the company had 45 done exactly as it claimed.<sup>45</sup>

By March of 1889, Kreamer was reporting to Governor Francis Fleming that the progress was becoming more rapid and that many of the promised canals had been dredged. His report of progress listed the following canals as being totally or partially complete by December of 1888: The Cross Prairie Canal, the Southport Canal, the canal connecting Lake Cypress to Lake Hatchineha, the connector between Hatchineha and Lake Kissimmee, the improvement of Tiger Creek and Rosalie Creek (called "Cow Path" in the report), improvements in the Kissimmee River itself, the canal between Lake Okechobee and Hiepochee, the Hiepochee to Lake Flirt canal, and the canal from Lake Hiepochee southward into the Everglades. Also included in this report is the additional canal into the upper Caloosahatchee River and some

improvements in this river's channel. Finally, there is the widening of the Southport canal to a width of 106 feet.<sup>46</sup> There is ample evidence that, in addition to lowering the levels of Lakes Tohopekaliga, East Lake Tohopekaliga, Lake Cypress and some of the smaller lakes to the east of this group, that the level of Lake Hatchineha was reduced. Enough of this lake was lowered to expose an area known as Live Oak Island, on the northeastern shore of the lake, approximately 182 acres in area, not counting the marsh.<sup>47</sup>

In 1893, as required by law, the Trustees issued another "Official Report ... To the Legislature of Florida Relative to the Drainage Operations of the Atlantic and Gulf Coast and Okeechobee Land Company." This report noted that, up to 1893, the company had been conveyed 1,174,943.06 acres of land. It stated that the canals mentioned in Kremer's 1889 report had been deepened and snagged, thus facilitating more outflow of water from the land. This report also recognized the newer canals in the northern area to Lake Hart and from that waterbody to the Econlochatchee River. Finally, it claimed that the level of the great Lake Okeechobee had been lowered four and one half feet below its normal level at the time the contract was entered into. All in all, the report was very favorable to the company's interest and promised little trouble in the future deeding of lands under the old drainage contract.<sup>48</sup>

As for the settlement portion of Disston's work in Florida, one has only to look at the map around the drainage contract to see the towns of Narcoosee, Runnymede, St. Cloud, Southport and the city of Kissimmee to note the growth of this area. However, less publicized, though just as important, was the development of Tarpon Springs, Gulfport, Anclote, and other cities in modern Pinellas

County to see an even greater effect on the growth of Florida. The main impetus to the growth of this vital area was through the Lake Butler Villa Company, another of the many Disston land companies. According to Gertrude K. Stoughton's *Tarpon Springs, Florida: The Early Years*, Disston and former Arizona governor, Anson P. K. Safford, were looking for a place from which to make a resort. James Hope, son of Anclote pioneer and U. S. Deputy Surveyor, Sam Hope, acted as their guide. Upon reaching Spring Bayou, the two immediately agreed that they had found their spot. So thinking, the Florida Land and Improvement Company was assigned title to about 70,000 acres of land in the vicinity. This company soon transferred most of it to the Lake Butler Villa Company, of which Safford was the president. Disston also had agents looking further down the Pinellas peninsula for additional opportunities. They settled upon the land that soon would be called "Disston City", today's Gulfport. Tarpon Springs flourished under the guidance of Safford and Mathew R. Marks, another experienced real estate man, who made a name for himself in Orange County before migrating west. Disston City, on the other hand, suffered greatly when Demens ended the Oranole Belt Railway in St. Petersburg, named for the Russian's home town.<sup>49</sup> Thus, two very important areas in the State of Florida owe their very existence to the efforts of Hamilton Disston.

Also owing much to the Disston heritage is the Florida sugar industry. Although some sugar has almost always been grown in Florida since Spanish times, Disston's experiments in St. Cloud and the surrounding area proved the potential for the exploitation of the land for the growth of sugar. Rice was also experimented with in this vicinity. A separate company was founded to exploit this crop's potential also,

but it was fairly short-lived compared to sugar.<sup>50</sup> Like other Floridians, he experimented in a variety of crops, including oranges and tobacco.<sup>51</sup> This latter would seem to be a natural product for the heavy cigar smoking Disston. His drainage idea inspired many to do the same with their lands and helped to bring about a whole new way of looking at swamp lands.

Little more needs to be said about his immigration schemes. He was successful in helping to bring a number of English settlers to Central Florida, where their heritage lives on today. He also brought in Italian laborers to work on the dredges in the early years of the drainage project. At one point, as a humanitarian gesture, he offered forty acres of land to each of fifty Jewish families displaced by the recent Russian pogroms who were stranded in Philadelphia.<sup>52</sup> The exact number of immigrants he brought to Florida is impossible to guess, but it was substantial.

Hamilton Disston was a complex man, like any of us. However, there has been a persistent story that needs further examination, and that is the alleged suicide of this active and vital man. The main sources of the story, and there are only two cited, are; one, the Democratic newspaper of Philadelphia, and; two, the oral testimony of a nephew who barely knew "uncle Ham", but stated that it was the family secret. Upon examination, one should remember the times in which this newspaper story was written was the age of "yellow journalism", William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer and others. Remember, also, that Hamilton Disston was a large and regular contributor to the Republican Party, who also had, at times, some political ambitions of his own. Additionally, we should not forget that he was close to Matt Quay of Pennsylvania. the hated Republican "Boss" of the United

States Senate. The nephew's statement can be seen, in some circles, as hearsay. The alleged cause of the suicide was the supposed losses by the Disston firm during the Panic of 1893-94 and the coming due of a \$1,000,000 note drawn on the family business.

The facts of the case do not lead to a conclusion of suicide, especially since there were no eye-witnesses and the coroner's official report, recognized by all, reads that he died by natural causes, probably a weakened heart, i.e. a heart-attack. The "Father of Business History", Alfred Chandler, in his book on *Land Titles and Fraud*, noted, on page 493, that he was acquainted with Hamilton Disston and that he died of a heart-attack, while at home. If the obituary in the May 1, 1896, edition of the *Florida Times-Union* is typical, the newspapers reported that, "Heart disease was the supposed cause of his death." How could only one newspaper get the story right, when a coroner, a friend and all of the other newspaper organizations in the country reported his death incorrectly?

What of the charge of near bankruptcy caused by the Panic of 1893-94? Yes, the Disston works did reduce wages by 10 per cent during the middle of the panic, however, the company was on sound enough ground that by May 23, 1895, they had restored the lost percentage and the firm's business had increased 12 percent from 53 April of 1894 to April of 1895.<sup>53</sup> On April 4, 1896, the Disston firm announced in *The New York Times*: "Value of annual product, \$2,500,000. Our foreign trade is 20 per cent of our total business. Our output is 20 per cent greater than six years ago." This would hardly put a business out of commission.

Finally, there is the will of Hamilton Disston. This document, as recorded in *The*

*New York Times* of May 9, 1896, stated that: "In the petition filed by the executors the value of the estate is given as 'over \$100,000,' but it is thought that it will amount to several million dollars when the heavy insurance Mr. Disston carried is included." The "income" from the will and its enjoyment was to go to all the children, until his son reached his thirtieth year, when he could then take his full one-third share. His wife was to get most of the material goods (house, horses, carriages, etc.) and enjoy all of the other income until her demise, when it would become residuary estate. Fully one-third of the real estate, except that in Florida, was to go to the wife during her natural lifetime. This is not a document of a poor, destitute man, driven to the brink and beyond by a \$1,000,000 note due on his investments. It is interesting to observe that his Florida holdings are excluded from his personal will. The answer why this is so can be no simpler than the fact that corporations, under law, are treated as separate, corporal bodies, with lives of their own. With Disston's friends in the financial and political worlds, there are questions to be raised as to whether or not he could have won an extension, refinancing, etc. of this note, e.g. one of his business associates was Edward T. Stokesbury, a later partner in the "House of Morgan".

The entire scenario of a financially distraught, no place to turn man bent on suicide simply does not fit the available evidence at this time. The newspaper account of the suicide in a bathtub, is much too melodramatic. The whole repetition of the story smacks of another "Seward's Folly" myth of American history.

In summation, Florida lost a good friend when Hamilton Disston passed from this world. This was recognized by his contemporaries. In its editorial for May 1, 1896,

the day after Disston died, the *Florida Times-Union*, stated: "Floridians will read the news of the sudden death of Hamilton Disston with a feeling of genuine regret. He did wonders for the advancement of Florida's interests and the development of her products. He can be classed as one of Florida's best friends." Kissimmee, St. Cloud, Narcoosee, Tarpon Springs, Gulfport, Runnymede, Fort Myers, LaBelle, Moore Haven, etc. all owe a debt of gratitude to Hamilton Disston. The great attempt to rescue Florida from the swamps, mosquitoes and alligators, and make it a showcase of civilization is the legacy of Disston's Florida efforts. Without his leading the way, how long would the State have to await one like him: Flagler, Chipley,

Plant, all followed his lead and made their own marks upon the landscape. There may be those who chide these remarks and look at the environmental damage done by his and succeeding generations, however, they take the man out of his time, and thrust upon him a knowledge he did not have nor have a chance to acquire. Without him, many who now criticize would never have migrated to the Sunshine State and stayed away, wondering how anyone but the brave Seminoles could live in the land of swamps and alligators.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See the following for accounts of Henry Disston: Herman L. Collins and Wilfred Jordan. *Philadelphia: A Story of Progress*. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1941), 417-18; Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, editors. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Volume III (Cushman-Fraser). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 19\_\_, 318-19; Harry C. Silcox. *A Place to Live and Work: The Henry Disston Saw Works and the Tacony Community of Philadelphia*. (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994); and William D. Disston, Henry Disston and William Smith. "The Disston History." May 1920. Typescript in the Disston Papers of the Tacony Branch Library

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of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The author would like to express his sincere thanks for the assistance rendered by this library's very capable and courteous staff.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson and Malone. *Dictionary of American Biography*. 318.

<sup>3</sup> Disston History. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Silcox. *A Place to Live and Work*. 54-55.

<sup>5</sup> Disston History. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Silcox. 55. Samuel W. Pennypacker, in his *The Autobiography of a Pennsylvanian*, (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1918.) noted that McManes had made his fortune in street railways. Pennypacker depicts this "thrifty, capable and vigorous Irishman" as an absolute autocrat who "tolerated no difference in opinion in the ranks." He states that McManes was the head of the Republican organization in Philadelphia during the 1870s. 176.

<sup>7</sup> Pennypacker. *Autobiography*. 174.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Silcox. *A Place to Live and Work*. 55.

<sup>10</sup> For Disston's relationship to Wharton Barker, see Pennypacker's *Autobiography*, 124; For Scott's relationship, see *Florida Dispatch*, March 13, 1888. 218; For Quay, see, Stanley P. Hirshson. *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt*. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1968), 227-28. Hirshson also notes the ambition by Disston to make a run for the Senate in 1891. Disston was also on the board of directors for the Investment Company of Philadelphia, which was capitalized at over \$4,000,000. Also serving on this board were Craig Lippincott, John Wannamaker, Henry Hovt Jr., and Issac Clothier. [See Poor's Manual of the Railroads of the United States: 1890. (Henry V. Poor. New York: American Banknote Co., 1890), 47.]

<sup>11</sup> For his father's appearance as an elector, see, Johnson and Malone, *Dictionary of American Biography*, 319; For Hamilton's letter of June 18, 1888, J. J. Dunne to W. D. Barnes. "Old Railroad Bonds" (Drawer), no file (old box destroyed). Land Records and Title Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee, Florida. Letter is loose in the drawer at

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this time. It is on the letter-head of the "Keystone Chemical Company."

<sup>12</sup> Silcox. *A Place to Live and Work*. 54-55.

<sup>13</sup> Silcox. *A Place to Live and Work*. 55; Letterhead on letter of June 18, 1888, cited above. [Disston is listed as "Vice-President" on this letterhead.]; and Pennypacker. *Autobiography*. 125.

<sup>14</sup> Disston History. 63, 72-73.

<sup>15</sup> Collins and Jordan. *Philadelphia*. 418.

<sup>16</sup> Silcox. *A Place to Live and Work*. 56.

<sup>17</sup> Edward C. Williamson. *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age: 1877-1893*. (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976), 73.

<sup>18</sup> T. Frederick Davis. "The Disston Land Purchase." *Florida Historical Quarterly*. 17(January 1939): 203-06. This short piece is still the best and simplest way to understand the Disston Drainage Contract and the Disston Purchase. Davis is emphatic about the two separate arrangements; with good cause.

<sup>19</sup> The original language of the contract stated Township 23, but this was amended later. The Peace River is what was meant, but, looking at today's map, one finds Peace Creek (the original language) is a small stream, running east to west near Bartow, and flowing into Peace River, which is the current name of the waterbody meant by the contract.

<sup>20</sup> Davis. "Disston Land Purchase", 205-06.

<sup>21</sup> *The New York Times*. February 18, 1881.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida, Volume 2. Tallahassee: I. B. Hilson, 1904. 500-01. [Hereafter, Trustees Minutes, Vol. #, Page #]

<sup>23</sup> *The New York Times*. June 17, 1881.

<sup>24</sup> Kenneth R. Johnson. "The Administration of Governor William Dunnington Bloxham, 1881-1885." Masters Thesis, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida. August 1959.58.

<sup>25</sup> Davis. "The Disston Land Purchase." 207-08.

<sup>26</sup> Letter of December 18, 1881. Disston to Trustees. Brown Rectangular Filing Box, "Disston", Land Records and Title Section, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Tallahassee, Florida. [Hereafter, "Brown Box. Disston"] According to the *Florida Daily Times*, of December 23, 1881, the negotiations took place in New York during a series of "frequent interviews." Reed, for purposes of biographical background, was a member of Parliament, a noted civil engineer, a naval architect and consulting engineer for both the Russian and Japanese navies (ironically) and the chairman of the Milford Dry Docks.

<sup>27</sup> Trustees Minutes. Vol. 3. 199-200.

<sup>28</sup> Brown Box. "Disston." Letter of January 17, 1882. Reed to Bloxham.

<sup>29</sup> Davis. "The Disston Land Purchase." 208.

<sup>30</sup> Williamson. *Florida Politics in the Gilded Age*. 75.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 76

<sup>32</sup> Johnson. "The Administration of William Dunnington Bloxham." 60.

<sup>33</sup> Brown Box. "Disston." Letter of October 3, 1881. Salinger to Judge E. F. Dunne.

<sup>34</sup> Brown Box. "Disston." Letter of December 18, 1881. Disston to Trustees, previously cited. This file also contains handwritten copies of the agreements with the two railroads.

<sup>35</sup> Florida Department of State, Division of Library and Information Services, Bureau of Archives and Records Management. Record Group 593, Series 665, Carton 1. Letter of April 14, 1884, Chipley to Bloxham.

<sup>36</sup> Albert Parry. *Full Steam Ahead: The Story of Peter Demens, Founder of St. Petersburg, Florida*. (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors Publishing Co., 1987), 13-16. Also see letter of support, dated December 29, 1886. Disston to Governor E. A. Perry. "Old Railroad Bonds ..." [Drawer] Loose, file box destroyed. Land Records and Title Section ...

<sup>37</sup> Old Railroad Bonds ... [Drawer], "Atlantic and Gulf Coast and Okeechobee Land Company" [File].

Letter of June 8, 1888. Disston to Governor E. A. Perry. Land Records and Title Section ...

<sup>38</sup> Brown Box. "Disston". Letter of October 18, 1881. 1. Coryell to Governor W. D. Bloxham.

<sup>39</sup> *Tallahassee Floridian*. June 28, 1881. 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Florida Daily Times*. February 23, 1882. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Cantrell. *When Kissimmee Was Young*. (Kissimmee: Self Published, 1948), 25. According to Pat Dobson's research, which is confirmed by the notice in the Minutes of the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, this canal was actually dug in 1884, one year after the Southport canal. Ms. Cantrell's dating is, therefore, slightly inaccurate in this instance. The author would like to thank Leigh Camp, of St. Cloud, Florida, for finding this contradiction in the sources herein cited.

<sup>42</sup> This is a quick summarization of Pat Dodson's article, "Hamilton Disston's St. Cloud Sugar Plantation, 1887-1901." *Florida Historical Quarterly* 49 (April 1971): 357-369.

<sup>43</sup> Florida State Archives. Record Group 593, Series 665, Carton 1. Letter of December 4, 1885. Daniel to Perry.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. Letter of March 23, 1886. Daniel to Perry.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. Folder 2. Letter of June 19, 1886. Disston to John A. Henderson.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Letter of March 5, 1889. Kreamer to Fleming.

<sup>47</sup> See a series of letters in Volumes 20-22 in the Miscellaneous Letters to Surveyor General. Land Records and Title Section ... For the acreages involved here, see the Official Plat of Township 28 South, Range 29 East, surveyed by William H. Macy, January 16, 1897.

<sup>48</sup> "Official Report of the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund to the Legislature of Florida Relative to the Drainage Operations of the Atlantic and Gulf Coast Canal and Okeechobee Land Company, 1893." Tallahassee: Tallahassee Book and Job Office, 1893. It is worth noting that the lowering of the Lake Okeechobee by four and one half feet, via this operation, would be greatly

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disputed today, as it was in the years immediately preceding Governor Broward's great effort.

<sup>49</sup> See, Gertrude K. Stoughton. *Tarpon Springs, Florida: The Early Years*. (Tarpon Springs: Tarpon Springs Area Historical Society, 1975, Second Edition), and Parry. *Full Steam Ahead*. 23-24.

<sup>50</sup> *The Tropical Sun*. (West Palm Beach/Juno) April 1, 1891, and June 10, 1891. It was reported in this latter article that 15,000 acres was rented for four years at a rent of \$600,000. The firm was known as the Kissimmee Rice Manufacturing Company.

<sup>51</sup> *Florida Times-Union*, January 21, 1886. Reported that Disston had 56,000 young orange trees planted in a grove on East Lake Tohopekaliga. For the Tobacco story, see *Florida Times-Union*. December 4, 1895.

<sup>52</sup> *South Florida Journal*. March 9, 1882. He wrote the offer in an open letter to Mayor King.

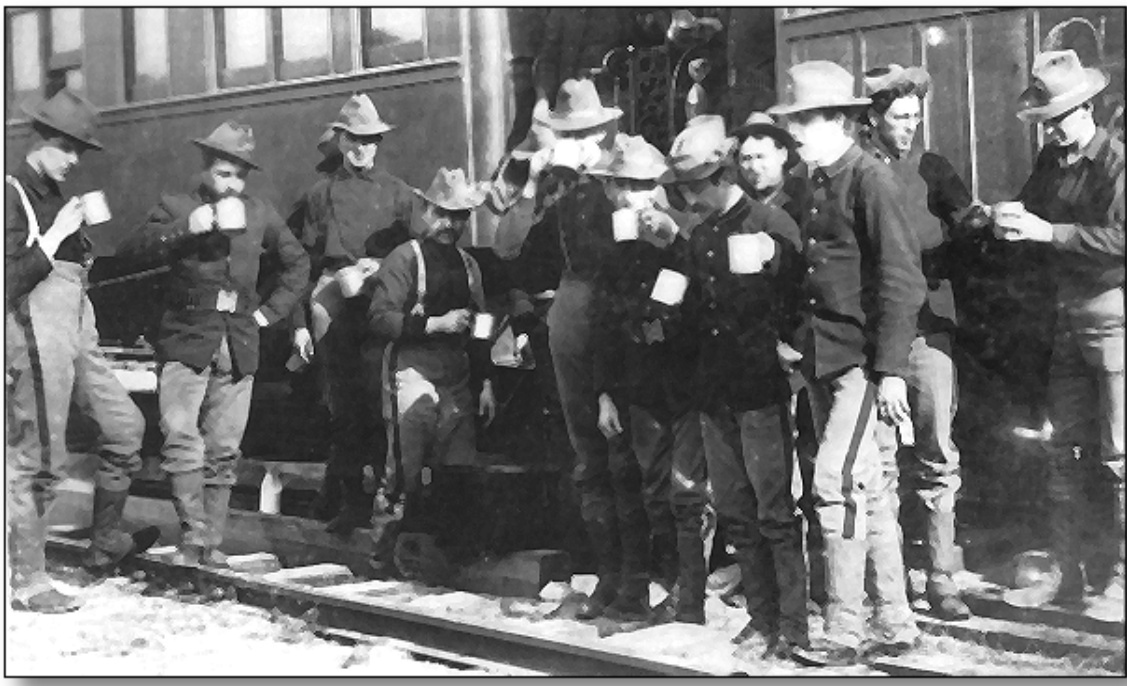
<sup>53</sup> *The New York Times*. May 23, 1895. 1.





**Henry Bradley Plant's recently opened Tampa Bay Hotel and its magnificent lawns and gardens stand ready in this 1892 scene to capture the world's attention in 1898 as headquarters for the U. S. Army and hundreds of news correspondents who arrived to report on the "splendid little war" with Spain.**

Photograph courtesy of the Tampa Historical Society.



**Troops of the New York 71st Infantry bound by rail for Tampa, stop over in Lakeland for coffee and rest from the long train ride.**

Photograph courtesy of the H. B. Plant Museum.

# WAITING FOR WAR TO BEGIN: News Dispatches from the Tampa Bay Hotel

Alexandra Frye

*A recent acquisition to the archives of Tampa's Henry B. Plant Museum is a collection of news clippings from the Spanish-American War period. A. E. Dick, manager of the Tampa Bay Hotel in the 1890's, subscribed to the clipping service owned by Henry Romenke. The service, located at 110 5th Avenue, New York, NY, was billed as the "most complete newspaper cutting bureau in the world." Drawn from publications throughout the nation and world, these clippings offer a window into life amongst the thousands of regular and volunteer troops and officers gathered in Tampa in preparation for embarkation to Cuba. On behalf of the Henry B. Plant Museum, Alexandra Frye choose from all the clippings ones which best describe the town and residents of Tampa, the Tampa Bay Hotel and the general conditions of camp life as reported by correspondents to an eager reading audience throughout the world.*

When the Spanish American War burst onto the stage of history on February 15, 1898, with the sinking of the U. S. Battleship Maine, it was only to last until the signing of the Treaty of Paris on December 10. As short as the actual fighting may have been, the "splendid little war" occurred during the era when Americans obtained their information, entertainment and opinion through the print medium, and daring correspondents went to great (and sometimes dangerous) lengths to bring back 'the news.' This was America's first military incursion onto foreign shores, and our regular and

volunteer soldiers and sailors, and our nation, would be changed forever

By the turn of century there were, according to Charles Brown in his book, *The Correspondents' War*, about 14,000 weeklies and 1,900 dailies throughout the nation serving a highly literate American population (near 90 percent). Competition was fierce for readers. New York alone had eight morning and seven evening dailies and at least two dozen weeklies.<sup>1</sup> The names of the most important publishers and editors of that era still resonate today, Joseph Pulitzer, William Randolph Hearst, James Gordon Bennett Jr. among them. Popular writers enjoyed celebrity status: Richard Harding Davis, for example, served as the model for "The Gibson Man," (masculine counterpart of The Gibson Girl).<sup>2</sup> Stephen Bonsal, James Creelman, Ambrose Bierce, and Peter Finley Dunne were names well known to reading audiences in cities from coast to coast. Illustrators such as Frederic Remington shared in the star status; although photography was used to document events, its reproduction in books and newspapers had not yet reached its full potential.

These elements came into confluence during the Spanish-American War, the first time the United States sent troops to fight far from home and its last amateur war. There were fewer than 30,000 regular army soldiers when the war was declared. President McKinley issued a call for 125,000 volunteers and later for another 75,000. An estimated 60,000<sup>3</sup> soldiers passed through Tampa, Florida, chosen as the base of embarkation for the army because of its



**Tampa's tall trees, scrub grass, palmettoes, and sand is the setting for the men of K Troop. Pictured in an original photograph by William Dinwiddie is Sgt. Philip K. Sweet, Henry S. van Schaick., Colton Reed, Allen M. Coville, Henry Fletcher., and Sherman Bell.**

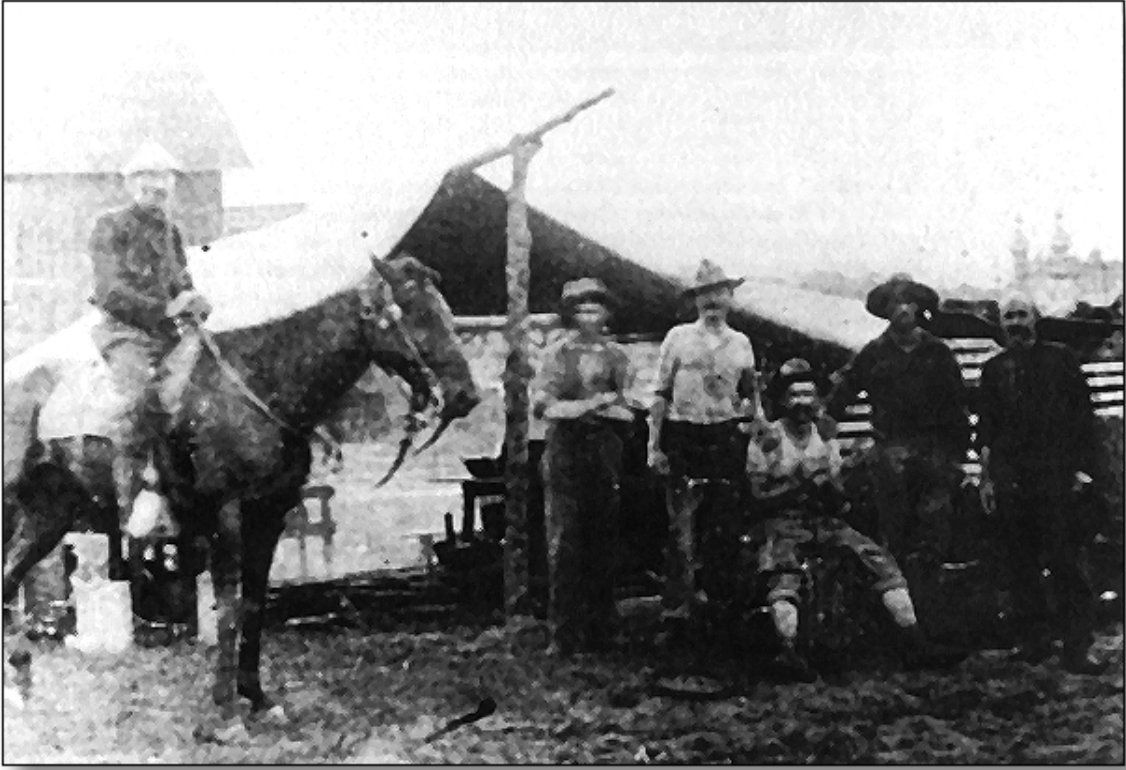
Photograph courtesy of Burgert Bros. Collection.

deep water port, its rail line and its proximity to Cuba.

The first troops arrived April 20, 1898.<sup>4</sup> They continued to pour in through May and into June. Along with the soldiers came correspondents from newspapers throughout the nation, as well as foreign observers from such countries as Great Britain and Germany. By May 22, the *Tampa Daily Tribune* reported that 125 journalists were in town, with more arriving. One rather young reporter, the audacious 16-year-old son of Missouri's 11th Infantry bandmaster, persuaded the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* to pay his way to Tampa in exchange for some articles. The young entrepreneur's name was

Fiorello LaGuardia, and fame would come to him at another time as mayor of the City of New York.<sup>5</sup> To their surprise, these reporters would remain in Tampa for a month or more, waiting for the invasion to begin. Stringent army censorship precluded strategic information reports. Consequently, many of the dispatches they sent back home gave readers news of their volunteer sons and sweethearts, announced the latest promotions within the ranks and described day-to-day life in the camps of Tampa.

The vignettes they penned described heat, dust, monotony, and military frustration--but also offered humor and insight.



**Cavalry troops of the 1st United States Volunteers, Rough Riders, are shown in their corral area. Arriving in Tampa ready for mounted action against the Spanish, most of the army's cavalry were ordered to leave their horses behind when they finally sailed for Cuba.**

Photograph courtesy of the H. B. Plant Museum.

In the first week of May, the editor of the *Plattsburgh (PA) Press*, reported that the 21st Infantry was in camp as were some six thousand men, all waiting for the 'expedition' to Cuba to begin--although no one quite knew when that would be. "The troops have not been idle since coming here," the editor wrote. "Drills in extended order and practice marches are the order of the day. These are made with full equipment to inure the men to the climate and hard service and with the thermometer in the nineties are no pleasure jaunts.

"The climate is torrid, sure enough" he continued. "At mid-day the thermometer hovers in the nineties but the nights are cool and pleasant. There has been no rain in this

vicinity in eight months and the black, grimy dust is enough to choke you. It gets into your eyes, your nose, your food and, were it not for the ample bathing facilities in the vicinity, it would be unbearable."

Dean A. C. Peck wrote to the *Denver (CO) Republican*, charitably describing the area as "beautifully located at the head of ... Bright Tampa Bay with crystal spray" and an adjacent countryside dotted with clear lakes, many swamps, and "a species of ragged, shred like moss hanging from the trees ... which is "self-propelling." When it came to the town, A. C. Peck wrote: "We do not call Tampa much of a place in the North or West where our eyes are accustomed to well



**U.S. Army officers, newspaper writers, war correspondents, and a foreign military observer gather on the grounds of Plant's Tampa Bay Hotel. The group includes Stephen Crane (center in white suit.) Richard Harding Davis (in helmet.) and Captain Arthur H. Lee of Great Britain (seated front right.)**

Photograph courtesy of the H. B. Plant Museum

paved and kept streets and fine business blocks ... The soil is a fine, gray sand. With one or two exceptions, where dilapidated and uneven pavements of wooden blocks make locomotion dangerous, the streets, including the main shaft, have this sand to a depth of at least a foot, through which teams and pedestrians alike must struggle ... There are few business blocks of any pretension. There are some fine residences."

That was about as kind as descriptions of Tampa ran. *The New York Times* reporter wrote: "There is no shade at the artillery and cavalry camps, and very little at the infantry camps near Tampa. There is not a regiment

that would not prefer going to Cuba at once to waiting here in the heat and sand glare and monotonous inaction."

There was something everyone agreed on: The Tampa Bay Hotel, "a magnificent winter resort built of brick in the Moorish style, with spacious grounds, wide verandas, a casino, bicycle track and natatorium ... only a quarter of a mile from the business part of the city ... Every night the electric lights shine on handsome uniforms and elaborate summer costumes. A regimental band plays on the broad veranda and the walks are full of young couples whose talk is certainly not of war," wrote the *New York*

*Press* on May 6, the same day the *Providence* (R. I.) *Journal* called the Tampa Bay Hotel a "magnificent 'caravansary' built by Mr. Plant ... a beautiful place and good hotel. One of the few complaints sounded came from a Detroit man with the 32nd Michigan volunteers, who wrote to the *News Tribune*: "It is a great resort just now for all the army officers and their ladies, but I understand they do not go out of their way to make it a pleasant for a common private, and the prices charged, especially for wet goods are so high that a \$13 a month man would not go back a second time. One of the boys told me that he went in there last night with five others and the six glasses of beer cost 80 cents. In this climate where the boys have a thirst with them all the time, you can imagine how long they could keep that up."

The first soldiers to reach Tampa were seasoned veterans of the regular army. By mid-May, according to a *Providence Journal* report, the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th, 9th, 10th, 13th, 17th, 21st, 22nd and 24th Infantry had arrived, plus part of the 9th Cavalry and Light Batteries E and K of the 1st Artillery. An "immense gathering officers" convened at the Tampa Bay Hotel, which served as army headquarters. It is the most remarkable reunion in the regular service has been since the war

The writer also detailed the lack of formality among American officers. "These officials are all cheery, approachable, genial American citizens. Many of them insist on wearing civilian clothes, even here and now, at all times when they are not actually on duty. In business clothes they look very much like prosperous business men." The *Tampa Daily Tribune* summarized an article from the *Jacksonville Times-Union* and *Citizen* about General Wheeler's decision to move into the campsite with his men, rather

than stay with other officers at the Tampa Bay Hotel. The dispatch ended with "That is the way for an American general to treat American soldiers, and they appreciate it." Another correspondent wrote of seeing an American captain at the Tampa train station, where he was seen off by ten or more of his men. The captain had personal words and a handshake for each soldier. When the writer commented that this kind of cordiality would never exist between a European officer and his men, the captain replied: "Well, bless your soul ... they are my boys. You be with them, as I have, behind a wagon train or in a hastily scooped out trench and feel that each and every one of them would die for you in a minute and not one of them dream of leaving you while there was a drop of blood left in his body and see if you would ever forget it. My boys, God bless them! I have three of them on the train going to Atlanta with me and they have everything just as good as I have and will, so long as I have a dollar."

The American regular soldier was often compared in print to his continental counterpart. Writing to the *Baltimore Sun* in mid-May, American Major J. G. Pangborn declared there was "absolutely no compari-

**With the world's attention on America's war with Spain, several foreign nations sent military observers to the U. S. Army headquarters at Plant's Tampa Bay Hotel. Captain Arthur H. Lee of Great Britain (on left) and Count von Goetzen of Germany were two of the military attaches.**

Photograph courtesy of the H. B. Plant Museum  
straight fellow in dark blue shirt, rough blue trousers, dingy leggings and dun colored slouch hat, who strides the streets of Tampa, is a man every inch of him." Captain Arthur Lee, official observer and reporter for the British government, was quoted as saying he had never seen so many physically impressive troops before, well disciplined but also with "a consciousness of individual capability and an atmosphere of independence about each and every one..." which was in striking contrast to the



European soldier, who "is simply a bit of this big machine in which he plays so insignificant a part that his individuality is wholly gone when he answers his first roll call. By and of himself he is a wooden image compared to the American soldier..."

The American volunteers who began arriving in Tampa in May did not, at first, get high marks from some journalists like *New York Evening Post* writer who observed in a May 19 dispatch: "In many ways these volunteers are ridiculous in comparison with the regulars. They are younger, smaller,

paler, weaker. They are undisciplined. Though they are mostly of a very good class of people morally, they furnished more cases of drunkenness in a day than all the regulars had furnished in a week. That was not because they were as individual men more inclined to drunkenness but because they were undisciplined youths, suddenly turned out of their homes into a camp, and felt themselves bound to something rough and soldier-like. As soldiers they are simply not, man for man, one-half what the regulars are."

The volunteers also had no appreciation for distinctions of rank, as the *Evening Post* correspondent recounted in his article the following week. A group of Michigan 32nd volunteers trekked over to the Tampa Bay Hotel (possibly including the Detroit man mentioned earlier, who thought the beer cost too much) and "taking possession of the tables in the writing room, proceeded to write letters home on sheets bearing the heading: 'Headquarters of the Army.' The officers of the regular army who frequent and often fill these tables in writing their own letters, officials and others, took this irruption with perfect philosophy, nor had the volunteers any idea that they were guilty of any breach of discipline." Other articles alluded to the better meals that the regular army enjoyed, because they had experienced cooks who knew what to order and how to get the best available.

As soldiers, officers and correspondents spent the month of May speculating on when the invasion of Cuba would begin (and sometimes erroneously reporting that it had begun), journalists had a chance to observe the Cubans who lived in Ybor City. *Chicago Tribune* correspondent H. J. Whigham, described the weeks leading up to embarkation in the book, *The Spanish American War*. Recalling Ybor City, Whigham wrote: "This was my first introduction to the people for whom, ostensibly, we were going to war, and it was something of a shock. I talked with the secretary of the local junta and the editor of the Cuban newspaper and many other patriots and I expressed my opinion of them in a dispatch at the time which I have not since felt included to alter. They were childlike, simple and which they could certainly have done as far as numbers were concerned, but their sole knowledge of warfare was confined to the use of the machete. In their belief there was nothing so terrifying to the

Spaniard as the Cuban sword. ...Altogether the Cubans were amusing children, but if these Ybor City people were good specimens of the race, it was plain that a free and independent Cuba would be a very dangerous experiment."

Correspondents chaffed under the censorship that General Shafter imposed on all journalists, and some grew testy enough to take out their irritation on the small town that was struggling to accommodate them. But few dispatches can match the satiric note of Charles E. Hands, for the *London Mail*, who painted the quintessential "Wish You Were Here" postcard of soldiers lolling under the palms. He began by writing: "The United State army for the liberation of Cuba is sitting down amid orange grove and palm trees, and bright flowers, at Tampa, in Florida, gazing dreamily out of the Gulf of Mexico. General Shafter and General Wade, with the headquarters staff and as many of the army war correspondents as there is room for, are at the Tampa Bay Hotel. Here we have been for a fortnight or three weeks, or more or less--in this balmy scent-laden atmosphere one loses count of time--and here, for all one can see, we are likely to remain until the war is over." Mr. Hands recites a litany of tongue-in-cheek complaints, starting with the Tampa Bay Hotel lobby: "The most grievous of all the hardships we are suffering is the terribly long walk from the great, cool, airy hotel lobby, where we smoke and otherwise carry on the war, to the dining room." Occasionally, he admits, they think about Cuba--but not for long. (Too hot to think of anything for very long.) Instead, they go to the "queer little town (Tampa) and watch an acrobatic monkey chained to a porch, or parrots or even the live alligator on exhibit in a packing case. Then they go back to the hotel where there is a man selling horses suitable for soldiers or war correspondents,



and when they tire of that they smoke a cigar or have some fruit. And so it goes." "A restful blissful feeling of sweet indolent content pervades the place. You know now why it is that the Southerner is easy going and poor, and why he drawls in his speech ..."

By June 7, the waiting was over, and soldiers and journalists piled into waiting transports, eager to put Tampa behind them and get on with the war. With the reported sighting of Spanish ships, there would be yet another week's delay before they finally sailed. The classic army motto, "hurry up and wait," could very well have described the long, hot weeks of boredom, anxiety and uneasiness they endured. By midAugust, the invasion had concluded.

Correspondents of almost every major newspaper, including artists and photographers, sent to report on America's preparation for war, instead found the small town of Tampa and the spectacle of Henry Plant's Moorish-design Tampa Bay Hotel. The Tampa they found was still small and struggling with man and nature to exist. Thrust onto the pages of history in 1898, soldiers, sailors, writers and artists would not forget their brief stay.

The history of its part in the war is short, and not altogether flattering, but it was the nation's and the world's first glimpse of Tampa and it would not be forgotten by the war's participants, correspondents or by the residents who found themselves described in newspapers in every major city in America, Great Britain and Europe. To Tampa, it was a "splendid little war" in so many ways.

#### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Brown, *The Correspondents' War* (Charles Scribner's Sons, NY, 1967), p.11-13

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.77

<sup>3</sup> J. Schellings, *Tampa's Role in Spanish American War* (University of Miami Press.)

<sup>4</sup> C. Tebeau, *History of Florida*, (University of Miami Press), p.313

<sup>5</sup> G. J. A. O'Toole, *The Spanish War*, (Norton Simon & Co., NY), p. 232

## THE SUMMER OF '47

Gary R. Mormino

It was the summer of our discontent, a seedtime of change. In Washington, an embattled Democratic president blamed a "do nothing" Republican Congress for the nation's woes, while a resurgent GOP pledged to return America to family values and limited government. A prying press greatly annoyed the President and First Lady, who attempted to protect their only daughter from publicity. In Hollywood, a handsome actor testified that the movie industry was controlled by subversives holding un-American views; critics charged that the fading movie star was more interested in Washington than Hollywood. In the Middle East, Palestinians and Jews battled in the streets, while in England, royalty blazed anew as the public fell in love with a young princess.

In far-away Florida, summer ushered in a season of controversies. Red tide and overflowing sewers lapped the shores of Tampa Bay, while overhead, military aircraft sprayed chemicals to combat new and old pests. When students returned to classrooms, they discovered "portables," visible symbols of overcrowding. In Tallahassee, lawmakers faced angry taxpayers and frustrated educators. A combative "He Coon" governor announced plans to improve Florida's educational system. Tampans squared off in an ugly debate over the "big league" image of its football stadium. It was the summer of 1947.

That summer, a surging economy ignited by pent-up consumer demand and cold war anxieties buoyed the spirits of Floridians. An optimism borne of victory and postwar prosperity swept Tampa Bay. But the demons of the southern past—segregation, poverty, and nature—clashed with dreamers' visions of a new Tampa.

In 1947, the ghosts of World War II still lingered. Following the conflict, Congress had drastically slashed the military, shutting down most of Florida's military bases. But for some crisscrossed runways, Henderson Field, located in sparsely-settled northeast Hillsborough County, became a memory. In peacetime, Henderson Field's 2,000 acres served new purposes. The federal government deeded the scrubland to Hillsborough County. Within a decade the area served as home to two breweries and the University of South Florida.

Fortune also favored Tampa when the U. S. government decommissioned Drew Army Air Field. Emblematic of World War II's galvanic impact upon the region, Dale Mabry Highway was built to connect MacDill and Drew Fields. In the summer of '47, Drew Field named after businessman John H. Drew faded into history, when officials renamed the facility Tampa International Airport. The city inherited a \$20 million windfall.<sup>1</sup>

MacDill Army Air Field alone survived the postwar blues. In September 1947, the Army Air Corps officially became the United States Air Force, a move which strengthened MacDill's profile.

Cold War tensions in Latin America and the Caribbean assured MaeDill's survival in the 1940s and 50s. Indeed, the mood in Congress swung dramatically from isolationism to containment in 1947, with the declaration and passage of the Marshall Plan and Truman Doctrine. The Cold War and the Military Industrial Complex funneled millions of dollars into the Tampa Bay economy.

World War II wrought a technological revolution, and the war's weapons and experiments reappeared in the skies and stores of 1947 Tampa. Jet planes roared overhead, eventually cracking the speed of sound that year, while DC-3s whisked passengers from New York and Havana to Tampa. C-47s and other military transports also circled the skies, dumping copious amounts of DDT along Tampa Bay bayous and backyards. The enemy was the omnipresent and omnivorous mosquito. Developed to combat the native predators of the South Pacific jungles, DDT quickly became a panacea for Florida's other insect scourges. Floridians rushed to apply the witches brew, but some began to question the new cure. A lethal dose of red tide, however, reminded residents of nature's revenge.<sup>2</sup>

Two years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, atomic technology continued to preoccupy Tampa residents. Hurricanes also haunted residents, thus on June 24, 1947, *The Tampa Tribune* asked Courthouse Square strollers the following question: "Would you like to see a scientific test made to discover whether 'baby hurricanes' could be killed by [atomic] bombs?" Strollers endorsed the idea.

Technology seemed to hold out a dazzling future to residents of the Tampa Bay area. In August 1947, thousands of shoppers flocked to the Maas Brothers' Franklin Street showcase to gaze and ponder the meaning of a brand new medium: television. The department store sponsored an exhibition of the latest technology; shoppers watched with fascination as images of local singers and talking heads magically appeared on a six-inch screen.<sup>3</sup> Alas, since Tampa Bay had no television station in 1947, residents could not watch the magical November wedding of Great Britain's Princess Elizabeth and Lt. Philip Mountbatten.

The year 1947 introduced another new medium: FM radio. WDAE—owned by the *Tampa Daily Times*—promised the area's 5,000 radio listeners who owned FM receiving sets static-free reception. Twenty-five years earlier, WDAE had become Florida's very first licensed AM radio station.<sup>4</sup>

The bewitching new technologies—DDT, television and FM radio—promised a better day for Tampa Bay. Technology also lured visitors to Florida with the modern comforts of air travel, sleek postwar automobiles, and air conditioning. The future seemed now.

Historically, tourism serves as an accurate barometer of public confidence and the state's fiscal health. In 1947, tourism reinforced America's love affair with Florida, but profound changes in the marketing and nature of tourism were occurring amidst the honky-tonk of old Florida. In 1947, bulldozers cleared a site on U.S. Highway 19 between the isolated settlements of Homosassa

Springs and Spring Hill. Newton Perry, a former Navy frogman, called the new attraction Weeki Wachee, named for the glorious springs. Weeki Wachee's promotion of "live mermaids" anticipated the marketing strategies used by future theme parks.<sup>5</sup>

Older tourist attractions—pristine beaches, bass-filled lakes, and alligator farms—lured record numbers of winter visitors in 1947. The sheer number of visitors so impressed local and state officials that economists predicted with giddy optimism that tourism would someday become a twelve-month a year industry.<sup>6</sup> Air conditioning, still rare in 1947, eventually helped fulfill the tourism-in-August prophecy.

The economic boom was driving the price of Tampa Bay beachfront property higher and higher. From Pass-a-Grille to Clearwater Beach, a postwar prosperity drove the price of gulf property threefold in just a few years. In a decade the Pinellas beachfront population had grown 700 percent. In Tampa, city officials bemoaning Hillsborough County's paucity of sandy beaches, began to convert land along Ben T. Davis Causeway (now Courtney Campbell Parkway) into a municipal beach.<sup>7</sup>

Reinventing a city's image proved even more difficult than creating public beaches. In tourism, image is everything. Thus, when editors of the influential *Holiday* magazine came to Tampa, boosters rejoiced. Quickly, jubilation turned to lamentation. *Holiday* released an advance copy, bluntly commenting that Tampa smelled, that its Gasparilla Festival smacked of "slapstick comedy,"

and that slum areas "beggared a Mexican Peon village."<sup>8</sup>

In Tampa, old economies and new realities collided in 1947. "Cigar City" struggled to redefine itself. Thousands of cigarmakers, many of them pioneers from the handrolled heyday of Ybor City as the capital of premium cigars, remained unemployed. The Great Depression and the popularity of cheap cigarettes during the war—a tonic for "war nerves"—had seriously eroded the market for Tampa's finest. Most notably, fashionable men no longer smoked cigars.<sup>9</sup>

Still, the moniker "Cigar City" lingered. In 1947, Tampa was becoming a city though famous for cigars, more important for phosphate and shipping, construction and services, military defense and organized crime. Old firms and first families held power and controlled civic affairs, but a new generation of businessmen and leaders emerged after the war, typified by Jim Walter, Sam Gibbons, Tony Pizzo, and Julian Lane.

In an earlier era, a local bromide held that when Ybor City caught a cold, Tampa contracted pneumonia. The 1940's Tampa economy, however, depended upon the comparative health of military defense spending, small-scale manufacturing, retail service spending, agricultural products, and the housing-construction business.<sup>10</sup>

If homebuilding supplied the oxygen for Tampa's postwar boom, the G.I. Bill provided the fire. The sounds of hammers and saws disrupted the peaceful summer of '47, as homes went up in new developments and old neighborhoods.

An older bungalow in Hyde Park or a Mediterranean Revival in Suburb Beautiful could be purchased for less than \$10,000, but most buyers preferred a new home, a ranch style with large lot in the fast-growing suburbs. Unincorporated Hillsborough County boomed. Brandon, famous for its serenity and strawberries, took off in the late 1940s.

Dynamic new developments occurred around the South Dale Mabry area. In 1947, Dale Mabry had not yet celebrated its tenth birthday, but clearly the road formerly called Vera Avenue pointed toward the future. Realtors gasped when a developer paid \$13,500 for a corner lot at the future traffic nightmare of Dale Mabry, Morrison, and Henderson Avenues. A scant seven years earlier the lot was worth only a hundred dollars.<sup>11</sup>

Tampa was experiencing significant internal shifts in population. Ybor City, once the social and cultural center for Spanish, Cuban, and Italian immigrants, failed to hold its magic for the children of those immigrants. In 1947, Ybor City was losing population, as young couples—many of them veterans—moved from the beloved but dilapidated ethnic quarters. Many Latin families moved to West Tampa, taking advantage of the G. I. Bill to build a new home and share the camaraderie of West Tampa's ambience.<sup>12</sup> Hillsborough County's population surged dramatically during the 1940s, growing from 180,000 in 1940 to 250,000 a decade later.

Growth posed new problems for Hillsborough County's beleaguered school system. When the county's 30,000 children returned to school in September 1947, they encountered

overcrowded conditions. Everyone seemed aghast at the state of education in Tampa, but the roots of the crisis required little research. Hillsborough County, for reasons of austerity and depression, had failed to build a single new school since 1927. The portents of future crises were everywhere, as pregnant mothers carried with them thousands of prospective students, the fabled Baby Boom. One solution, unveiled in 1947, involved the use of temporary army barracks (a.k.a. "portables"). Citizens expressed alarm at such stopgap solutions. The *Tampa Daily Times* declared temporary barracks a "step backward—a concession to apathy and indifference."<sup>13</sup>

The debate over the future of education took on ominous overtones during the legislative session in Tallahassee. Florida faced a staggering deficit, as the bills for decades of neglect came due after the war. Governor Millard Caldwell, an aristocratic looking man who operated Harwood, an 800 acre plantation near Tallahassee, desperately pleaded for new revenues and an accounting. The Legislature passed a \$63 million appropriation—a budget twice as large as ever approved in Florida—stitching a crazyquilt package of sin taxes and managing to delay a dreaded sales tax for two years.<sup>14</sup>

The 1947 legislative session has been described as one of the most historic in Florida history. Legislators helped create the Everglades National Park, an event punctuated by the publication of Marjory Stoneman Douglas's *River of Grass*.

But it was education which preoccupied and dominated the debate. The Governor, supported by a young

Tallahassee legislator, LeRoy Collins, worked steadfastly to modernize Florida's antiquated educational system. Gross inequities marked the system, characterized by gaps between rich and poor counties, and even disparities within counties. Caldwell and Collins proposed the Minimum Foundation Bill. The ambitious program promised a minimum floor beneath which no county could fall. More importantly, for the first time the state contributed to funding school construction and paid for operating expenses. The bill further mandated nine-month school terms, the requirement that county superintendents possess a college degree, and for the consolidation of school systems within counties. The legislature overwhelmingly passed the landmark educational bill.<sup>15</sup>

If the Minimum Foundation Bill served as the most significant achievement of the 1947 legislature, the most sensitive bill concerned co-education. In 1947, legislation transformed the Florida State College for Women into Florida State University. The event brought male students to the rarefied campus, while the legislation also allowed females to attend the male bastion at the University of Florida. President Doak Campbell announced that Florida State was launching a football program, hoping to schedule games with Stetson, Alabama State Teachers College, and the University of Havana.<sup>16</sup>

How does one explain this sudden outbreak of liberalism, the passage of the Minimum Foundation Program *and* the breaking down of single-sex barriers at Florida's universities? For a state desperate to attract new business and tourists and obsessed with image, the

solutions are understandable. The reforms, moreover, may have been enacted because of the prospects of federal courts monitoring segregated education in the South.

College underscored the promise of postwar life. Florida's institutions of higher education struggled to accommodate the waves of new students flooding dormitories and classrooms. In 1943, enrollment at the University of Florida had plummeted to fewer than a thousand students. In 1947, inspired by the dreamscape of postwar possibilities and subsidized by the G.I. Bill, a new student body emerged at Gainesville, composed of traditional young men, but now also married couples, veterans, and women. Married veterans attending college received \$90 a month plus full benefits for books and tuition. Overwhelmed by applications—the admissions office expected 9,000 students in September—the University of Florida asked admitted students to consider enrolling in February.<sup>17</sup>

Hardened veterans, pimply freshmen (including one Leland Hawes of Tampa), and co-eds rushed pell-mell to the red-bricked campuses at Gainesville and Tallahassee. Administrators encountered problems rarely seen in earlier classes. So many students drove automobiles that the Florida Highway Patrol assigned officers to control traffic in Gainesville. More alarming, at least to the deans, was the dramatic number of new fathers enrolled in school. The University of Florida erected special housing for married students—FlaVet Village—richly earning the nickname the "Fertile Crescent." In spite of freshman ratcaps, hopeless overcrowding, and wretched

football teams, most alumni remember 1947 with special fondness.<sup>18</sup>

Higher education in 1947 reflected Florida's historic distrust of big cities, a malapportioned state legislature, and a failure to recognize urban needs. Tallahassee, 20 miles from the Georgia border but 500 miles from Miami, boasted two public institutions of higher education, while Miami claimed none. In 1947, the state of Florida had not even invested in a medical school.

In Hillsborough County, administrators and students struggled to support and keep afloat two private colleges: The University of Tampa and Florida Christian College. Florida Christian College, which opened its doors in 1946, had taken over the abandoned buildings of the Temple Terrace Country Club, located on the Hillsborough River. The school enrolled 175 students. The University of Tampa, founded in 1933, had already survived the Scylla and Charybdis of the Great Depression and World War II.<sup>19</sup>

The G.I. Bill probably saved the University of Tampa. In 1945, enrollment had plunged to 210. When students registered in September 1947, the registrar announced that veterans constituted more than half of the university's 1,200 enrollment. Enrollment did not guarantee the University of Tampa success or serenity. New crises appeared in 1947. The university needed accreditation, but accrediting officials demanded that the school raise half a million dollars toward a threadbare endowment. Throughout that summer, President Ellwood C. Nance cajoled and pleaded with businesses and clubs to enlist in the civic

crusade, but the university fell short of its goal.<sup>20</sup>

In the first assembly of the fall term, President Nance warned students that communist-front organizations would be barred from the University of Tampa, "until Joe Stalin allows democratic organizations to meet in Moscow and promote the ideals of the American way of life." In an interview with a reporter, President Nance confessed that as a young student he had joined a communist-front organization. Communist witch hunts attracted increasing attention in 1947. In Washington, Ronald Reagan—then a "hemophiliac" Democrat—testified before the House Committee on Un-American Activities that communists had.<sup>21</sup>

If any single person symbolized the spirit and buoyancy of postwar Tampa, Paul Straub merits the distinction. A former football player at the University of Tampa, Straub had enlisted in the Marine Corps during World War II, only to lose both legs at Guadalcanal. Friends raised \$8,000 to help with rehabilitation. In 1946, when the University of Tampa announced the limited return of the football Spartans, Paul Straub became head coach. In 1947 the Spartans hoped to raise \$25,000 to put a team on the field.<sup>22</sup>

In many respects, the Tampa sports scene of fifty years ago is more recognizable than the American athletic arena. In 1947, professional basketball dribbled toward its second full season. Lineups, featuring white players from then-powerhouses City College of New York, New York University, and Holy Cross, reflected basketball's popularity

in the Jewish and Irish neighborhoods of the urban northeast. The Baron Adolf Rupp was beginning a dynasty at the University of Kentucky. Professional football struggled for league stability and national visibility. Hockey, wildly popular in the northlands, held no appeal on the frozen ponds of Tampa Bay. In 1947, baseball was America's game. In Tampa, the beloved Smokers, led by manager Tony Cuccinello, reinforced the love affair between sport and community.

If Tampans enjoyed the minor-league exploits of the Tampa Smokers and the abundant semi-pro and amateur teams, they adored football at the high school and college level. Football meant, among many things, the end of the long, hot summer and the revival of local turf wars. And of course, there was always the possibility that this might be the year the Gators won it all.

The war had disrupted, even discontinued college football, but peace brought little hope to a University of Florida football team that had not won a single victory since 1945. Coach Ray "Bear" Wolf pleaded patience. The drought ended in mid-October when the Gators vanquished North Carolina State, 7-6, before "a howling [home] crowd of 17,000." The *Tribune* headline reported, "Gainesville Goes Wild After Florida Grid Win." The 1947 season also introduced the school's first cheerleaders. A fashion correspondent noted, "The girls wore uniforms of white sweaters and blue skirts with orange lining ... and will be a permanent addition to the new co-educational school."<sup>23</sup>

In November, the University of Florida football team came to Tampa to play

Furman University. Tampa enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with the university; ten Tampans played on the 1947 team, most notably Marcellino Huerta, Julian Schamberg, Hal Griffin, and Fletcher Groves. A Tampan, then a sophomore at Jefferson High, Rick Casares would become one of the greatest athletes at Florida.

The November contest between Florida and Furman drew 14,000 fans at Tampa's Phillips Field. Commentary over the suitability of Phillips Field as a first class facility drew more interest than the game itself. A legacy of a \$72,000 New Deal grant, Phillips Field had served as the region's largest stadium since its construction in 1937 adjacent to the University of Tampa. Until the construction of soon-to-be demolished Tampa Stadium in 1967 (the first edition), Phillips Field entertained large crowds, most notably the annual Plant-Hillsborough High School Thanksgiving day game.<sup>24</sup>

But in 1947, critics depicted Phillips Field as minor league, which matched Tampa's image. Wilbur Kinley of the *Tampa Daily Times* pointed out "the crying need of a larger and better football stadium in Tampa," a facility which at best, seated 17,000; at worst, served as an embarrassing venue for the Cigar Bowl, Tampa's recent effort to become a major player in the New Year's bowl games.<sup>25</sup>

The debate over a new stadium persisted longer than the Cigar Bowl. George Blaine Howell, shipbuilder, banker, and civic leader, answered critics. Howell, who had helped erect the old stadium in 1937, asked the relevance of a new stadium, since the 17,000 seat Phillips



Field had almost never been filled—not even for the Florida-Furman game. The dream and debate endure.<sup>26</sup>

In 1947, the most interesting games in town, infinitely more dramatic and compelling than Gator football or Smokers baseball, were gambling and politics. In truth, organized gambling and Tampa politics became so intertwined, so interdependent, that they qualify as a single entity, a serious blood sport appreciated by insiders and spectators.

The Floridian and Tampa Terrace Hotels and the Citizens Bank Building defined Tampa's urban skyline, but with little doubt, the most important "industry" in 1947 was bolita. Begun by Cuban immigrants in the late nineteenth century, bolita—an illegal numbers game—had evolved into a dynamic enterprise, employing hundreds, influencing elections, and handsomely rewarding many. Boliteros (bolita peddlers) mentioned schedules, taking bets at City Hall, the Scrub, and restaurants.

Highly romanticized, Tampa's organized gambling network can be understood by patching together oral reminiscences and written accounts. Roughly understood, bolita had originally been controlled by Cubans and limited to Ybor City and West Tampa. The ascendancy of Charlie Wall, a scion of Tampa's leading Anglo families, assured the protection of gambling and the penetration of bolita into non-Latin areas. The Volstead Act (1919) opened new sources of vice, and Italians capitalized on the possibilities of bootlegging. Necessarily, bolita and bootlegging enjoyed the protection of city and county police.

In 1947, bolita had reached its apogee. In the 1940s, bolita exercised a tremendous influence in Tampa's political and economic affairs. Danny Alvarez, an ex-police officer, bag man, and aide-de-camp for Mayor Curtis Hixon in the 1940s, has described how he collected huge sums of money from gamblers, the price of doing business in Tampa.<sup>27</sup>

By the 1930s, the harmony which characterized the "golden" era of organized crime, disintegrated. Flash points and fault lines appeared in hotly contested mayoral races and power struggles between the offices of county sheriff and state's attorney. Casualties in the bolita wars mounted. Whereas Charlie Wall solicited and enjoyed the support of Cubans, Anglos, and Italians, no single leader after 1940 could control the various factions. The election of Hugh Culbreath as Hillsborough County Sheriff upset the balance of power.<sup>28</sup>

In 1947, *The Tampa Tribune* launched a holy crusade against bolita. For decades the *Tribune* and *Daily Times* had winked at organized crime, running occasional editorials but offering little opposition. On October 5th, the *Tribune* began a twelve-part jeremiad, "Gambling Interests Rated No. 1 Power in Tampa's Politics." J. A. "Jock" Murray, perhaps the *Tribune's* greatest investigative reporter, named names, scolding and embarrassing public officials. Murray began with a shocker: "Gamblers hold the balance of power in Tampa today ... organized politics are run by the rackets in this county." The previous year, Murray had charged the windmills of public education, and his series had been highly effective in mobilizing action. While the *Tribune's* exposé angered

politicians—Mayor Hixon, Tampa Police Chief Eddings, and County Sheriff Culbreath all denied the very existence of illegal gambling. Bolita continued to flourish until 1950 when Senator Estes Kefauver subpoenaed Tampa gamblers and politicians to testify in a dramatic televised hearing.<sup>29</sup>

If reforming bolita was more difficult than the *Tribune* figured, bringing together Tampa and its fiercely independent suburbs proved impossible. Urged on by a barrage of editorials and stories by the *Tribune* and the *Daily Times*, leaders scrambled to secure an annexation plan and put it on the ballot.

In 1947, the city of Tampa comprised a scant 19 square miles. Compared to Miami or St. Petersburg, Tampa was geographically much smaller. In fact, St. Petersburg was about three times the size of Tampa in 1947. Reformers hoped to add 17 additional square miles to the city, by persuading voters in unincorporated areas to see the uplifting advantages of annexation. Historically, the residents of Palma Ceia, Ballast Point, the Interbay and Sulphur Springs had expressed little interest in political alignment with Tampa. Taking a page from the Republican Party, which in 1884 accused the Democrats of rum, romanism, and rebellion, opponents of annexation saw the specter of bolita, taxes, and corruption. Voters resoundingly defeated the measure. It was not until 1953 that the annexation measure finally succeeded.<sup>30</sup>

In addition to the controversial annexation issue in 1947, Tampan also went to the polls to select the mayor. Candidates included incumbent Mayor Curtis Hixon, George T. Taylor, a

contractor and member of the Board of Representatives (now the City Council), and Don V. Giunta, a schoolteacher. In an ugly election Taylor, "A Builder that's Building Minded," pounded away at Hixon's failings to run a safe and well-maintained city as seasonal floodings, the result of record rainfall, inundated city streets. Giunta advocated new sources of support for the University of Tampa. But in the end, Tampan overwhelmingly returned Hixon to the mayor's office, where he remained until his death in 1956. A young dairy farmer and former football captain at the University of Florida, Julian Lane, was also elected to public office—the school board—for the first time in 1947.<sup>31</sup>

The elections of 1947 mark a political crossroads in Tampa. Profound changes shook the very framework of local politics. The source of change came from as far away as the United States Supreme Court and as close as the neighborhood soapbox. For forty years, Tampa politics had been governed by the White Municipal Party. A nonpartisan party designed to eliminate African-American voters, the White Municipal Party had been the law of Tampa since its enactment in 1909, when Mayor D. B. McKay vowed to "eliminate the Negro vote in Tampa."<sup>32</sup>

But in 1944, the Supreme Court's landmark decision, *Smith v. Allwright*, declared the White Primary unconstitutional. Southern leaders resisted the implementation of the *Smith* decision, delaying the registration of African-American voters, but the Court ruled again in 1947 that blacks could not be denied the ballot in the all important primary. The *Daily Times* and the

*Tribune* realized that the White Municipal Party had become an anachronism. The *Daily Times* editorialized in August 1947, "The White Party has never served anything except a prejudiced purpose . . . why not junk all the tomfoolery and put city primaries on the normal Democratic and Republican basis?"<sup>33</sup>

African-Americans, who had dreamt of this for decades, besieged the voter registration office—waiting in separate lines—to enroll in the Democratic Party. On August 2, 1947, C. Blythe Andrews, the editor of the black newspaper *Florida Sentinel*, wrote, "For the first time in many years, Negroes will participate in Tampa city primaries." He warned, "Negroes don't need our white friends to tell us who to vote for ... We wish to do our own thinking, our own planning, our own campaigning."<sup>34</sup>

Events that summer of '47 connect to some far-reaching themes in the history 10 of Tampa and America. The seeds of the 1950s and 1960s—a civil rights movement, the Cold War, the growth of suburbia at the expense of downtown, and the decline of industries—were sown in the 1940s.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>5</sup> "Mermaid Memories", *St. Petersburg Times*, September 30, 1997.

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<sup>11</sup> "New Building Tops Millions In Suburbs," "Dale Mabry Highway Starts New Business Developments," August 17 and August 10, 1947.

<sup>12</sup> Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 297-300.

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## "The most terrible gale ever known" -Tampa and the Hurricane of 1848

Canter Brown, Jr.

Having weathered yet another hurricane season, Tampa Bay area residents have breathed sighs of relief that, unfortunately, may mask the very real danger of future calamity. While fears of what commentators often describe as a "hundred year" storm occasionally assert themselves in headlines and into public discourse, our tendency has been to believe that it could not happen to us. The fact is that it has happened, and that should disturb us. One hundred fifty years ago raging winds, piercing rains, and rising tides lashed the region to a degree almost beyond modern understanding. One survivor, still stunned by the storm's ferocity one month later, summed up the experience so painfully endured by many. "Everywhere may be seen the same destruction," she bemoaned, "and could you see it you might well say, 'Tampa is no more.'"<sup>1</sup>

Tampa's tragic destruction occurred in the early fall of 1848, but happenings of previous decades set the stage.<sup>2</sup> The town, then as now, enjoyed an atmosphere filled with promise. The optimism, though, constituted a fairly recent phenomenon since Tampa's development had lagged from persistent problems owing their origins to the area's inaccessibility and military heritage. The community traced its birth to the founding of a United States army post in 1824. Called Fort Brooke after its original commanding officer, it centered on land lying east of the Hillsborough River below today's Whiting Street and north of Hillsborough Bay. Thanks in good part to Judge Augustus Steele's efforts, a small village had emerged

during the Second Seminole War of 1835-1842 on land just to the north of the garrison grounds. When the conflict ground to a halt in 1842, the settlement regressed for a time as the garrison's size quickly dropped to minimal levels and the village's founding father departed for greener pastures at Cedar Keys.<sup>3</sup>

For several years after the Second Seminole War's conclusion, military authorities stymied attempts to foster Tampa's growth. They controlled a military reservation that included the town's site, as well as territory stretching for several miles beyond it. Occasionally, the military brass threatened to oust all "squatters," while refusing to reduce the reserve to more-modest bounds. Meanwhile, two Congressional initiatives, the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 and the Military Bounty Act of 1846, encouraged frontier settlement at some distance north, east, and south of the village. Even that growth came slowly, as the threat of a renewed Indian war dissuaded many potential immigrants from locating near Tampa Bay.

The turnaround for Tampans began in 1845, when Florida achieved statehood. The legislature soon reaffirmed and legitimized Tampa's role as Hillsborough County's seat. The new state government also threw its weight behind attempts to compel federal authorities to grant title to the land upon which the town stood. An elected county government organized under state law in January 1846, just as most regular Fort Brooke troops departed for service in Texas preparatory to the Mexican War. The county

commissioners ordered surveyor John Jackson to replat and expand Judge Steele's village plan, and it set in motion efforts to erect a courthouse on the town block circumscribed by Franklin, Madison, Monroe (now Florida), and Lafayette (now Kennedy) Streets. Delays and frustration proved the order of the day for the next two years. Still, in January 1848 the county accepted contractor James McKay's courthouse building. Six months afterward, on July 25, President James K. Polk inked legislation granting Hillsborough County title to the necessary 160 acres. By early September, teacher William P. Wilson had opened Tampa's first organized school. Classes convened in the village's principal building, the new courthouse.

The excitement surrounding these advances kindled hopes in 1848 that Tampa faced a bright future. A number of additional families, some of relatively substantial means, established residence. New stores appeared to cater to the military and to frontier settlers. In May, Tampa Bay navigation passed a milestone when the Egmont Key lighthouse first flared its beacon of safety. Prospering Manatee River sugar plantations seemed poised to channel riches into Tampa merchant houses, and Mexican War victories heralded the return of army troops and government spending.

Nonetheless, by September the community, while growing and hopeful, remained a modest one. Perhaps 150 to 200 civilians graced the immediate vicinity. West of the Hillsborough River, a few Hispanic individuals and families lived on Spanishtown Creek in present-day Hyde Park. To their north near today's University of Tampa resided the Robert Jackson family. Their home stood a short distance from boat repair facilities situated on the river's west bank. Several other families inhabited the

Interbay Peninsula at locations between the Jackson homestead, Ballast Point, and Palma Ceia.

A few houses dotted the landscape inside Tampa's surveyed limits east of the river. Among them, widow Mary Stringer occupied a dwelling where Tampa's city hall now stands. The A. H. Henderson family lived on Florida Avenue at Whiting Street, while surveyor John Jackson had erected a home on Tampa Street, between Jackson and Washington. The Darling & Griffin store (later called Kennedy & Darling) sat at the corner of Whiting and Tampa Streets. East along the north side of Whiting Street near the river (Water Street) rested the town's principal hostelry, the Palmer House Hotel, operated by Port Collector John M. Palmer and his wife Margaret F. Palmer. A walk of a "few hundred feet" north brought visitors to the L. G. Covacevich home. At or near the foot of Lafayette Street close to the river came Judge Steele's former residence, a Seminole War blockhouse, and the Simon Turman and William Ashley homes. A "trail" connected the heart of town lying along the riverside and Whiting Street with the remote courthouse site.

Most local civilians lived on the Fort Brooke garrison grounds. There, a myriad of facilities and structures reminded onlookers and townsmen of the post's former wartime prominence. On the bayside, officers' quarters lined the shore. Northward near the garrison's center and on higher ground, a headquarters building, adjutant's office, parade ground, and hospital adorned the scene. To the west, at the river's edge below Whiting Street, came a cluster of buildings including the post commissary, warehouses, sutler W. G. Ferris's home and store, merchant John B. Allen's residence, the post chapel, and the home of chaplain and Presbyterian minister Henry Axtell.

Barracks, more homes, and miscellaneous additional structures appeared at various other points about the grounds.

It should also be remembered that, although few in number, free blacks and, more commonly, slaves helped to pioneer the village in the 1840s and shared in the terror of events soon to occur. The names of most of these individuals are lost to us. Perhaps the most well known was Sampson Forrester, a one-time slave freed by General (later President) Zachary Taylor for his services as an army guide and interpreter. Forrester and his wife Rose resided on the garrison's grounds, where he continued to work for the government and, apparently, merchant Thomas P. Kennedy. Young Isaac Howard, only eight years of age, offers an additional example. Brought to Tampa in 1846 with the James McKay family, he survived the hurricane to work on McKay's ships. Howard remained in the town following the Civil War to become a prominent political and community activist.<sup>4</sup>

Such was the village of Tampa, Fort Brooke, and vicinity when nature intervened in September 1848. The signs first appeared on Saturday, the twenty-third. The sky turned overcast, and the atmosphere soon felt "sultry" and "oppressive." Shoppers in from the countryside "grew uneasy about the weather" and hurried their returns home. That night, the bay glowed with a phosphorescent sheen. Come Sunday morning, winds commenced gusting from the east, followed by intermittent showers. The winds blocked the schooner *John T. Sprague*, owned by W. G. Ferris, from approaching the post. The vessel had delivered needed supplies and the Fort Brooke payroll from New Orleans. Men left church services, either Presbyterian at the post chapel or Methodist at the Palmer House, to brave the elements in order to

"kedge" the ship to the wharf. The work took until nightfall. By then, the bay once again glowed. According to one resident, "the light there from was almost bright enough to read by."<sup>5</sup>

The blow arrived in earnest at about 8:00 a.m. on Monday, the twenty-fifth. A shift in the wind from the east to the southeast heralded the change. Likely, Egmont Key lighthouse keeper Sherrod Edwards, his son and apprentice lighthouse keeper Marvel Edwards and his family knew first the dangers in store for Tampa Bay residents. The tide rose so quickly at the key that two feet of water surrounded Edwards' home before he realized the need to take action. Having few options in his isolated location, Edwards did what he could to protect his loved ones. "He placed his family in his boat and waded with it to the middle of the island," recalled pioneer John A. Bethell, "and secured it to the palmettos until the gale was over."<sup>6</sup>

Most Tampans similarly failed to react quickly to the threat. As the winds grew in intensity, they looked on from their homes as live oaks and shrubs took the brunt of the early going. "In the morning before the [storm] came to its full height," recorded an Axtell family member, "we watched from the front windows the falling of some of the most beautiful trees that ever graced Tampa." An important exception to the general languor involved Fort Brooke's commanding officer Major R. D. A. Wade. Sensing the peril, he ordered his men to begin moving post property to higher ground. Soon, he diverted their efforts to alerting civilians of the danger and assisting them in moving furniture and personal possessions. "The command was turned out early in the storm," he reported, "but such was the violence of the wind and resistless



force of the waters that no property could be saved.<sup>7</sup>

The soldiers' failure resulted from the speed with which the storm picked up force. Within two hours after 8:00 a.m., the winds had swung around from the southeast to the southwest. Then, at 10:00 a.m. the tide commenced to rise. A young woman who endured the storm insisted that "at one time it rose five feet in fifteen minutes." The water quickly submerged the shore, blown toward the post and village with terrific force by the hurricane winds. Meanwhile, the barometric pressure dipped to unprecedented levels, a fact that emphasizes the powerful natural forces that were battering the community. At 11:00 a.m. it stood at 30.122. Three hours later it bottomed out at 28.181. By then water stood fifteen feet above the mean low watermark.<sup>8</sup>

Caught unprepared, local residents panicked, especially those who lived near the water. Schoolmaster Wilson dismissed his students at 10:00 a.m., adding to the equation seared children trying to reach their homes in the face of the storm's force. "Our house was blown down in part, and the waters from the bay swept around it in fearful violence," declared Juliet Axtell. "We escaped from it in the midst of the fearful tempests," she continued, "the roofs of buildings flying round us and the tempest raging at such a rate that we were unable to keep our feet or wear any extra clothing such as a shawl, to protect us from the piercing rain."<sup>9</sup>

Others joined the Axtells in flight from their homes. John B. Allen almost waited too long. "Mr. Allen remained in his house till the lower story gave way," explained a neighbor, "sliding the upper one down to a level with the water in which he was obliged to wade up to his arm pits some distance in order to reach dry land." Nearby, W. G.

Ferris attempted to relocate his family to the safety of his store, but "he could not reach the building from the southeast, and he no longer thought it advisable for anyone to remain there."<sup>10</sup>

Inhabitants of the Hillsborough River's western side fared no better. At the Robert Jackson home, wife Nancy Collar Jackson witnessed what she called a "tidal wave of alarming proportions." A friend preserved her story. "The waters overflowed the banks as never before known, and the immense steam-ways near their house were washed off their piers and were floating," described Cynthia K. Farr. "Mr. Jackson, an invalid at the time, had taken the older children to a little store nearby, to divert them and to relieve their mother of their care, but realizing that danger was threatening her in the home, sent an employee to bring her and the babe away."<sup>11</sup>

The details of Nancy's escape illustrate the immediacy of the storm's threat to life and limb. "On nearing the house the man saw the 'ways' floating and surging to and fro, and made all haste to tell Mrs. Jackson, who had not yet noticed how imminent was her danger," Farr continued. "She snatched her babe—asleep on the bed—and with it in her arms the man steadied her down the steps, lest she be blown off her feet, she entreating him to return and save if possible, a trunk which contained money and valuables." She added, "But before he could re-enter the house it was struck by the heavy timbers of the 'ways' and knocked off its foundation and sent whirling into the raging waves like a spinning top and in an incredibly short time was out of sight down the bay."<sup>12</sup>

As the waters erupted from the bay and river, refugees struggled for havens on higher ground. The Axtells stayed at Fort Brooke in "a low building . . . where we

remained in our wet clothes on a muddy wet floor from eleven o'clock till sundown, without fire or change of clothing." The Ferrises, McKays, and others who did not enjoy military or quasi-military standing headed into the village to the Palmer House. Many arrived between 11:00 a.m. and noon to discover that "dinner" had been laid out on tables in the hotel's dining room. That semblance of routine and order emboldened W. G. Ferris to return to his store for his account books and the money brought in on the *Sprague*. As he and his son Josiah remembered, the merchant waded in water "up to his armpits." Their account noted further, "Taking the currency and books with him he climbed, or floated, out through a window and waded to higher ground, a short distance east of the store."<sup>13</sup>

At about the time Ferris reached safety, likely just after 1:00 p.m., the tempest reached its full power. An account echoing Nancy Jackson's recollections suggests that a tidal surge or "wave" hurled the flood waters to new levels, Ferris witnessed the results. "Looking southward he saw the commissary building floating directly towards the store, and it was apparently coming 'end over end,'" the Ferris account related. "Part of the time it seemed to ride the big waves, then it would sink away between them, but all the time, and that means only a few seconds, it rolled and tumbled straight on towards the doomed buildings." The story continued: "Finally it struck the warehouse. There was a great crash, and an instant later all three of the buildings were floating northward, a mass of wreckage." Ships, including the *Sprague*, found themselves forced up the Hillsborough River. As the waters grew deeper, the hulk of an abandoned steamer rammed the *Sprague*, breaking its cables and setting the schooner adrift into the pine woods to the east.<sup>14</sup>

As the tidal surge or wave sped the flood toward Tampa's higher elevations, the panic originally felt by those who resided near the water spread generally. For example, an estimated fourteen or fifteen persons had gathered at the newly constructed and sturdy John Jackson home. Ellen Jackson, a bride of only one year, made them comfortable in the absence of her husband, who was away with a survey crew near today's Pasco County community of Elfers. The refugees' sense of comfort and safety soon proved false, however. The rising tide surged under the house, and its waters poured into the building.<sup>15</sup>

Events at the Jackson home then proceeded at a maddening pace. One elderly woman, likely Mary Stringer, expressed the terror that she felt by voicing an acute fear of getting her feet wet. "When the water began to come into the house this lady and others got up on the chairs and from there to the tables," recalled son Thomas E. Jackson. "When the house began to rock on the blocks, a change to some other refuge was contemplated," he added. "The old lady selected old Captain Paine, a large portly gentleman to bear her out and keep her feet dry." Jackson concluded, "This Captain Paine consented, but, unfortunately, when he left the porch, he became entangled in a mass of drifting fire place wood, and the couple were soon prostrate in the surging waters." Subsequently, the house floated off its blocks and "crossed the street and bumped into three large hickory trees that barred its way for hours."<sup>16</sup>

The Palmer House's inmates experienced a similar dilemma. As W. G. Ferris looked on, the wind and water hurled the wreckage of the Fort Brooke commissary and warehouse toward the hotel. "At that moment the Palmer house seemed to be doomed," the Ferris account noted. "The water soon filled the dining room and the tables began to float

around," it went on to declare. "Then there was a stampede to get out of the building."<sup>17</sup>

Chance thereupon intervened, almost certainly saving lives. "The wreckage just mentioned had met with some obstruction immediately in front of the hotel, forming a barrier that protected the building, but the hotel was speedily vacated, and while the people were wading and swimming out through the doors and windows, timbers, planks and logs were crashing against the house and floating through the south doors and windows into the dining room," the account specified. Another incident of heroism followed. "Josiah Ferris distinguished himself by swimming out through the north door with a young girl in his arms," the reminiscence revealed. The others followed in Ferris's wake.<sup>18</sup>

"The refugees went from the hotel to the Kennedy store," the account added, "thence to higher ground at the corner of Washington and Franklin streets." James McKay, Jr., one of those present, recalled the evacuation with supplemental detail. "Our family was moved to the Palmer hotel," he wrote, "and when driven out of there on account of the tide, to the Darling and Griffin [Kennedy & Darling] store, and then to the military hospital on the reservation." Commented one local man to a Savannah newspaper, "It was truly distressing to witness families hurrying from one supposed place of safety to another—vainly hoping their neighbors more secure than themselves."<sup>19</sup>

After 2:00 p.m., the winds began slowly to subside as they shifted from southwest to west-north-west. Still, according to Major Wade, they "raged with great violence until past 4 P.M., after which [they] lulled very much toward 8 P.M." An Axtell daughter related, "Towards night however the wind

changed and somewhat subsided and father with one or two other gentlemen and a party of soldiers succeeded in getting out some of our most valuable things among which our little family clock and the piano were the first—it was found indeed in its old place but dancing up and down with the floor & up to the keys almost in salt water."<sup>20</sup>

The brave souls who stirred from their refuges in the late afternoon and early evening encountered mostly water and debris. "Darkness found Tampa completely surrounded by water with only the tops of trees around the present post office and business section visible," an onlooker revealed in an account published early in the early 1900s. "By this time the bay had overspread the Garrison[,] and Davis Islands, then low marshlands, were out of sight." The account added: "The bay had been swept out of its banks along [what would become] Bayshore Boulevard and all the section of what is now Ballast Point, Palma Ceia and Bel-Mar was under water. The entire Interbay peninsula was submerged." A second man confirmed the onlooker's story. "The islands in Hillsborough bay were out of sight under the water," he recorded, "and in places the tide rushed across the peninsula west of the river to Old Tampa bay."<sup>21</sup>

The destruction disheartened strongest of spirit. "In the garrison the little church on the beach, the soldiers' residence near it, [J.] B. Allen's boarding house, the Indian agent's office, and Mr. Ferris's residence, store and warehouse had been wrecked, and all other buildings had been more or less damaged," lamented a resident. "North of Whiting Street Major Wade and other officials assessed the scene at Fort Brooke. "[The] storm . . . destroyed all the block house, and the Turman and Ashley residences, had been swept away." Another wrote, "Every

building on the Bay and river, public and private, (except Mr. Palmer's Hotel and that much injured,) is destroyed." He continued: "All the vessels in port were driven up the river and lodged in the pine-woods—far from their natural element. Iron safes, a fire engine, kegs of nails, &c., were driven from the places they occupied, and not a frame left to tell where the building in which they were stood."<sup>22</sup>

Major Wade and other officials assessed the scene at Fort Brookes "[The] storm ... destroyed all the wharves and most of the public buildings at this post," the commanding officer informed superiors. "The commissary and quartermaster storehouses with all their contents were swept away, and a few damaged provisions, etc., only can be recovered." He went on to note that "the officers' quarters (except headquarters) are destroyed or very badly damaged, and the barracks are beyond repair." Even the hospital, where many soldiers and civilians eventually had gathered, suffered damage. "The roof ... was completely carried away, the doors broken," described assistant surgeon B. P. Curry, "the windows destroyed and the property otherwise lost or materially injured, with the exceptions of the medicines, and stores, which received but little damage."<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps one Axtell family member best conveyed for posterity Tampans' emotions upon viewing the storm's aftermath. "But what a scene of destruction Tampa is," she commented, "there are but five habitable houses left & these more or less injured." The young woman then painted a word picture of her former neighborhood. "The row on which we lived, the Chapel, the Commissary building, the Settler's store, Mr. Allen's house—all gone! " she detailed. "Not a vestige of them remaining, and in their place for two or three miles up the river

are piles of rubbish leading one to ask where did it all come from."<sup>24</sup> Miss Axtell concluded, "Everywhere may be seen the same destruction."<sup>25</sup>

Night brought relief. The winds subsided, and stars appeared in the clearing sky. Tampans attempted to find dry places to sleep, while taking the toll of casualties. Almost miraculously, the storm damage had limited itself to property loss. "Many hair-breadth escapes, both serious and ludicrous, might be related," a correspondent explained to an out-of-state newspaper, "but fortunately no lives were lost." In the aftermath of the hurricane's terrific din, the absence of noise offered comfort. Commenting on the quiet, a grateful chronicler recorded that "the elements seem[ed] to say 'we are satisfied.'"<sup>26</sup>

Tuesday's dawn brought a return of earlier depression, feelings of thankfulness for survival having passed to thoughts of financial devastation and hunger. "Yesterday we had the equinoctial," penned a villager. "This port and the neighboring towns are *utterly wrecked*." He added: "The public storehouses and their contents were carried off by the breakers, and but little ... has been recovered. Most of the poor people here have only the clothes on their backs." The man continued, "I do not see how food is to be procured, except beef. Nearly all the buildings are beyond repair"<sup>27</sup>

As the villager suggested, reports of destruction in other places began filtering into town. "We learn that the fishery, dwellings, &c., on Old Tampa [Safety Harbor], were totally destroyed—the people, with difficulty, escaping with their lives," declared a local man a few days afterward. "At Clear Water Harbor, and in parts of Benton County [Hernando, Pasco, and Citrus Counties], the destruction is very

great." At Charlotte Harbor, the Kennedy & Darling Indian store received damaging blows, while a sloop containing nine persons crashed upon the shore with no survivors.<sup>28</sup>

Elsewhere, the story appeared much the same. Historian Lillie B. McDuffee looked into the storm's impact at modern Bradenton. "In places along the banks of the Manatee River the water was hurled in with such force that it threatened to wash away homes," she discovered. "It beat hard against the houses, rocking them back and forth." Pioneer John A. Bethell recalled: "Every island from Sanibel to Bayport was overflowed..., and many new passes were made... through the islands. For instance, Longboat inlet and several small passes between there and Big Sarasota; also John's Pass." The Egmont Key lighthouse experienced damage severe enough to compel federal authorities to tear it down. Even Indians in the interior were affected. "They state that the late hurricane was very destructive in their section of the country," observed Major Wade, "sweeping everything before it."<sup>29</sup>

As the day passed on Tuesday, the sun shown and dispositions turned brighter. Townspeople set about poring through the rubble looking for valuables as the waters ebbed. John Jackson may have been the most fortunate. Two boxes of coins held for him at the Ferris store turned up in a pile of debris at the foot of Washington Street. The crew of the *Sprague* discovered themselves marooned on land at what is now the corner of Tampa and Twigs Streets. Upon examination, they found that food and other commodities carried on board had weathered the storm in good shape. "The captain of the *Sprague* came out of the woods and brought some coffee, hard bread, and other supplies," remembered one villager delighted at the sight. "When the post commander learned that the food on the boat was intact

he immediately sent a detachment of soldiers to take charge of them, and the supplies were brought to the village and divided between the storekeeper [W. G. Ferris] and the army men."<sup>30</sup>

As fear of starvation abated and settlers recovered some of their effects, grateful residents reflected appreciatively on Major Wade's leadership. "Major Wade has been unremitting in his efforts, day and night, to alleviate the distress of the sufferers," noted one Tampan, "by affording assistance to the helpless, giving shelter to the houseless, etc." Juliet Axtell recalled the officer's personal kindness to her family. "The Major took us to his quarters after the storm abated," she wrote, "which was almost the only place standing uninjured."<sup>31</sup>

A night of forgetting followed the labors of Tuesday, as Tampan prepared to face the daunting task of rebuilding their literally shattered lives. During the day several barrels of whiskey had been found floating in Hillsborough Bay. Additionally, a few cases of wine had turned up in rubble that littered the shore. Before Major Wade could impound "the potent stuff," the local people helped themselves. "Whiskey was free the evening following the big blow," commented an historian of the occasion, "and doubtless some of the thrifty villagers made the most of their unusual opportunity." The relief, without question, was welcome indeed.<sup>32</sup>

The hurricane of 1848 swept down upon Tampa Bay with a fury that lay beyond the ability of human beings to resist. Within a matter of a few hours, a promising frontier community had found itself prostrate before the force of nature. What many pioneers called "the most terrible gale ever known," offers Tampan today a vivid reminder of

the price nature can exact.<sup>33</sup> It is a lesson best not forgotten.

## ENDNOTES.

<sup>1</sup> "Letters to Harriet Tracy Axtell from her family at Ft. Brooke, Fla.," ed. by Jean Rumsey, 123 (transcriptions at Tampa Bay History Center, Tampa) (hereafter, Axtell letters).

<sup>2</sup> The principal published accounts of the Hurricane of 1848 may be found in Leland Hawes, "The monster storm: the hurricane of 1848, the biggest storm of the 19th century. Tampa has seen nothing like it since," *The Tampa Tribune*, Sunday, November 20, 1982; Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida* (St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Printing Co., 1950), 112-15; John A. Bethell, *Bethell's History of Point Pinellas* (St. Petersburg: Great Outdoors Publishing Co., 1962), 77-80; Donald B. McKay, *Pioneer Florida*, 3 vols. (Tampa: Southern, 1959), I, 153-56; Anthony P. Pizzo, *Tampa Town* (Miami: Hurricane House, 1968), 19-20; and Lillie B. McDuffee, *The Lures of Manatee: A True Story of South Florida's Glamorous Past* (Bradenton: B. McDuffee Fletcher, 1961), 59-60.

<sup>3</sup> Except as otherwise noted, background materials for this essay may be found in Canter Brown, Jr., *Tampa Before the Civil War* (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> Julius J. Gordon, *Afro-Americans of Hillsborough County, Florida, 1870-1890* (Tampa: priv. pub., 1993), 43, 66; Canter Brown, Jr., *African Americans on the Tampa Bay Frontier* (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 1997), 29.

<sup>5</sup> C. A. Winchell, "Elements Combined to Lay Tampa in Ruins During Memorable Storm of 1848," *Tampa Daily Times*, October 11, 1924; D. B. McKay, "Story on Big Blow Found in Newspaper," *Tampa Tribune*, Sunday, November 22, 1953; Janet S. Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness: A Settlement History of Manatee River and Sarasota Bay* (Tulsa, OK: Caprine Press, 1983), 165.

<sup>6</sup> Bethell, *History of Point Pinellas*, 77

<sup>7</sup> Axtell letters; 123-24, R. D. A. Wadeto Roger Jones, September 26, 1848, Letters Received by the Adjutant General's Office, M-814, roll 398, National

Archives (this letter is reprinted in part in D. B. McKay, "Our Big Wind," *Tampa Tribune*, Sunday, May 7, 1950).

<sup>8</sup> McKay, "Our Big Wind"; Axtell letters, 124; Winchell, "Elements Combined."

<sup>9</sup> Axtell letters, 123.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 124; Winchell, "Elements Combined."

<sup>11</sup> Cynthia Farr, *A Sketch from the life of Mrs. Nancy Jackson* (Tampa: priv. pub., 1900), 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Axtell letters, 123; James McKay, Jr., "History of Tampa of the Olden Days," *The Sunland Tribune* 17 (November 1991), 78; Winchell, "Elements Combined."

<sup>14</sup> Winchell, "Elements Combined"; Wade to Jones, September 26, 1848; D. B. McKay, "The Storm," *Tampa Tribune*, Sunday, July 14, 1946.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas E. Jackson, "Storm of 1848 Was Real Thriller, Says Thos. E. Jackson, Pioneer Tampan, In a Letter to the Times," *Tampa Daily Times*, October 18, 1924.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Winchell, "Elements Combined."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid; D. B. McKay, "Story on Big Blow"; *Savannah Republican*, October 16, 1848.

<sup>20</sup> Wade to Jones, September 26, 1848; Axtell letters, 124.

<sup>21</sup> McKay, "Story on Big Blow"; Winchell, "Elements Combined."

<sup>22</sup> Winchell, "Elements Combined" *Savannah Republican*, October 16, 1848.

<sup>23</sup> Wade to Jones, September 26, 1848; McKay, "Our Big Wind."

<sup>24</sup> Axtell letters, 124.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 123-24.

<sup>26</sup> *Savannah Republican*, October 16, 1848; Axtell letters, 123-24.

<sup>27</sup> Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 165.

<sup>28</sup> *Savannah Republican*, October 16, 1848; Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1991), 75-76.

<sup>29</sup> McDuffee, *Lures of Manatee*, 59; Bethell, *History of Point Pinellas*, 77; John W. Stafford, "Egmont Key: Sentinel of Tampa Bay," *Tampa Bay History* 2 (Spring/Summer 1980), 21; R. D. A. Wade to Roger Jones, October 12, 1848, M-567, roll 398, NA.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson, "Storm of 1848"; McKay, "Story on Big Blow"; Winchell, "Elements Combined."

<sup>31</sup> *Savannah Republican*, October 16, 1848; Axtell letters, 123.

<sup>32</sup> Winchell, "Elements Combined"; McKay, "Story on Big Blow."

<sup>33</sup> Matthews, *Edge of Wilderness*, 165.

# **BARTOW, WEST BARTOW, AND THE ANDY MOORE FAMILY: The Joy and Importance of Discovering African-American History**

Clifton P. Lewis

*In many parts of this great country, citizens take for granted that, with a minimum of effort, they can gain access to their local history. The town or county library's shelves, they comfortably assume, will contain numerous volumes written over the past century or two that will detail almost every aspect of the community's past. Heritage is available. The strong foundation that it can provide for dealing with today's problems can be taken for granted.*

*Florida stands as a major exception to this general rule of relatively easy access to local history, and for the African-American community conditions rank even worse than for the state as a whole. The few white communities that can boast properly researched and well-written histories should feel particularly fortunate, since virtually no black communities enjoy the same. Until very recently, histories about this state and its various regions, counties, and towns were designed either to ignore or to minimize the accomplishments of African-Americans. Compounding this problem, a population comprised mostly of persons born elsewhere has not supported the kinds of history research and teaching programs that their home states have engaged in for generations past.*

*This sad state of affairs should not be allowed to persist, and at Bartow, Florida, a group of concerned citizens has acted on a small scale to ensure that it does not. The idea, as it has developed over a period of several years, has been to rebuild a community composed of African-American families upon a foundation rooted firmly in lessons, accomplishments, and role models that the past can provide to those living today. Our history can empower our present. It can inspire, and it can guide with positive results and directions that otherwise could not have been anticipated. It is a story worth sharing.*

## **The History Project's Origins**

During the period 1995-1996, residents of the West Bartow African-American community rose up in arms over the issues of neighborhood blight and high crime. Some residents feared walking the streets, and service personnel hesitated to come into the neighborhood, especially at night. At the time the local people assumed that these circumstances signaled the beginning of a new and disturbing trend. In reality, sagging quality of life indicators had been ignored for some time. Conditions had been allowed to deteriorate there a long time ago.

By November 1996 awareness of neighborhood problems had sparked



West Bartowans to rally together, giving voice to demands that something be done to enhance the community. A group of concerned citizens met to plan a course of action. A decision was made to include city officials in subsequent meetings. Everyone agreed that redevelopment of this neglected community would not be an easy task, but residents appeared ready for the challenge. "*Somebody* ought to do *something*" echoed as an often-heard complaint.

Thus was born the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow, Inc. Its organizers committed themselves to resolve community concerns. More discussions ensued with Bartow and Polk County officials and with representatives of other government agencies in order to mobilize a maximum effort. Expectations for dramatic improvements ran high. The NIC, as it came to be known, conducted a "needs" assessment to identify specific problem areas. In almost no time, its officers had adopted a mission statement, as well as a strategic plan.

Events then proceeded at a rapid pace. With the assessment report in hand, the group zeroed in on problem indicators. We demanded solutions and found a receptive city administration. The police department stepped up its prevention and enforcement activities, code-enforcement officers accelerated their efforts and increased the number of citations issued for violations, and the demolition of vacant buildings commenced. Our reasoning was that, by getting rid of old vacant buildings which served as breeding places for undesirable activities, the criminal element would be forced to go elsewhere.

Concerned citizens across the town eagerly joined in the NIC's activities. A first "clean-up day" in March 1997 attracted nearly 300 volunteers representing various churches, civic clubs, businesses, and agencies. It was truly gratifying to see members of the white community working with their black neighbors to help rejuvenate this historically black district. Residents pledged to continue the campaign until all old buildings were demolished and our community looked more like "the other sections of town." We wanted to create a seamless city without differences among neighborhoods. Revitalizing West Bartow took on a very high priority, even if it meant tearing down every vacant building in sight. The rallying cry could well have been "down with the old and up with the new." Such was the level of excitement and commitment to rebuilding!

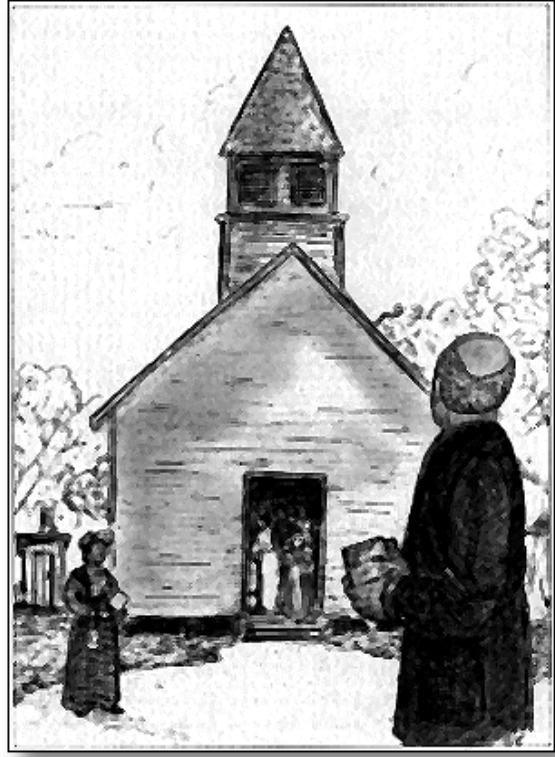
As often happens when time passes after such a flurry of well-intentioned activity, concerns surfaced about how much change really was necessary—and about how soon needed change should occur. Someone suggested that, before we tear down too much of this old community, we ought to take time to learn more about its history. This seemed to many of us to be a pretty good suggestion. The community appreciated that, at last, something was being done to improve conditions, and its members applauded the NIC's organizers for taking the initiative. Still, many voiced concerns about the impact of too many changes occurring too rapidly. West Bartow, as far as the long-time residents were concerned, remained unique. While some change was necessary, they believed, after all was said and done they

wanted the neighborhood to retain its special character and identity.

Having decided to pause and reflect upon the pace and level of change for the neighborhood, the obvious questions appeared to be "What character?" and "What identity?" Real facts were needed to counter the refrain of those who favored rapid action. "Isn't this just a run down community in bad need of revitalization?" they queried. So, while the bulldozers continued their work and other redevelopment plans unfolded, a historical committee undertook research on West Bartow's history.

The historical research process added a new and uncertain dimension to the NIC's activities. In order to insure accuracy and good productivity, the research project had to be well organized and carried out with a high degree of discipline. The work proved very time consuming and physically challenging, but, as we soon learned, the results provided gratification beyond our wildest imaginations. As West Bartow's history unfolded, it became evident that the neighborhood could boast far more positives than negatives.

Soon, the climate of opinion shifted conclusively. It had become clear that we had been focusing so passionately on tearing down that we had ignored all-important facets of our heritage. It should be noted that, fortunately, the structures actually demolished needed to be torn down because of the danger they posed. On the other hand, future efforts obviously had to pay more attention to building up than to tearing down. Beyond that, NIC supporters, in learning some of the area's amazing history, became convinced that it should be

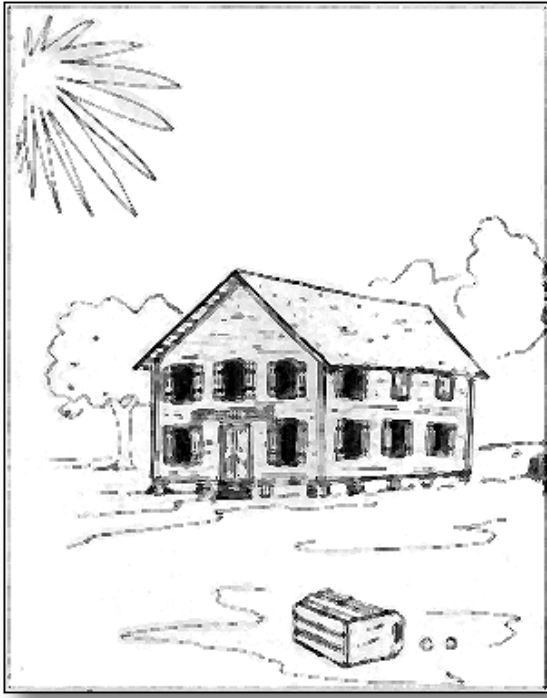


**Drawing of Providence Colored Baptist Church, the first black church in West Bartow, c. 1860s. Oral tradition points to present-day First Providence Missionary Baptist Church being the oldest black church, and perhaps oldest continuing black institution in Polk County.**

Drawn by Lloyd Harris for the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow  
Bartow, Inc.

researched fully and documented before it was lost to future generations.

While the research posed real challenges, it often afforded joy with new discoveries and insights. Senior residents delighted in talking about West Bartow's olden days. They shared stories both about happy times and about sad times. They related to us tales of many families that no longer lived here. We heard about families that built homes and raised children who, in turn, grew up in the neighborhood and later went on to



**Drawing of the first public school for blacks in Polk County. Opened in the mid-1880s, the school served West Bartow until the 1940s when it was replaced with Brittville Elementary School.**

Drawn by Lloyd Harris for the  
Neighborhood Improvement  
Corporation of Bartow, Inc.

the higher accomplishments. Most persons interviewed offered information freely. Where one individual held something back, another soon came along to fill the gap. We were really on a roll! The revitalization effort and the history project were attracting attention from the media. Expressions of good will poured in.

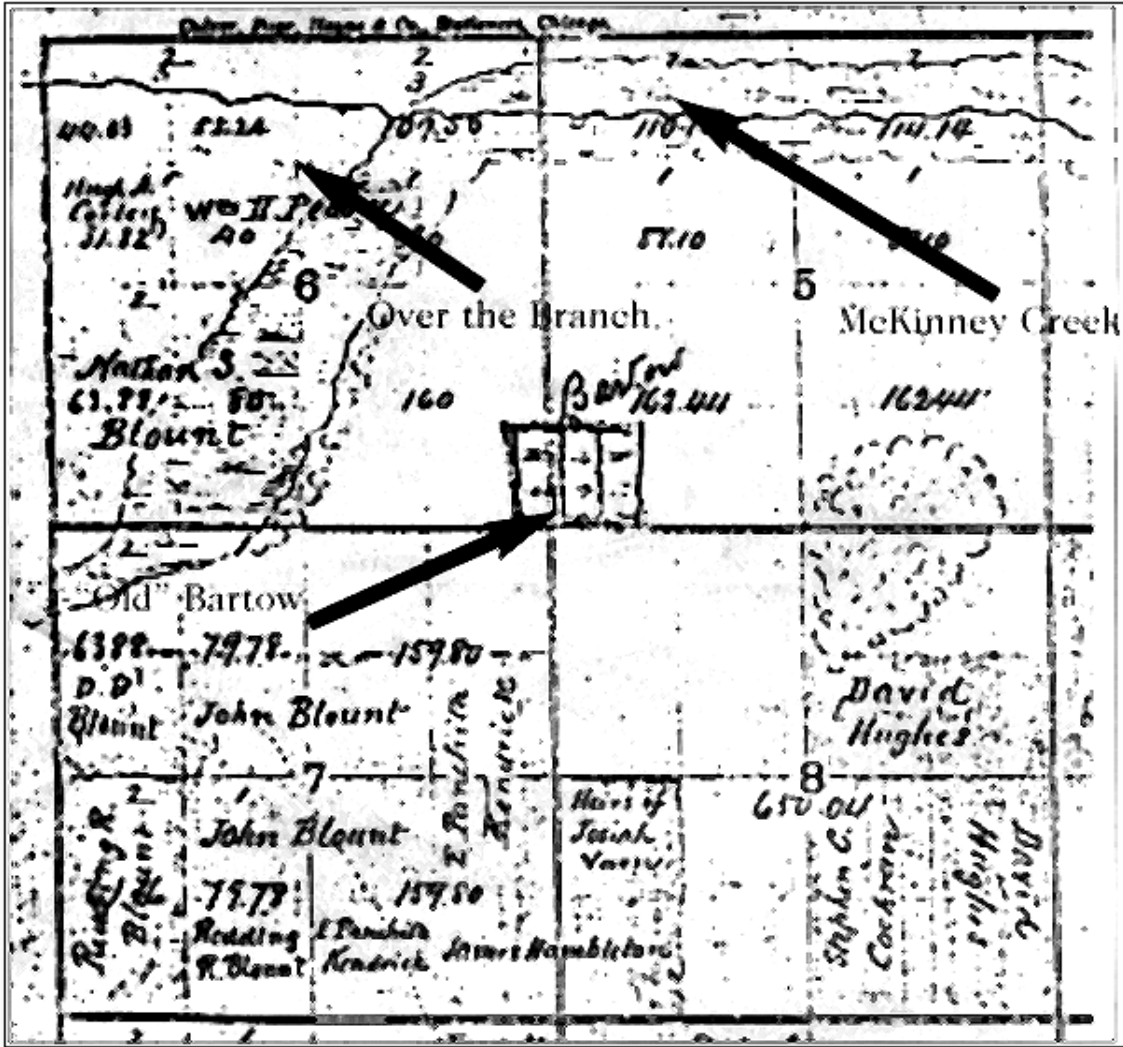
The fuss failed to detract the NIC's volunteers from pursuing their work. The details intrigued us. We learned about the long-forgotten industry of brick making and of cattle raising that occurred in West Bartow. The fact that black men actually prospected for phosphate, as well as worked in the

mines, surprised us. The interviews revealed that fruit packing provided another source of honest employment. Of course, the storytellers bragged about the skills of old-time craftsmen, highlighting the pride that was evident in their creations. Residents enjoyed an active social life, we were told. Social clubs, night clubs, soda fountains, movie houses, lodges, and so on offered many forms of entertainment.

Sometimes the more-shadowy side of life emerged. Some oldtimers discussed seldom-shared details about how the gambling game known as bolita was played and occasionally fixed. It turned out that avoiding detection by the police and retaining the aura of respectability required a high degree of creativity. Although bolita may be dismissed by some today as simply a popular pastime, the game once offered a main source of income to many families during hard times. Its economic impact should not be underestimated.

Certain types of details were revealed only with prompting. The names of prominent persons who served as financial backers to the bolita runners and loan sharks were voiced reluctantly. Respected business people who refused to provide loans to blacks through normal banking procedures readily made personal loans at outrageously inflated interest rates, sometimes as high as 100 percent or "a dollar for a dollar," as the oldtimers said.

In most instances this type of information was provided only upon the promise of strict confidentiality, even though the persons involved had long since died. These secret revelations helped to put a lot of things in context. Likely, many of



Copy of the original 1855 Polk County map of Township No. 30, Range 25 East, sections 5, 6, 7, and 8. Arrows indicate original Bartow, "Over the Branch," as the black pioneers preferred to call their community rather than Brittville, and McKinney Creek, which one had to cross when going from West Bartow to the other part of town.

Map courtesy of Florida Bureau of Survey and Mapping, Division of State Lands.

the descendants of old-line and prominent families are completely unaware of the types of immoral and probably illegal activities practiced by their ancestors. We were very grateful that the older residents had the courage to talk about those events and about relations between blacks and whites. In this modern era, it is sad to note, discus-

sions about race relations in days gone by still can be very painful. Race relations, even today, almost always are described by blacks in negative terms. We listened to the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The origins of our community institutions were key elements of the research,



**Elizabeth Moore, 1867-1905, daughter of Andy Moore and Tanner Reid Moore, married Thomas Waldon of Virginia in 1882 and homesteaded 160 acres of land in Homeland. She and Thomas later worked the Moore homestead in West Bartow.**

Photograph courtesy of the author.

and the information we obtained about early churches and schools opened up a whole new world to us. We were reminded that the modern-day First Providence Missionary Baptist church

probably got its start around 1856. At that time members of Polk County's initial group of slave pioneers began worshipping Christ in the open fields near a place called Bear Creek in West

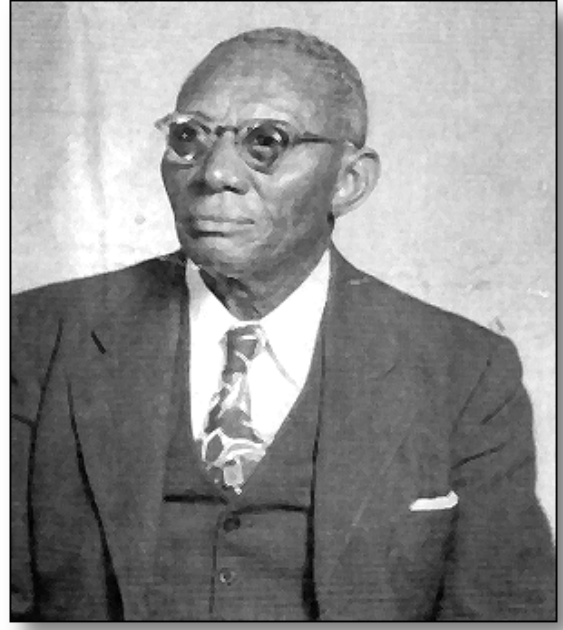


**Thomas Waldon, of Virginia, married Elizabeth, daughter of Andy Moore and Tanner Reid Moore. After Elizabeth's untimely death in 1905, Thomas married Emma, daughter of Prince Johnson.**

Photographs courtesy of the author.

Bartow. Years later, after a church building was erected, school classes for black youngsters were taught there. If this information proves to be accurate, then First Providence is the oldest black church, and perhaps the oldest continuing black institution of any kind, in Polk County and in much of central and south Florida. The actual details have not been verified with certainty. On the other hand, the oral tradition runs very strong and has been handed down through many generations, as has always been the custom among our African ancestors.

Public education came late for African--Americans in Polk County, but there, too, the West Bartow community can claim a pioneering status. Available



**James H. Waldon, grandson of Andy Moore and Tanner Reid Moore, and son of Elizabeth Moore and Thomas Waldon, was the father of Gussie Lee Waldon Watson.**

records suggest that the first public school for blacks in the county opened in the mid-1880s, as the Brittsville Elementary School, it consisted of a two story wooden building. The facility served the West Bartow community until it finally was torn down in the 1940s.

The community's identity coalesced slowly after the first settlers arrived as slaves in the early 1850s. For much of the remainder of the nineteenth century and up until recent times, West Bartow remained racially segregated. It stood as a self-contained community with its own institutions and social order. In the late 1880s it received the name Brittsville from Bartow's city fathers. They intended to honor a white developer, William F. Britt, who built the first planned subdivision in this black neighborhood. In spite of the official name, the area's African-American



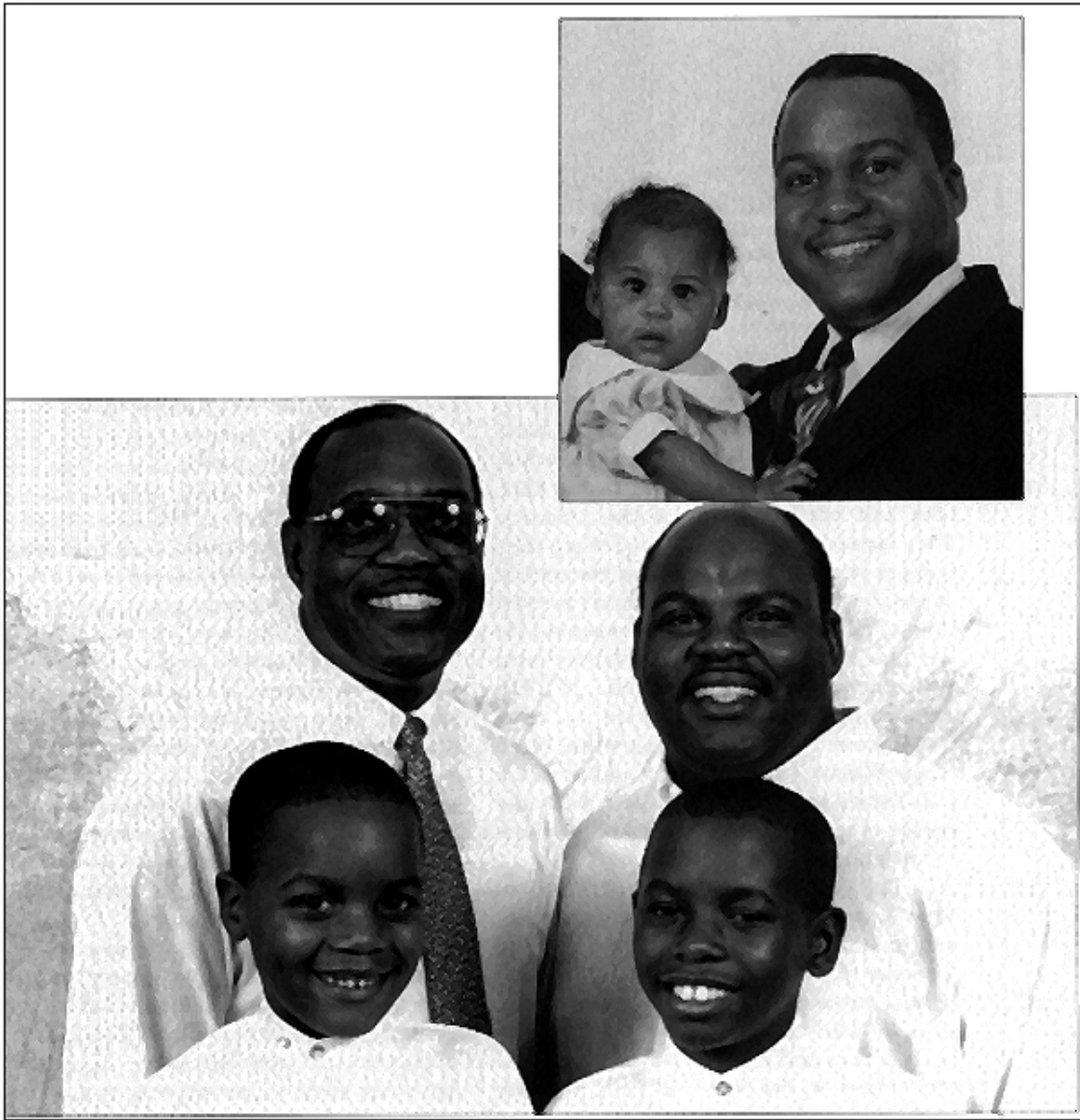
**Gussie Lee Waldon Watson, shown above and in and in later photo, left, is the great-granddaughter of Andy Moore and Tanner Moore, and is one of the seven children of James H. Waldon. Ms. Watson is the mother of Benjamin Jerome Williams, Jr. and Gwendolyn Strong, grandmother of five, and great-grandmother to four great-great- great- grandchildren of Andy Moore and Tanner Moore.**

population preferred to call their community "Over the Branch." This name doubtlessly was used because one was obliged to cross over the McKinney Creek when commuting between West Bartow and the other part of town. "Over the Branch." What a romantic—almost magnetic sounding name!

As our work as NIC researchers progressed, we amassed a wealth of information about "Over the Branch," but, the more we learned, the more we wanted to learn. We developed a thirst for historical tidbits that was difficult to quench. We soon began delving into the identity of early black pioneers who helped settle Bartow and the Peace River frontier. Who were they? What were

they like? Did they contribute much to the overall development of Bartow? Did they pay taxes? Own land?

By that point, our history project had become an integral part of our redevelopment effort. We still intended to rebuild this neighborhood, but our revised strategy was to do so on a solid foundation of history. As the depth of our research grew, we accepted that we were not knowledgeable enough in the area of historical research. After spending fruitless hours in the Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library, we decided to seek help from several local historians. This decision proved to be very wise. We were privileged to receive invaluable and



Steven Johnson Williams, (right) son of Benjamin Jerome Williams, Jr., is shown with his daughter Emadi Lynn.

Photographs courtesy of the author.

**Benjamin J. Williams, Jr., (left) with one of his two sons, Benjamin J. Williams, 111, and two grandsons, Kevin and Benjamin IV. A proud, pioneer family with a strong believe in tradition and education, Benjamin, Jr., was the first black classroom teacher in the initial integration of the Broward County school system. Named the 1985 Honorary Citizen of the Year for the city of Ft Lauderdale, he retired in 1994 after a 39 year career in the Broward County school system as a teacher, assistant principal and principal. His son, Benjamin, 111, father of two of the long fine of descendants of Tanner Moore and Andy Moore, has a B.S. in Criminal Justice.**





**The oldest black residence in Bartow, this white, two-story house was designed and built around 1884 by a former slave, Lawrence Bernard Brown. A foundation of oak blocks surrounded with brick supports the six bedroom house constructed of solid oak walls and floors. The Brown family home is the type of historical structure the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow, Inc. hopes to preserve.**

Photograph courtesy of the author.

highly professional assistance from a group of fine men and women.

### **The Early Black Pioneers**

The saga that ultimately revealed itself to us could not have proved more interesting or strengthening.<sup>1</sup> We discovered that small groups of white settlers began to arrive in the Bartow area around 1850. One of the first of these families brought along about one dozen black slaves and settled in what is now West Bartow. Others soon trickled in. One well-known historian noted that the first two babies born to permanent settlers in Polk County belonged to two black slaves by the names of Harriet and William Brown.<sup>2</sup>

The Civil War era witnessed a drastic change in Polk County's African-American population. Among whites, loyalties were divided between the North and the South. In 1864 and early 1865, local white Unionist soldiers, together with black troopers from New Orleans and Washington, DC, freed many of the slaves who lived south of Bartow. They were taken as "contrabands" to Fort Myers and Key West.

After the Civil War's end in 1865 and during the decade thereafter, other freedmen and freedwomen left Polk County of fear for their safety or, perhaps, to seek greater opportunities elsewhere. White "regulator" groups lynched two men near Bartow in 1871. At a public

meeting local citizens condemned the violence, declaring that "we view with most indignant feelings the hanging of Nathaniel Red and the shooting of Jim Pernell, and believe it to be the duty of every good and honest citizen to assist the civil authorities in ferreting out and bringing before the courts of the country the perpetrators of such violent and unlawful acts."<sup>3</sup> Still, fear gripped many African-Americans families, whose members sought refuge in Hillsborough County where fellow blacks sat on the county commission.<sup>4</sup>

Of those African-Americans who remained in Polk County during the late 1860s and 1870s, the NIC researchers were able to identify many of their accomplishments. As an example, in 1867 former slave Stepney (or Stephen) Blount Dixon accepted appointment as one of three county voter registrars, thus making him the first black person to serve in a county-wide office in Polk. Mr. Dixon later homesteaded near Tampa, where he lived the rest of his life as a family man and farmer.

The life of freedman Prince Johnson offers another illustration. In 1880 he became the first African-American actually to run for office in Polk County. At that time he sought the position of constable. Although he lost the election, we recognize Johnson for his bravery and commitment. Prince homesteaded an eighty-acre farm on the eastern side of Bartow and went on to become one of the most widely known and successful farmers in the county.

Ned Green stands out as another key player of the early years. Although he and his wife Emily did not arrive in Polk County until the mid-1880s, Green, too,

proved to be a remarkable person. Soon after appearing on the scene, Ned homesteaded 120 acres of land "Over the Branch." Within a few short years, in 1886, he purchased a separate one-acre plot and donated it for the use of the Providence Colored Baptist Church. This church today is known as the First Providence Missionary Baptist Church, as mentioned previously.

### **Andy Moore**

Numerous other personal stories that deserve to be mentioned came to light as a product of the NIC research project, but with limited exceptions their experiences must await another time for telling. I would make mention, though, of one pioneer whose life carries special meaning to this writer. His name was Andy Moore.

The Polk County portion of Andy Moore's life began in 1862, when he and a number of other slaves were transported from Virginia by planter William Joel Watkins, who was anxious to protect his property from the advance of Union forces. This came at about the same time Polk County was created out of Hillsborough. The written record first reveals Andy at that glorious moment when the slaves were freed in 1865. The daughter of Andy's owner later recorded in her memoir that her father appeared to question Andy's ability to survive as a free man, while her words indirectly pointed out her father's callousness. "Among our Negroes was Andy the fiddler," she wrote. "Andy had five children, and I remember when word came that Lincoln had freed the slaves my father dolefully shook his head as he said, 'Poor Andy, with five children to feed.'"<sup>5</sup>

Andy Moore's owner was said to be a good man. It was noted that he was well educated, wealthy, and a highly successful farmer. Some said he related well to blacks and whites alike. But, this intelligent man who doubted Andy's chances of survival would be proved wrong by the events of subsequent years, although the slaveowner may never have known his error. He left Polk County soon after the war and would not be around to witness the miracles God worked in Andy's life.

We learned a good bit about the path that Andy took. Approximately one year after gaining freedom, Andy Moore and Tanner Reid, the woman who was the mother of his five children, were married on September 2, 1866. Previously, state law had prohibited them from officially ratifying the enduring commitment they had made between themselves years before. The next year Andy registered to vote, an act that involved some personal danger in a sometimes lawless frontier county filled with Confederate veterans.

Already, Andy had found himself a taxpayer and the farmer of his own land. He had cleared a tract of land in "Over the Branch" and, several years afterward, submitted a homestead application to the Tallahassee land office. Finally, on October 26, 1876, after having farmed the land successfully for over five years, Moore received a clear title to his eighty-acre farm. Research indicates that Andy was the first African-American to file a homestead application (December 1869) and the first to hold legal title to land in the county.

As the years passed the community took greater notice of Andy. During the early 1880s, for instance, a reporter published

an article on local agriculture. It read, in part, "One of the best places within a mile of Bartow is that owned by a negro named Andy Moore." The reporter commented further, "He has some 30 bearing [citrus] trees, makes some 400 or 500 bushels of corn, raises his own meat, and is independent generally."

As Andy merited increased respect for his talents and hard work, he pushed his children to improve their own chances for a brighter future. He believed especially in the benefits of education. Consider the fact that Polk County in the 1870s and early 1880s provided virtually no support for the education of blacks. Not surprisingly then, of the 453 children listed on the 1880 United States census as attending school in the county, only five were black. One child belonged to Prince Johnson. The other four belonged to Andy Moore.

Soon, the Moore children began to tally accomplishments of their own. In 1882 son Patrick stood as one of four black men to vote along with eighteen white men to incorporate the town of Bartow. Their action made the county seat Polk's first incorporated city. It should go without saying that those four black men—Patrick Moore, along with Squire Newman, Prince Johnson, and Tony Tucker—rank high in our minds on the roll call of Bartow's founding fathers.

The years, by then, were taking their toll on Andy and Tanner Moore. God's mercy was manifested in 1891 with Tanner's death. Her grave supports the oldest marked tombstone among the nearly 2,000 sites in the black Evergreen Cemetery in West Bartow. The same year, Andy apparently accepted the reality of his own mortality. He

commenced deeding portions of his considerable land holdings to his children. Andy Moore eventually passed away in 1900. His remains were placed by family members in a common grave with his beloved wife Tanner.

But, Andy's death did not mark the end of the Moore family story. I mentioned earlier that his life carried special meaning to this author. That fact can be traced to 1882, when Moore's beautiful daughter Elizabeth married a newly arrived and handsome fellow from Virginia by the name of Thomas Waldon. The couple followed her father's example by homesteading 160 acres of land just south of Bartow in the small village of Homeland. There, they started to raise a family.

Andy Moore's death in 1900 prompted the Waldons to relocate to the Moore family homestead in West Bartow. Earlier, Elizabeth's father had deeded to her thirteen and one-half acres of the property. They farmed the land until 1905 when thirty-eight-year-old Elizabeth died, seemingly at childbirth. Thomas thereafter married Emma, daughter of Prince Johnson's. He continued to work the Moore family farm and added to his estate, as well. In 1918 Thomas purchased twenty acres in "Over the Branch" with one of his sons, Fred (Cap) Waldon. Cap went on to become a well-known grocer and landlord. With the passage of time, Thomas deeded off portions of his land.

The Moore/Waldon line persisted at West Bartow, even as some family members sought their fortunes elsewhere. When Thomas passed away in 1923, he left behind seven children. Each of them grew to be a solid citizen.

Today the legacy of Andy Moore and wife Tanner lives on. The city of Bartow, the county of Polk, the state of Florida, and, indeed, America itself are richly blessed. To paraphrase a comment recorded at the time of Thomas Waldon's arrival at Homeland in 1882, "The population of this country has been greatly enhanced by the generations of Andy Moore." More on that in just a moment.

### **After Thoughts**

As direct result of the NIC's history project and the historical facts that were uncovered, West Bartow has taken on a new significance to its current generation of residents. The neighborhood never again will be treated simply as an irrelevant, blighted area. We now know for certain that it is one of Polk County's oldest settlements. As such, "Over the Branch" merely is showing its age.

Yes, we still intend to rebuild this gracious, old, and neglected community, but it will be done with an eye toward its history, preservation, protection, and promotion—not to tear down and destroy.

Such can be the contribution of the wealth of history to a community; yet, sometimes the impact on human beings can come even more profoundly. "The Joy and Importance of the Discovery of African American History" serves as a very appropriate subtitle for this narrative. In a very personal sense, my family has been uplifted by the discovery of its West Bartow roots and especially by learning of Andy Moore and his wife Tanner Reid. Readers may be interested to know that, prior to

undertaking this history project, my mother-in-law, Asonia Waldon-Washington, had not heard of Andy Moore and Tanner Reid Moore. She had no idea who they were. Words alone cannot describe the depth of emotion that swept through our household the moment she discovered that those two pioneers, over whose grave she had walked and which she had ignored throughout her life, were her great-grandparents.

Odd as it may seem, not one of Andy's descendants, beginning with my mother-in-law's generation, knew anything about Andy Moore and Tanner Reid Moore or of any of the other black pioneers of West Bartow. This history project, which began as an afterthought, has produced some blockbuster revelations—at least for my family. Rest assured that future Waldon family reunions will never be the same. The generations that have followed Andy Moore will continue to honor his memory.

For many African-Americans today, the lack of knowledge about family heritage presents a real and harmful void. The Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow, Inc., strongly encourages groups in other communities to conduct similar research. We believe that they will find the results truly gratifying.

#### ENDNOTES

*The officers of the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow, Inc., extend their sincere appreciation to the Polk County Historical Association, the Polk County Historical and Genealogical Library, the Florida Humanities Council, NIC volunteers and supporters, Odell Robinson, Lloyd*

*Harris, Hal Hubener, Dr. James M. Denham, and everyone else who assisted us in any way, and especially to our scholar and mentor, Dr. Canter Brown, Jr., of the Tampa Bay History Center, whose guidance and assistance were absolutely invaluable.*

<sup>1</sup> Except as noted, source materials for information contained in this article may be found in the research files of the Neighborhood Improvement Corporation of Bartow, Inc., Bartow, Florida.

<sup>2</sup> Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Peace River Frontier* (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1991), 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Tallahassee Weekly Floridian*, May 9, 1871.

<sup>4</sup> Canter Brown, Jr., *African Americans on the Tampa Bay Frontier* (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 1997), 56-59.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Watkins [Mrs. George] Gibbs Memory Diary, Gibbs family file, St. Augustine Historical Society Research Library, St. Augustine, n.p.

## The Spanish American War South of Tampa Bay

Pamela N. Gibson and Ann Shank

There were fewer than 3000 residents in the Manatee County of 1898, which included the present Sarasota County, but they were involved with the island of Cuba more than a year before the United States went to war with Spain and sympathies were squarely with the insurgents. When "the situation" made its way into the local paper, the *Manatee River Journal*, on October 28, 1897, concern was for hurriedly re-supplying the revolutionaries before Spain executed its threat to apply open "search and seizure" rules to ships in Cuban waters flying the Stars and Stripes. The *Dauntless*, run by Capt. "Dynamite" Johnny O'Brien, and *Silver Heel* were both openly carrying contraband.

The South Florida papers expressed annoyance with the new U.S. anti-filibuster blockade of Florida's ports, as well as the Cuban search and seizure efforts. A special report from Punta Gorda to the *Times-Union* and the *Citizen*, and carried in the Manatee paper, related how all vessels in Charlotte Harbor had been searched by the U.S. Cruiser *Montgomery* and the cutters *Forward* and *McLane*. Acting on a tip that a filibustering expedition was about to leave for Cuba, they found no armaments. By Christmas time that year, however, the local markets were full of hams and turkeys and the *Journal* commented, "Seems like the Florida folks are off beef!"

Adding to the impression that the Cubans were suffering, and thus needing U.S. support, was an October report from Major A. M. Wilson, a cattleman and postmaster of Miakka, Florida. Having returned home from Havana via New York (because he didn't have a yellow fever health certificate), Tampa, and Braidentown, Wilson brought news of displaced people dying of starvation or dying after gorging themselves on relief supplies. Wilson, who was later elected to one term in the Florida Senate and two in the Florida House of Representatives, opened that "principally on account of this curse of yellow fever it is to be hoped Cuba will be brought under some new form of government. In Havana the fever never dies and Spanish shiftlessness has made the great seaport a menace to the health of the world." Just apply some Yankee energy to quarantine plus efficient boards of health, however, and "this great historical terror of mankind will pass away! "

Area cattlemen such as Wilson were eager to supply beef for the island. The *Journal* quoted a *Fort Myers Press* report of October 26, 1897, that 872 head of cattle left Punta Rassa, purportedly bound for Cuba. A further 1200-1500 cattle were expected to leave Port Tampa, despite the report from a Cuban cattle buyer that Florida's high cattle prices were ruining the trade. The first week of November saw 765 more cattle shipped from Punta Rassa and Fulton Brothers sent 743 head from Port Tampa at \$13.25. Since the cost of the



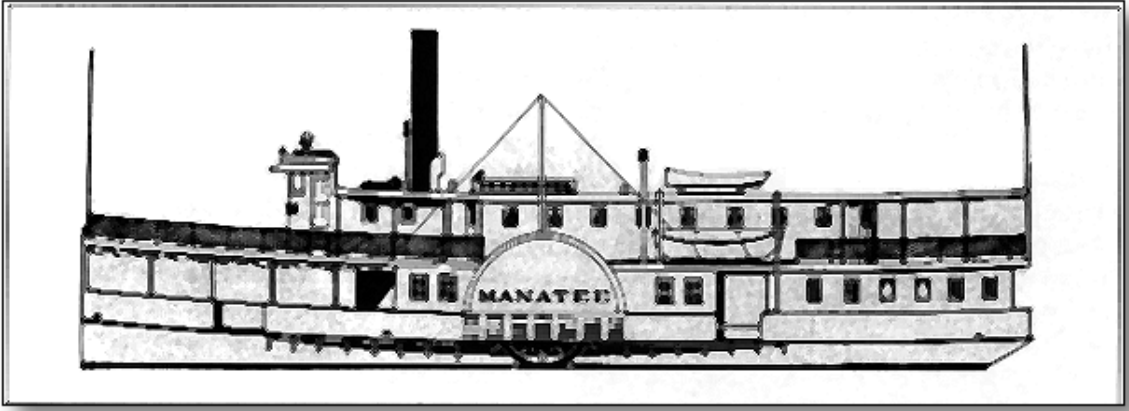
**Finely dressed residents pose in 1896 on the unpaved main street of Braidentown, later changed to Bradenton.**

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Library System.

beef on arrival in Cuba would be around \$29.89, it was small wonder that the people of Cuba were starving. In the December 2nd issue of the *Manatee River Journal*, Florida's cattle stocks were reported to be nearly exhausted, forcing prices higher. Cubans were expected to buy stock cattle for the Cuban ranges as they had earlier done. Thus, local "cattle kings came in for their full share of prosperity, which is now permeating the county."

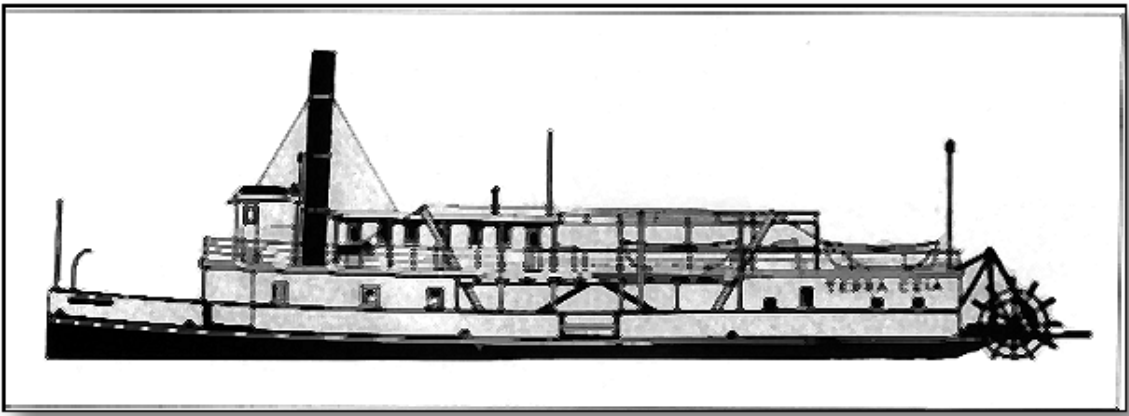
*Manatee River Journal* founder Joseph H. Humphries returned to edit the paper with the issue of January 20, 1898. He did not stint on coverage of news from Havana. He expected that, if push came to shove with Spain, the main thrust of the war would be fought from Florida. Soldiers have to eat, and providing food for an extra 100,000 or so would be very nice for the local citrus and vegetable growers.

On February 15, 1898, the U.S. Battleship *Maine* blew up in Havana harbor. The *Manatee River Journal* remained calm, with perhaps some sarcasm for the Spanish position. In what began as an item of strictly local and commercial interest, on March 10 the paper introduced its readers to the *Terra Ceia*, a new steamer of the Independent Line. While the steamer was purchased to supplement the *Manatee* on its runs between the Manatee River and Tampa, it took on unexpected war-related significance for the residents of Sarasota. That tiny community, too small to be listed in the 1900 census and lying about 45 miles south of Tampa on Sarasota Bay, felt vulnerable to Spanish invasion. John Hamilton Gillespie, manager for the company which had sold land to a colony from Scotland 13 years earlier, is quoted as having written to his mother in Scotland, "I fully expect if war comes



The *Manatee*, built in Newburgh, New York in 1884, sailed to Braidentown in October of that year and provided passenger service between Tampa, St. Petersburg, Terra Ceia and Manatee River ports.

Art courtesy of the Manatee County Public Library System.



Formerly the *Welaka*, purchased in 1898 by the Independent Line Steamers of Tampa, the *Terra Ceia*, shown above in 1898, carried passengers and freight between Tampa Bay ports and points along- the Manatee River to Ellenton.

Art courtesy of the Manatee Count Public Library System.

that every house in the place will be burnt .... I have applied to the authorities for protection but I think they have not enough protection for themselves, far less for us."

When the *Tampa Daily Times* alerted readers via an extra edition that "The Crisis Has Come!" on April 7, war was "no longer doubted." While the U.S. Naval Flying Squadron was going to sea,

the first real war scare took place in Sarasota. It seems that Capt. John J. Fogarty of the *Manatee* had been sent to Jacksonville to pick up the new steamer, the *Terra Ceia*. According to his later account, he had been on a three-week cruise along the "east coast canal and inland water ways which were so narrow and shallow that not more than a mile an hour could be made." After rounding the Keys, he intended to head straight up the





**M. Hans Wyatt, sheriff of Manatee County from 1905 through 1913, shown in 1898 in the uniform of the Tampa Rifles of the U. S. 6th Infantry. Wyatt, who saw action in Cuba, was erroneously reported as killed at the battle of San Juan Hill.**

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Library System.

west coast to Tampa. However, as Fogarty told the story, "wood having run short aboard the steamer," he decided to "run into Sarasota for a few cords to take him to Tampa."

A perfect stranger on the coast, this new steamer of course attracted the attention of an observer in the cupola atop the Belle Haven Inn as soon as she entered the bay. Since the steamer was quite large and coming from the south, or, the direction of Cuba, everyone began guessing, and, as the story goes, concluded it was a Spanish Man-of-War. The only way to escape the expected cruelties of Spanish captivity, as they had been pictured, would be to take to the woods, which many did before the Stars and Stripes became discernible to those on shore. Fogarty recounted that "among the number who escaped to the woods were a prominent merchant and a hotel man, but fortunately the mistake was discovered before they reached the Myakka swamps and couriers were sent out to advise them of the error."

The *Manatee River Journal* opened its April 28 issue with the words WAR and TAXES. Under the heading "War at Last" was the announcement of the Presidential declaration and blockade of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Next to it was the heading "Battles Bring Taxes" and a discussion of the Congressional revenue bill, which would include taxes on tea and coffee. The *Journal* had an on-going economic perspective on "the situation." By war's outbreak, the chances of selling local produce were great. As U. S. Navy Admiral Dewey's attack finished the war in the Philippines, on May 5 the paper cautioned local farmers to "plant sweet potatoes and rice." Good food "for home consumption as well as for the market" would be needed.

Most of the April news naturally concerned events in Tampa, but local, first-hand, accounts added an immediacy to

the situation. The H.F. Curry family returned to Curry's Point on the Manatee River from Key West, reporting that troops sent to Key West were causing so much trouble that the city was going to be placed under "Marshal's" law. Nearer home, a detachment of the naval militia from Tampa and Port Tampa arrived at the Egmont and Mullet Key batteries as guards and to display signals.

At the beginning of the war with Spain, the U.S. regular army was so understaffed that on April 22, 1898, Congress authorized the mustering of volunteer companies. Twelve of Florida's twenty companies formed the First Florida Infantry in May 23, 1898. "FOR DEFENSE" the headlines read as meetings were held in Braidentown "by our citizens for the purpose of providing a means of defense against a possible attack of Spaniards .... There will shortly be an organized body of men in Braidentown abundantly prepared to meet any emergency." George Riggan, A. T. Cornwell, Sr., and Harry Wadham composed the committee appointed to correspond with Adjutant General Houston about the Home Guard volunteers and to secure any arms that the state or federal government might provide.

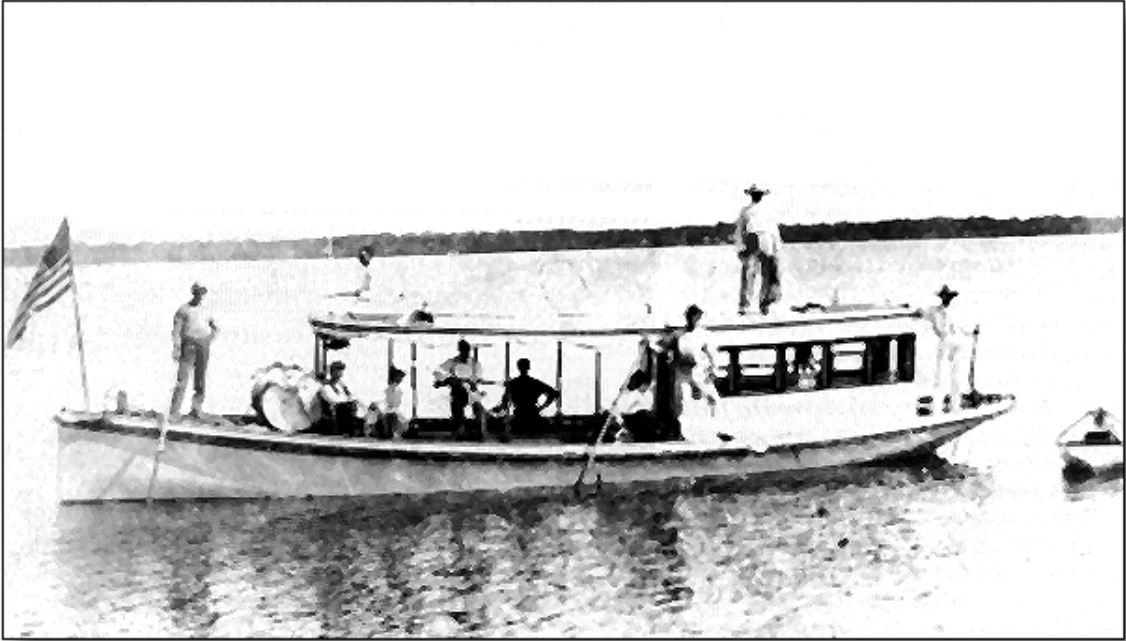
By May 12, many more men had signed up for the Home Guard than was required. Their names and the bond for forty guns and ammunition were forwarded to state headquarters. Within two weeks the forty guns arrived. Judge J. J. Stewart arranged for a meeting at the courthouse to organize the Guards and elect officers. H.W. Fuller was elected captain, with Judge Stewart and H. G. Reed as First and Second Lieutenants. Dr. C. W. Ballard offered



**Brigadier General William C. Harlee, U. S. Marine Corps, shown above as a Lt. Colonel, circa 1919, saw combat in Manilla, Corregidor and other battles in the Pacific. He was the subject of the book by John Harlee, *The Marine from Manatee*.**

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Library System.

room #7 in the Ballard Block on Main Street in Braidentown for storing the guns until the county commission could provide a proper armory. Dr. Ballard, by unanimous vote, was elected an honorary member of the company. The name "Braidentown Home Guards" was officially adopted and the regular members included J. W. Johnstone, Harry Wadham, T. C. Walton, T. Emmett Hunter, Charles Stuart, S. S. Curry, W. D. Hicks, J. S. Knight, Charles Duckwall, W. H. Hall, S. H. Highsmith, R. C. Trimble, E. L. Blakely, J. H. Humphries, W. C. Patten, Jr., C. C. McGinty, E. B. Camp, and W. B. Coarsey. They came from throughout the



**The *Zephyr*, the first motor-powered boat to play the Manatee River in regularly scheduled ferry service, was leased to the U.S. government and used to patrol the river against the possibility of invasion by Spain. The *Zephyr* was returned to its former peacetime role after the Spanish-American War. The crew, shown armed with rifles and shotguns, never had to fire their weapons in defense of the river.**

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Library System.

county, from Palmetto and the north to Venice in the south.

Newly-elected Captain Fuller adjourned the company to the Methodist Ladies' ice cream stand while the guns were delivered to the temporary storage. Later that evening, Lt. Stewart had the squad out for a short drill. The press reported, "He claimed he has good material for a company" and proposed "to lead everything on the river if the boys will give enough of their time to drills."

*Journal* editor Humphries had "the boys" in mind when he suggested plans for the 4th of July. A program affording amusement for all should include "athletic sports, boat races and ... a military drill contest between the

Braidentown Home Guards and companies organized in Manatee and Palmetto." He suggested the ladies make or buy a flag to be presented to the best drilled company on the 4th.

Col. Charles C. Whitaker, who had grown up on Sarasota Bay, came down from his home in Tampa to Braidentown and participated in the Home Guard's target practice. Whitaker was described in the *Journal* as "a military man of experience, having advanced from private to major, having held every one of the intermediate offices." Seventeen Home Guards participated in the practice, firing four rounds each. Few scores were made, indicating the necessity for continuous practice. The

officers called for a full turnout for the 4th of July.

As if he did not have enough to do, Judge Stewart then began organizing a company of volunteers for enlistment in the war in Cuba. All able-bodied men between 18 and 40 were asked to contact the Judge. While a number sought to or spoke of enlisting, not all were accepted. In May, Dr. J. D. Leffingwell of Braidentown sold his medical practice to William D. Hicks and left for Tampa to volunteer his services as a surgeon. He was back in town two weeks later and resumed his practice, not from his old office, but, the press reported, "friends and patients can find him at any time at either his residence, the drug store or the post office." With 65,000 volunteers mustered into service and 13 regiments assigned to duty in Florida, it was probably his age that kept him out of the service. In mid-September he took out an ad saying that he was leaving Braidentown to attend the New York Post-Graduate medical school.

In Sarasota, J.H. Gillespie wrote to his mother that since "they expect to put the cowhunters first into Cuba ... I may get to the front." While he identified with the pride of the cowhunter, Gillespie was a businessman. He did not enlist. One of the area's cowhunters, A.B. Edwards, did try, but was turned down because of bad eyesight. Not to be deterred, Edwards, later mayor of Sarasota, went to Cuba anyway, and obtained a civilian position with the Quartermaster's Department of the Army. In a later interview he recalled that when he went to Cuba he wore his cowhunter's clothes, including the leggings. He said, "When I went into the commander's office he looked at me from the soles of my feet to the top of

my head, but never said a word." Edwards spent two years there, part of the time assessing the need for cattle. On his return to Sarasota in the spring of 1900, he participated in the lucrative shipment of cattle to the cattle starved island.

Throughout the summer of 1898 reports of and from local participants in the Cuban war maintained a personal connection to events reported in the press. The reported death of M. Hans Wyatt pretty well ended the lighthearted aspect of the eagerness for local war news. Wyatt, who had opened his own abstract business in Braidentown in January, by June was among the first sailing from Tampa with the U. S. Army to Cuba. On July 14, the *Manatee River Journal* announced that three letters had been received in town, telling that young Hans had been killed during the battle for San Juan Hill. He had been with Captain Burns' Tampa Rifles, part of the U. S. 6th Infantry.

Two weeks later the paper thrilled local readers with the headline that "HANS WYATT IS NOT DEAD but liveth and writes that he never felt better in his life." A post card, dated July 7th, Santiago, Cuba, had finally reached his brother G.H. Wyatt. The same mail brought a letter dated July 8th to Mr. Willard, saying, "that he knew what war meant, having passed through the hottest of the battle of July 1st," in which "his regiment suffered so terribly and the man on the left next to him was killed." These letters "were written from the trenches, where he had been continuously for three days" while flags of truce flew in Santiago. The second letter was necessarily short as "it was written on an old envelope and sheet of

note paper which had been part of someone else's letter. It was then mailed in a secondhand envelope, reversed and sewed together. "

Wyatt's return to Braidentown was announced in the November 10th issue. He brought his final discharge papers with him, which mentioned him "as a soldier: character, excellent; cool and brave in action; thoroughly trustworthy; service, honest and faithful." M. Hans Wyatt later served two terms as Manatee County sheriff, from 1905 through 1913. For 20 years he represented Domino Citrus Association as a field agent. He was ready to celebrate his 84th birthday, when he died on October 21, 1955.

Off the Manatee County coast, efforts were being made to protect the coastal communities on two fronts - military and medical. Egmont and Mullet Keys, located at the mouth of Tampa Bay and west of Manatee County, were centers of much activity.

For a number of years, Egmont Key had served as a quarantine station for any ships coming into the harbor. Yellow fever was an ongoing threat and with the increase of naval activity came the increased risk of importing the disease. At the same time, Egmont was a strategically important island, and some of the activity observed there was not clearly described for the local press.

In late May Congressman Sparkman announced that the War Department, through the Lighthouse Board, had agreed to connect a telegraph cable from Egmont Key to Braidentown and then on to Tampa and the outside world. Expectation was that it would be shared by the State Board of Health. On June 9,

the *Journal* sang out "Hello Central! I want Egmont Key!" reporting that Braidentown people should be able to communicate with the island by the week's end. Lighthouse tender *Arbutus* laid cable to Shaw's Point on the Manatee River and Hote Reed had men stringing cable to Braidentown. The cable was indeed completed before the paper's next edition on June 16.

But not everyone was that eager to report all the news. When the *Terra Ceia* came into the Manatee River at the time the cable was being laid, in search of wood and water, her crew gave out no information. As she carried several reels of cable, however, the press surmised that she was helping to mine Tampa Bay. The steamer *Manatee* was also on the river with an excursion party of soldiers on leave. On the *Terra Ceia*'s next run up the river for wood, the press reported that she carried "a large number of mines and other paraphernalia for harbor defense." But the "persons employed at Egmont (remained) noncommittal as to what is being done on the island."

The *Journal* reported in mid-August that the *Terra Ceia* was under government charter and engaged in delivering shell and other material to Egmont Key to be used in the construction of fortifications and three Decker portable houses for use at Egmont's detention camp of the U.S. Marine Hospital. The newspaper turned critical, however, three weeks later. "The character of the Egmont Key quarantine station or detention camp is of a character that is exceedingly dangerous to this section. All vessels coming from Cuba or infected ports are forced to stop there, to discharge their cargoes and undergo a thorough fumigating and

period of detention. This work is no doubt thoroughly done and there is probably no danger from that source for Tampa, but for the Manatee River and other nearby points from which men have gone to the island to secure work, there is danger. The Red Cross ship *Clinton* arrived there and a gentleman whose home is in Braidentown spent two nights and a day on board the vessel, assisting in discharging the cargo. This same gentleman came to the river and spent Sunday with his family, returning Monday. Others who have been working on the island station say that persons returning from Cuba are not restrained from coming into contact with the large number of laborers engaged "in government work and we know these laborers go and come, to Tampa, to the Manatee River and elsewhere." The following week the paper reported that the island's management had corrected the condition.

Fear of disease was not without cause, for many Manatee County residents could well remember the yellow fever epidemic of the previous decade. At the end of August, after the war was officially over, J. H. Curry, Jr., returned home on 30-day leave from the First Florida Regiment. He was recuperating from a serious case "of disease" contracted in the camp at Fernandina. Not all the local soldiers were as lucky. Dr. E. S. Tyner, who went to Santiago in early August as a yellow fever expert, was struck with that disease soon after arrival and soon died. He had claimed to have already had it and was thought to be immune.

While the week-to-week press coverage was limited to the war activity in Cuba, some of Manatee County's residents

became more involved in war operations in the Philippines. Alexander Watson was too young to join his brother Will in the Cuban war effort, but two years later, while attending school in Nashville, wrote home that he had joined the Marines and was sailing for the Philippines. After some weeks on the island he became ward master at the U. S. Marine 3rd Reserve Hospital. When the Manila regiments were ordered to China to quell the Boxer Rebellion, Alex was one of four hospital staff chosen to go. The second hot day of the march from Tientsin to Peking with the U. S. 116th Artillery, they battled Chinese forces. As young Watson was reviving a wounded soldier with spirits of ammonia, he heard a curt command from a voice above him order, "Don't give that stuff to my men!" Looking up, he discovered his boyhood neighbor and friend, William Curry Harllee, now a Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Belonging to different divisions, they did not meet again for three months, until returning to the Philippines. When Watson caught up with Lt. Harllee again, who should be with him but his brother Will Watson and Edgar Graham, the son of Judge E. M. Graham of Manatee. Ed Graham was chief clerk in General Humphries' commissary department.

That Marine Corps lieutenant went on to become Brig. General William C. Harllee, who "led the crusade to make marksmanship a part of Marine training for the nation's military" according to Strom Thurmond in the introduction to John Harllee's *The Marine from Manatee*.

Harllee's early years were not as outstanding, however. William was born in the town of Manatee. He attended the

Citadel Military Academy in South Carolina, but was a poor student. After failing to graduate, he taught school at Oak Hill, Florida (later Parrish), where he had to beat up the big boys to maintain discipline. Now that he knew what it was like from both sides of the teacher's desk, he applied for an appointment to the U. S. Military Academy at West Point and was admitted on June 19, 1897. Harlee spent most of the Spanish American War collecting demerits and was "honorably discharged for deficiencies in discipline" on July 30, 1899.

After his discharge from West Point, he persuaded Congressman Sparkman and U. S. Senator-elect James P. Taliaferro to put his name in for an appointment as a first lieutenant in one of the first ten regiments being formed for duty in the Philippines. The appointment never came and while visiting Washington, D.C., he learned from an officer that, with his past record, it never would. But at the Metropolitan Hotel he met his friend Geoffrey Reese Fowler of Texas, who was captain of the Second Texas

Regiment in the Spanish-American War. Fowler had just received his appointment as captain of the 33rd U.S. Volunteers, to be organized at San Antonio, Texas. Fowler asked Harlee to come along with him as First Sergeant of the Texans, also known as the 33rd Texas Volunteers. While in San Antonio, Harlee met Captain Lee Hall of the Texas Rangers, who taught him marksmanship - the start of his real career. But Harlee entered active service with the volunteers as a private, peeling potatoes.

Quickly promoted to sergeant to help drill the new Westerners, he rose to First Sergeant in Co. F under Captain Fowler. They sailed to Manila in October 1899, moved to Corregidor Island and missed the big battle at San Fabian that included the rest of the regiment. Harlee's unit was sent here and there on scouting expeditions until the battle of Mangataren on November 23rd. That Thanksgiving capture gave them the main supply base and fourteen artillery pieces destined for General Aljandrino's army. This was followed by the battle of San Miguel in which the Americans captured fifteen pieces of artillery. They returned to San Francisco in December, 1899.

Harlee joined the U.S. Marine Corps and passed his exam for 2nd Lieutenant on February 2, 1900. Commissioned February 17, his pay was \$1400 per year. Had he remained at West Point, he would not have been commissioned until June of 1901. Harlee went on to fight the Boxer Rebellion in China, the Cuban pacification of 1906, saw action at Vera Cruz in 1914, then in Haiti and Santo Domingo. He oversaw construction of fourteen rifle ranges for the U. S. Navy during World War I, and rose in rank to Lt. Colonel.

Hans Wyatt was not the only Spanish - American War veteran to become sheriff of Manatee County. During the 1928 four-way race for sheriff, James P. Davidson placed an ad in the *Bradenton Herald*, "North Carolinian by birth, Floridian by choice (twenty years in Manatee County), a Presbyterian by Faith, a Democrat by principle, a Prohibitionist by conviction, a Spanish-American War veteran by voluntary enlistment, a farmer and

contractor by profession and will be the next sheriff of Manatee County by the votes of the law abiding element of Manatee County."

The ad continued: "endorsed by a majority of ministers, a large majority of the women voters and other outstanding leaders of Manatee County who have observed the recent desperate effort to surrender this county to a lawless element." He was, indeed, elected and it turned out to be a peaceful four-year term. He was born in 1878, lived in Statesville, North Carolina and presumably served in the North Carolina First Volunteer Regiment during the Spanish-American War under the command of Col. Joseph F. Ammfield. This unit included the Statesville Volunteers. The North Carolina First Regiment was to be sent directly to Tampa for embarkation to Cuba but was diverted to Jacksonville, still badly trained and miserably equipped, there to join General Fitzhugh Lee's 7th Army Corps on May 22, 1898.

After desertions, dysentery, typhoid fever and lack of everything they were transported in early December to Savannah, Georgia, where they boarded a transport to Mariana, Cuba, for garrison duty. Their four month stint was uneventful and they returned to Ft. Pulaski, near Savannah, in March 1899.

Davidson then joined Company M of the 46th Infantry of the U.S. Volunteers and after training at the Presidio, San Francisco, was sent to the Philippines. The 46th served at Manila, Siland, Indan in the Cavite Province and Luzon before being sent home aboard the U.S. Army transport *Sheridan*, an old rust-bucket. The tub took two months to make the

crossing and delivered a lot of seasick soldiers first to Hawaii and then on to San Francisco during March and April 1901. The 46th was mustered out of service at the Presidio on May 31, 1901. Davidson must then have returned to North Carolina for he married Claudia Oaks from that state. They came to Palmetto in Manatee County around 1909. His administration as sheriff, 1929 through 1932, was described as "singularly free from the spectacular."

While the Spanish-American War was one of the shorter conflagrations in which the United States has been involved, it left its mark on the lightly populated Manatee County. Some joined the fray and traveled to Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines; others prepared to defend their towns while they remained at home. Cattlemen and farmers had the opportunity to gain some short term profits feeding hungry soldiers and starving Cubans. For some, the experience became a proven patriotic steppingstone to later public office.

#### ENDNOTE

"The Spanish-American War South of Tampa Bay," was presented in Tampa, Florida on May 29, 1998 by the authors to the annual meeting of the Florida Historical Society.



## ODET PHILIPPE: Peninsular Pioneer

Amy F. David

Pirate, doctor, entrepreneur, nobleman: all terms that have been used to describe Pinellas County's first non-native settler, Odet Philippe, but none which tell the full story of the man. A new book, *Odet Philippe: Peninsular Pioneer*, written by descendant J. Allison DeFoor, II, addresses the myth and mystery of Philippe as he reveals the indisputable contributions of the early pioneer.

A visit to Safety Harbor, Florida's Philippe Park, originally Philippe's plantation St. Helena, offers telling clues to the legend that remain today, perhaps originated by Philippe himself. Even his gravestone, DeFoor notes, contains misinformation, including an incorrect birth date and the misspelling of his name.

Local legend maintains that Odet Philippe, who was born to royalty, earning him the title "Count", served with Napoleon as chief surgeon at the Battle of Trafalgar. After his capture and eventual release in the Bahamas, he is said to have made his way to Charleston, South Carolina. It is indeed in Charleston where historical records first identify Odet Philippe as early as 1818. Listed in the city directory as a "Cigar maker on East Bay Street", Philippe also was involved in the slave trade, purchasing at least nine African slaves from 1818 - 1833. In 1822, Philippe and his wife Dorothee de Desmottes had their three daughters, Louise Poleanne, Elizabeth Octavia, and Septima Marie, baptized at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. A fourth daughter, Melanie, was born in 1825. The

death and burial place of Dorothee is yet to be discovered, but Philippe's second wife was Marie Charlotte Florance Fontaine, Septima's godmother. She and Odet adopted another daughter, Henrietta Florance, born in 1841.

Aside from Philippe's declaration of birth on citizenship papers, DeFoor pursues another interesting scenario. Several contemporaneous accounts, including this one, refer to Philippe as being a "Trenchman and native of St. Domingo [now Haiti] about the color of Alfred. . . ." Alfred was a house slave in Alabama. A subsequent search of family records in Lyon, France, have failed to uncover any information. While conclusive evidence is yet to be discovered, it is a tantalizingly possibility that Philippe could have been born of the *afttanchi*, or mulatto, class in San Domingue. Civil unrest and slave uprisings at the end of the 18th century sent many out of the country and to U.S. locations, including Charleston.

Business reverses in Charleston led Philippe to explore opportunities elsewhere and by 1830, he was actively involved in business in South Florida, living in both New River (now Ft. Lauderdale) and Key West. In both locations, Philippe pursued his vision of combining his mercantile interests with a working plantation. At New River he developed a coontie plantation and salt flat, but the outbreak of the Second Seminole War forced him to abandon the area. With concurrent business interests in Key West, records show Philippe firmly established in the area by the mid-1830s, involved in cigar-making and owning several businesses, including a pool hall. It is in Key

West where his second wife Marie Charlotte Florance Fontaine Philippe is buried, having died in 1846. Her grave may still be viewed on the grounds of the "Old Stone" Methodist Church on Eaton Street.

There is evidence that by the late 1830s, Odet Philippe had discovered Tampa Bay and in 1839 purchased a lot "in the town of Tampa", bordered by Tampa Street, for \$100.00 and resumed many of the mercantile businesses he had pursued in Key West. On November 1, 1842, Philippe received title for 160 acres on the northwest side of Tampa Bay under the Armed Occupation Act. It was here he established his citrus plantation of St. Helena (now Philippe Park in Safety Harbor) and realized his agricultural- mere antile dream. St. Helena soon became known as the Cypress Gardens of its day, attracting visitors to its lush and productive citrus groves.

It is at Tampa Bay that Philippe's documentable contributions to the state of Florida outshone the mystery and myth of his life. As the first pioneering settler in Pinellas County, Philippe continued to make cigars and thus was the first in the area to do so. Eventually, Tampa was to become known as "Cigar City" from the product. In an even wider-reaching contribution, Philippe's crop cultivation and development of citrus, including the development of the "Duncan" grapefruit, among other varieties, helped create the Florida citrus industry. His great success at Tampa Bay attracted other pioneers to the area, who also tried their hands at citrus cultivation.

But perhaps the most important contribution Philippe made was that of family. His daughters and descendants married, several into other area pioneer families including the Booths, McMullens, Stephens and Youngbloods, and have continued to make

their own contributions to Florida. In the words of author J. Allison DeFoor, II, ". . . Philippe represents the best of immigrants who have always been drawn to Florida. Severing his roots and bearing little beyond his wits, he helped carve out of a wilderness the foundations of the present state of Florida."

## CARLTON: A Goodly Heritage

Spessard Stone

The Carlton's, in diverse fields from the cattle ranges to the governor's chair, have exerted a prominent Influence in Florida for over 150 years. Herewith follows a summary of the family from early origins to several prominent Tampa citizens.

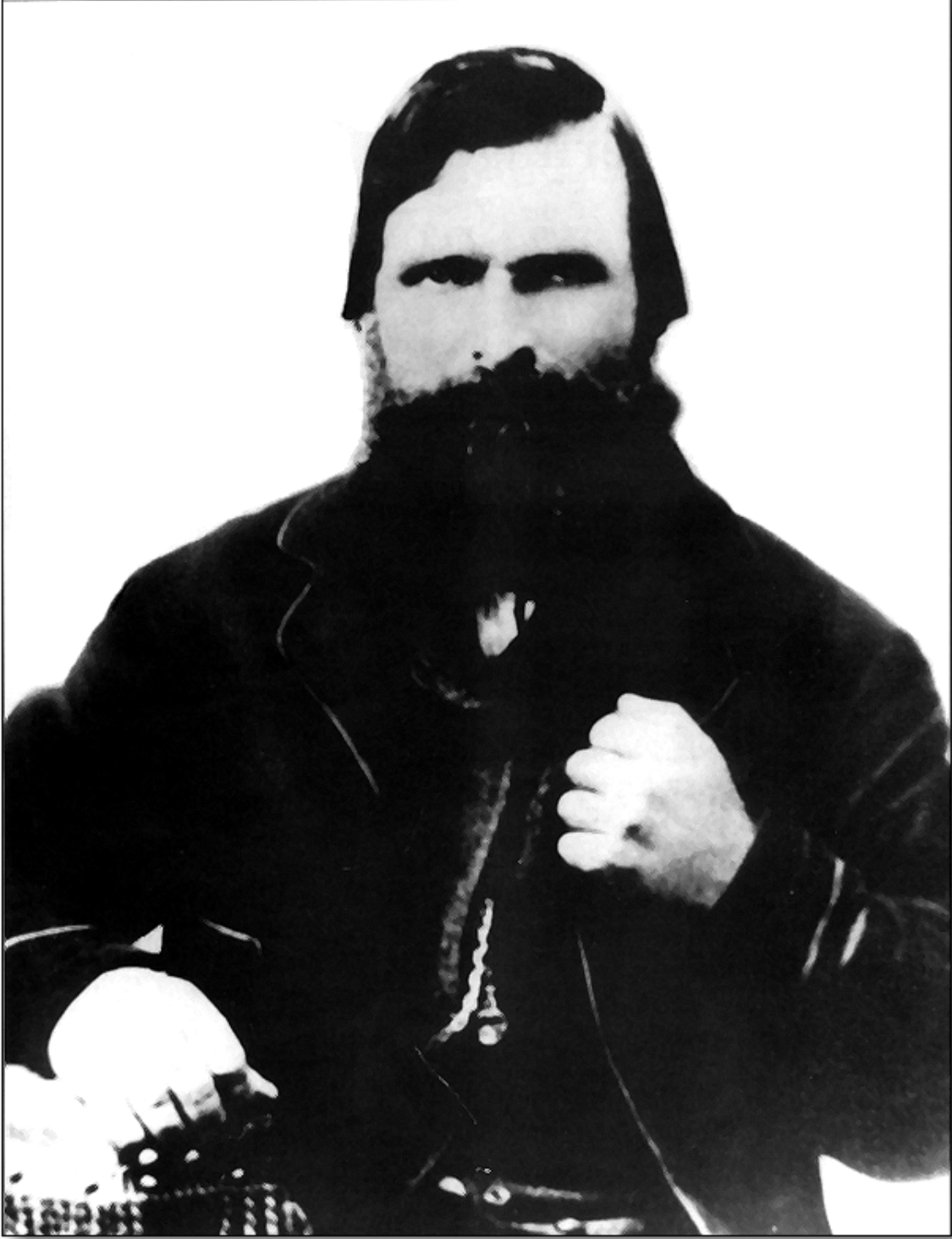
When Alderman Carlton settled in Florida in January 1843,<sup>1</sup> Florida was a frontier territory. He and his contemporaries would be astonished at how Florida has evolved in the interval into a modern state with its accompanying infrastructure, technology, and tourism. Probably only on the cattle ranches would they readily be at home. Alderman Carlton was the scion of a colonial family. Thomas Carleton, his grandfather, was born May 10, 1747 in Chester County, Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Martha (1751-1797), moved to North Carolina prior to the Revolutionary War, in which, while living in Duplin County, he rendered service as a private. Thomas died October 3, 1795 in Duplin County. In his will, Thomas made mention of prior modest bequests to his daughters, Rachel, Anna, Elizabeth and Lydia, and son, John, with his "dearly beloved wife, Martha, all the rest of any property both lands and stocks of all kinds and negroes her lifetime," except after her death, his sons, Stephen and Thomas, to inherit separate lands.<sup>2</sup>

John Carlton, the third of seven children of Thomas and Martha, was born April

20, 1775 in Duplin County, North Carolina. John, as others of the family, changed the spelling of his surname to Carlton. In Duplin County on November 17, 1797, John married Nancy Ann Alderman, born November 17, 1775 in Duplin County, daughter of David Alderman, a Revolutionary War soldier, and Jemima (Hall) Alderman. John and Nancy Ann lived in Duplin County until about 1800 when they moved to Sampson County, North Carolina. In the early 1820s, the family migrated to Bulloch County, Georgia and then, about 1825, to Thomas County, Georgia. They lived on the Ochlockonee River, where John owned and operated a sawmill and gristmill and farmed. In 1852 John sold his property and relocated to Madison County, Florida. There Nancy Ann Carlton died June 4, 1867 and John Carlton died February 26, 1868. Sales from Carlton's estate, which included: 120 acres of land and 40 head of stock cattle, realized a modest \$1,011.30.<sup>3</sup>

George W. Hendry remembered his grandfather for his spiritual, not material, walk in life:

"John Carlton resembled greatly old Abraham. I never read of old Abraham, but in my mind's eye I behold my grandfather. He had his family worship mornings and evenings as regularly as the days came and went. I can recall vividly the verbiage of many of his prayers, and can sing many of the songs that I learned when but eight years old at my grandfather's



**Alderman Carlton, descendent of a colonial family which first settled in Pennsylvania, moved in 1843 to land in the territory of Florida he received for his service in Georgia during the Second Seminole War. The area was probably located in Alachua County. He moved near Ft. Meade in late 1854 or early 1855.**

*Photograph courtesy of Canter Brown.*

hearthstone as though it was but yesterday ... The whole family, from grand father down, were exemplary, Christians, their piety proverbial...”<sup>4</sup>

John and Nancy Ann Carlton had nine children: (1) Rev. Thomas (1799-1841), of which a branch settled in Plant City; (2) Mary "Polly" (1801-90, Mrs. John Chastain of Thomasville, Georgia); (3) Alderman (1803-56); (4) Stephen (1805-86, who eventually settled in Polk County); (5) William (1807-75, of Fort Green); (6) Elizabeth (1808-62, Mrs. John Simmons of Taylor County); (7) Lydia (1812-98, who married James Edward Hendry and Benjamin Moody of Riverview and Homeland); (8) Rev. John Wright (1818-94, of Polk County); (9) Martha Ann (1820-1900, Mrs. Robert M. Hendry of Taylor County).<sup>5</sup>

Alderman Carlton, son of John and Nancy Ann, was born January 4, 1803 in Sampson County, North Carolina. In Duplin County, North Carolina on September 27, 1822, he married his first cousin, Martha Maria Alderman, born March 3, 1806, Duplin County, North Carolina, daughter of Daniel and Mary Wilson Alderman. About 1825, Alderman and family moved to Thomas County, Georgia. During the Second Seminole War, Alderman was a member of the companies commanded by Capt. Tucker and Capt. Browning, which were raised in August and September 1836. He participated in the Battle of Brushy Creek in Lowndes County, Georgia.<sup>6</sup>

Alderman, under provisions of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, received on May 10, 1843 at Newnansville, Fla. Permit #414 for land, which was probably in Alachua County. Alderman later removed to the Alafia

Settlement in Hillsborough County where he was a planter. During the Indian trouble in 1849, he served as fourth sergeant in Capt. John Parker's Company, organized July 1849. In 1851 city commissioners of Tampa deeded to L. G. Lesley, Dr F. Branch, W. B. Hooker, Alderman Carlton and C. A. Ramsey, trustees for the First Methodist Church of Tampa, Lot 3 of Block 14 of the survey of 1847. On July 3, 1852, he registered the following mark & brand: undersquare and underbit in one ear and undersquare in the other brand "C."<sup>7</sup> Alderman in late 1854 or early 1855 moved his family near the Campground branch on the Fort Meade and Fort Frazier road. During the Third Seminole War on December 29, 1855, he was mustered into service as second lieutenant in Capt. Francis M. Durrance's Company. In the spring of 1856 he was commander of the garrison at Fort Meade and led six men to the defense of the Indian-besieged Willoughby Tillis family. In so doing, he was slain, as were two of his men, William Parker and Lott Whidden, while his son, Daniel W. Carlton, John C. Oats and John Henry Hollingsworth, were wounded.<sup>8</sup>

Rev. J. M. Hayman was the administrator of the estate of Alderman Carlton. A partial inventory included in part: 32-year-old Negro woman named Charity, 4-year-old Negro boy named Joe, several houses at Fort Meade, corn mill, crop of corn in the field, 140 head of cattle, 30 head of hogs, 5 head of sheep, 2 yoke of oxen, 1 gray mare, 1 colt, 1 single horse buggy, saddle and bridle, large wagon, lots of books. In October 1856 this notice by Rev. J. M. Hayman was published: "Will be sold to the highest bidder before courthouse in Tampa on 15th of November next, one negro woman, age about 35 years, good



**George W. Hendry, son of John Edward and Lydia Carlton Hendry, grandson of John Carlton, and great-grandson of Alderman and Martha Carlton.**

Photographs courtesy of Canter Brown.

house or field hand also with her, a boy about 5 years old-very smart healthy child-will be sold together, as boy is her child. Estate of Alderman Carlton for benefit of heirs." In July 1859, Hayman gave notice that he was to sell lands belonging to the estate which included 161.5 acres in the Alafia area and 160 acres near Fort Meade.<sup>9</sup>

After Alderman's death, Martha M. Carlton lived in Tampa with her daughter and son-in-law, Martha Jane and J. M. Hayman. On September 1, 1857, she registered her mark and brand: crop & half crop in one ear, undersquare & underbit in other-brand "Z." In the fall of 1858 yellow fever broke out in Tampa, and Martha Carlton died from it on December 13, 1858.<sup>10</sup>

Alderman and Martha Carlton had 14 children: (1) Daniel Williamson (1823-91); (2) Mary Ann (1825-93, Mrs. Timothy Alderman of Ga.); (3) William Thomas (1827-91 of Alachua Co.); (4) Martha Jane (1829-95, Mrs. J. M. Hayman of Bartow); (5) Elizabeth (1831-31); (6) Manerva (1833-42); (7) Isaac (1835-97 of Hillsborough Co.) (8) Priscilla (1837-1919, Mrs. Eli English of Wauchula); (9) Susannah (1839-78; who married G. H. Johnson and Rev. Robert N. Pylant of Bartow); (10) Missouri (1841-43); (11) Sarah (1844-87, who married Stephen P. Hooker and William C. Hayman of Owens); (12) Georgia Ann (1846-? Mrs. Robert A. Carson of Immokalee); (13) Thomas C. (1850-50); (14) Nancy (1851-51).<sup>11</sup>

Daniel Wilson Carlton, eldest child of Alderman and Martha, was born July 2, 1823, Wilmington, North Carolina. At Thomasville, Georgia on February 18, 1840, he married Sallie Ann Murphy, born October 15, 1823 in North Carolina. Probably in late 1843 or 1844, Daniel moved to Alachua County, then to Hillsborough County, and by 1855 to near Campground branch, Fort Meade. During the Third Seminole War, Daniel served as a private from December 29, 1855 to August 1856 in Capt. Francis M. Durrance's Company, Florida Mounted Volunteers. In the Willoughby Tillis Battle of June 14, 1856, his father, Alderman Carlton, was killed and Daniel, although wounded, killed an Indian. Daniel, on September 5, 1856, enlisted as a private in Capt. Leroy G. Lesley's Independent Company, Florida Mounted Volunteers and was discharged February 19, 1857 at Fort Brooke. At the time of his service, he was 5 feet 8 inches, with grey eyes, light hair, light complexion and farmer by occupation.<sup>12</sup>



**Lydia Carlton, daughter of John and Nancy Ann Carlton, married first James Edward Hendry, and, later Benjamin Moody.**

Photograph courtesy of Canter Brown.

In the late 1850s, the family resettled at Troublesome Creek, between present - day Wauchula and Ona, in Manatee (now Hardee) County, Florida. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Daniel "drove his, in the Rebel Army, with shouts of exultation." By 1864 the atmosphere had changed dramatically in the Peace River Valley. Daniel, whose ardor for the Confederacy had abated, was joined by many of his neighbors. Former Tampan Capt. Henry Crane of Company B, Second Florida Cavalry, United States Army, in June 1864 reported of him, "The Rebs have we hear, carried him off in Irons northward. One of his sons at home on furlough, seeing his father treated thus, came to us & I have the pleasure to-day of seeing him bear arms directly under our glorious old "Banner."

After the Civil War, Daniel joined the Republican Party.<sup>13</sup>

Daniel and Sallie in the 1870s resettled at Nocatee in Manatee (now DeSoto) County. A cattleman, Daniel at this time had 2,000 head of cattle. Daniel Wilson Carlton died on April 2, 1891 at Nocatee. Sallie died April 15, 1905. They were of the Baptist faith and had been members of Mt. Moriah Baptist Church.<sup>14</sup>

They had 12 children: (1) Reuben (1842-1917 of Fort Pierce); (2) Wright (1843-1929 of Nocatee); (3) Albert (1845-1925); (4) Martha Jane (1847-1933, Mrs. James E. Whidden of Arcadia); (5) Alderman (1849-1940, of DeSoto Co.); (6) Lewis (1851-1925, of Wauchula); (7) James (1853-1940 of

Highlands Co.); (8) Jeremiah (1854-1918, of Nocatee); (9) William Lacy (1859-1920, of DeSoto Co.); (10) Charles Wilson (c1862-1955, of Tampa and Fort Myers); (11) Stephen Isaac (1863-c1918, of DeSoto Co.); (12) Elam B. (1864- 1908, of Fort Ogden and Wauchula).<sup>15</sup>

Albert Carlton, son of Daniel and Sallie, was born May 9, 1845, probably in Marion County. Albert, during the Civil War, enlisted at Fort Myers as a private on June 15, 1864 in Company B, Second Florida Cavalry, U. S. Army. War Department rolls described him as 5 feet 10 inches, with fair complexion, grey eyes, light hair, and a farmer by occupation. He was mustered out with his company on November 29, 1865 at Tallahassee. In Manatee County on October 11, 1868, Albert married Martha Winfield McEwen, born February 10, 1851, Washington County, Georgia, daughter of the Rev. William Penn McEwen, a Methodist minister, and his wife, Rutha (Sheppard) McEwen.<sup>16</sup>

Albert first earned his living as a farmer, cowhunter, and orange grower, but in 1902, he added a hardware store in Wauchula. In the normal course of business, credit terms and occasional loans were extended, and in 1904 he opened a bank, in which two of his sons, Charles and Carl, would be associated. Carlton National Bank, until its demise in the Great Depression, was the area's leading financial institution.<sup>17</sup>

Albert Carlton died in Tampa, Florida on September 1, 1925 at the home of his son, Dr. Leland Carlton. Martha W. Carlton died on August 6, 1944 at Wauchula. They were members of the First Baptist Church of Wauchula.<sup>18</sup>

Albert and Martha were the parents of ten children: (1) Ella Louise (1869-1958, Mrs. William A. Southerland of Wauchula); (2) Charles Jesse (1871-1963 of Wauchula); (3) Thomas Newton (1872-1948, of Wauchula); (4) Ab. W. (1875-1925, of Wauchula); (5) Alton Hudson Carlton (1877-1967, of Wauchula); (6) Carl Simeon (1880-1932, of Wauchula); (7) Gettis Stephen (1882-1971, of Wauchula); (8) Doyle Elam (1885-1972, of Tampa); (9) Dr. Leland Francis (1888-1950, of Tampa); (10) Leffie Mahon (1897-1983, of Wauchula).<sup>19</sup>

While many of the clan have contributed to the well-being of Tampa and the state, Tampa has most notably been affected by the families of Governor Doyle E. Carlton, Dr. Leland F. Carlton and Dr. Leffie M. Carlton.

Doyle Elam Carlton was born July 6, 1885, west of present-day Wauchula. He received undergraduate degrees from Stetson University and Chicago University, and his law degree from Columbia University in New York. Admitted to the Florida Bar in 1912, Doyle was an attorney with a prominent law firm in Tampa for most of his career. From 1926-28, he was City Attorney of Tampa. In 1947 he was special attorney for Florida in the settlement which brought to the state ownership of the Ringling Museums at Sarasota.<sup>20</sup>

Mr. Carlton had a distinguished political career. He served 1917-19 as the State Senator from the 11th District, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties. In 1928 he was elected governor of Florida. Governor Carlton's term of office, January 8, 1929 to January 3, 1933, was dominated by problems caused by the





**Early Hardee County settlers Daniel Wilson Carlton, 1823-1891, and his wife Sallie Ann Murphy Carlton, 1823-1905.**

Photograph courtesy of Canter Brown.

Great Depression. Leland Hawes, historical writer for The Tampa Tribune, commented that Governor Carlton came out of his four-year term with a reputation for integrity in the face of great pressure. In 1936 however, he was defeated in a bid for U. S. Senator. He, thereafter, devoted his attention to his law practice, business interests, and civic and church activities, being a member of the First Baptist Church of Tampa.<sup>21</sup>

On July 30, 1912, Doyle married Nell Ray, who was born in Meridian, Mississippi on January 27, 1891, and died February 18, 1982 at Tampa. Governor and Mrs. Carlton had three children: (1) Martha (Mrs. David E. Ward); (2) Mary (1920-1985, Mrs. William Jones Ott, of Tallahassee); (3) Doyle Elam, Jr.<sup>22</sup>

Martha Carlton was born October 16, 1914 at Tampa. A 1935 graduate of Florida State College for Women, she married on June 3, 1937 David Elmer Ward, son of David Thomas and Mary E. (Johnson) Ward. He was born September 26, 1909, near Fort Myers, Florida, and died February 16, 1995 at Tampa. An attorney, David served as County Judge of Lee County and State Senator of the 24th District. After service as a lieutenant commander in the U. S. Navy in World War II, he moved to Tampa where he practiced law and was involved in numerous business enterprises, church, civic and charitable activities. Martha is an active member of the First Baptist Church and has served on the boards of the Salvation Army, the YWCA, the Hillsborough County Bar Auxiliary and the Chiselers, Inc., a

support group for the restoration of H. B. Plant's Tampa Bay Hotel.<sup>23</sup>

David and Martha Ward had three children: (1) David Elmer Jr., an attorney in Tampa; (2) Mary Nell of Tampa; (3) Robert Carlton, an attorney in Clearwater.<sup>24</sup>

Doyle Elam Carlton, Jr. was born in Tampa on July 4, 1922. He attended the University of Florida and, during World War II, served in the U. S. Army Air Corps, being discharged as a sergeant. Although he lives at Wauchula, Doyle has maintained an active presence in Tampa. Agriculture is his main occupational interest, and he and his immediate family have extensive citrus and cattle holdings. In 1991 he was inducted into the Florida Agriculture Hall of Fame. Doyle has been involved in various other enterprises, notably as the chairman of Hav-a-Tampa Corporation, president and chairman of the board of Eli Securities, and chairman of the Florida State Fair Authority. Active politically, he was elected in 1952 and served eight years as State Senator from the 27th District and was returned to the Senate in 1964. Perhaps his finest political hour was his unsuccessful bid for governor in 1960 when he spoke out in favor of integration. He is a member of the First Baptist Church of Wauchula, of which he is a deacon.<sup>25</sup>

At Tampa on November 27, 1943, Doyle married Mildred Woodbery, daughter of Daniel Hoyt and Elizabeth (Johnstone) Woodbery. They have three children: (1) Susan (Mrs. Donald Emerson "Duck" Smith, of Wauchula); (2) Doyle Elam III, of Wauchula; (3) Jane (Mrs. David Durando, of Wauchula).<sup>26</sup>

Leland Francis Carlton, son of Albert and Martha, was born January 23, 1888, in Wauchula, Florida. Leland received his M. D. from Rush Medical College in Chicago and, after a one-year internship, moved in 1915 to Tampa where except for service as a lieutenant in the U. S. Army Medical Corps during World War I, he practiced for the remainder of his life. He was active in civic affairs and served on the staff of the Tampa Children's Home. Dr. Carlton died June 5, 1950. At Tampa on November 23, 1921, Dr. Carlton married Margaret Brown, and they had two daughters: (1) Margie (Mrs. Victor R. Gullatt, of Wauchula) and (2) Betty (Mrs. Herbert W. Kay, Jr. of Wauchula).<sup>27</sup> Leffie Mahon Carlton, son of Albert and Martha, was born February 9, 1897 at Wauchula. He attended Stetson University where he received in 1917 a degree in business administration. He was a cattle rancher and citrus grower. Leffie died on March 8, 1983. He had married Odell Imogene Ratliff (1897-1980), and they had two children, Leffie Mahon, Jr. and Dorothy Odell (Mrs. Robert Campbell, of Wauchula).<sup>28</sup>

Leffie Mahon Carlton, Jr., was born July 28, 1918 at Wauchula. He received his M. D. from Duke Medical College in May 1943 and completed his surgical internship at the University of Chicago. Entering military service in 1945, Dr. Carlton served in the Medical Corps and became chief of chest surgery at one of five chest wound treatment centers for returning soldiers. Discharged, he practiced surgery for 43 years in Tampa until he retired on July 1, 1990. On November 6, 1943, he had married Ellen (Lynn) Remensnyder. Dr. and Mrs. Carlton reside at 3711 Bayshore Blvd., Tampa, and have three sons: (1) Leffie

Mahon III, a physician practicing urology and urological surgery in Tampa; (2) Charles Dennis, a real estate broker with cattle and citrus interests; (3) Leland Francis, a citrus grower.<sup>29</sup>

## ENDNOTES

This article is adapted from the author's *Lineage of John Carlton* (Revised 6th Edition, 1998). The Carlton's are a numerous clan with many branches on the family tree. I have herein focused only on the Tampa line off Albert Carlton of Wauchula.

<sup>1</sup> Armed occupation act permit of Alderman Carlton, DNR, Tallahassee.

<sup>2</sup> Milton D. Wilson, *The Carlton Family Some Descendants of Thomas Carlton, Revolutionary Soldier of Duplin County, North Carolina* (Polk County Historical Commission, Bartow, 1940s); "Records of Wills, Duplin County, N.C.," Book A, 69.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> George W. Hendry, *Family Record of Lydia Moody Nee Hendry Nee Carlton*, (Jacksonville, Florida, 1900), 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> Spessard Stone, *Lineage of John Carlton*, (Wauchula, 1998), 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Livingston, "Alderman Carlton 1803-1856," *South Florida Pioneers* 8, April 1976, 15-18.

<sup>7</sup> Livingston; Armed Occupation Act permit; Canter Brown, Jr., *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, (Orlando, University of Central Florida Press, 1991), 359; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census 1850, Hillsborough County, Florida; Elizabeth Chase, *The Pioneer Churches of Florida*, 1976, 33; "Hillsborough County: Early Marks & Brands," *South Florida Pioneers* 8, April 1976, 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Soldiers of Florida*, 1903, 14-15; Brown, 102,113.

<sup>9</sup> Livingston; *The Florida Peninsular*, October 4, 1856, July 9, 1859.

<sup>10</sup> Livingston; "Hillsborough County: Early Marks & Brands," *South Florida Pioneers* 10, October 1976, 13

<sup>11</sup> Stone, 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> Pension application of Sallie Carlton, N.A.; U.S. Original Census Schedules, 7th Census 1850, Hillsborough County, Florida; *Soldiers of Florida*, 14-15; Brown, 113; Stone, 17-18.

<sup>13</sup> U.S. Original Census Schedules, 8th Census 1860, Manatee County, Florida; Crane to Woodbury, June 18, 1864; Brown, 169; Co. E records and Co. B pension file of Reuben Carlton, N. A.; Confederate pension application of Wright Carlton, Florida Archives; Co. B pension application of Albert Carlton, Veterans Administration, St. Petersburg; Brown, 209; Charles T. Carlton to Stone, December 21, 1997. See also Stone, "Tories Of The Lower Peace River Valley," *Sunland Tribune* 22, (November, 1996), 55-62, for a more thorough analysis of the Civil War on Daniel, his sons and neighbors. Reuben, of Co. E, 7th Fla., was the son who enlisted in Co. B. His brother, Wright, also of Co. E, continued to serve in the 7th until captured December 16, 1864 at Nashville. Reuben settled at Fort Pierce where he there founded a prominent family, including descendants, Thaddeus H. Carlton (1906-65) who served in the Florida House in 1943 and his son Charles T. Carlton, who in 1997 assumed senior status as a judge of the Circuit Court in Naples, Florida.

<sup>14</sup> 1873 Manatee County Tax Book; Joshua Creek Cemetery.

<sup>15</sup> Stone, 21-22.

<sup>16</sup> Co. B pension application of Albert Carlton, Veterans Administration; Stone, 36. Tom McEwen of *The Tampa Tribune* bears a strong resemblance to his ancestor the Rev. McEwen.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Plowden, *History of Hardee County*, 1929, 69.

<sup>18</sup> Wauchula Cemetery; Stone, 39-40.

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<sup>19</sup> Stone, 39-40. Currently serving in the Florida House of Representatives, Lisa Carlton of Osprey, a great-granddaughter of Thomas Newton Carlton.

<sup>20</sup> Pension application of Albert Carlton; D. B. McKay, *Pioneer Florida* (3 volumes), Volume III, 1959, 1; Allen Morris, *The Florida Handbook 1977-1978*, 1977, 129-130.

<sup>21</sup> John B. Phelps, *People of Lawmaking in Florida 1822-1995*, 1995; Leland Hawes, "Deaths of Florida Senators set stage for strange race," *The Tampa Tribune*, July 12, 1986, D, 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Susan Carlton Smith to author, May 1997; McKay.

<sup>23</sup> McKay, Volume III, 30-34; Lindsay Peterson, "David E. Ward dies, noted judge, lawmaker," *The Tampa Tribune*, Florida/ Metro, February 17, 1995, 1, 3; Martha Carlton Ward to author, June 1997; David E. Ward, Jr. to author, June 9, 1997.

<sup>24</sup> David E. Ward, Jr. to author, June 9, 1997.

<sup>25</sup> McKay, 696; James W. Covington, *The Story of Southwestern Florida*, Volume III, 1957, 346-347; Molly Sweeney, "Doyle Carlton Jr.," *The Tampa Tribune*, November 4, 1991, BayLife, 6; Paul Power Jr., "Doyle Carlton Jr. among 4 inducted into Hall of Fame," *The Tampa Tribune*, February 13, 1991, Florida/Metro, 6; Phelps, *People of Lawmaking in Florida 1822-1995*, 1995.

<sup>26</sup> Stone, 70, 71.

<sup>27</sup> Covington, 69-71.

<sup>28</sup> Covington, 384-385.

<sup>29</sup> Lynn Carlton, June 6, 1993; *Florida Advocate*, March 16, April 6, June 8, 1945; Krissa Vance, "Carlton, Southerland Inducted Into Hall of Fame [Hardee County Schools Hall of Fame], *The Herald Advocate*, May 27, 1993; Renee Garrison, "This Old House," *The Tampa Tribune*, June 16, 1990, 5G, 1.

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Rowena Ferrell Brady, a native of Tampa, an educator in Hillsborough County schools for thirty-six years, and author of *Things Remembered, The Album of African Americans in Tampa*, is the 1997 recipient of the coveted D. B. McKay Award. The award has been given each year since 1972 by the Tampa Historical Society "for Significant Contributions to the Cause of Florida History."

Ms. Brady is the daughter of the late Reverend and Mrs. Andrew Jackson Ferrell, Sr., and widow of the late Charles T. Brady. She attended Tampa's Harlem School, Booker T. Washington Junior High School, and Middleton Senior High School, and earned her Bachelor of Science and Master of Education degrees from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee. After graduation she began her career in Tampa's elementary schools where for almost four decades,

through her love for teaching, she helped shape the futures of generations of children.

Since her retirement from teaching, she has continued to remain active in a number of social and community organizations. She was the first chairperson of the City of Tampa Mayor's Archives Awareness Week Board, and member of the boards of Tampa Historical Society, Friends of the Museum of African American Art, and Fairest Chapter, Order of Eastern Star, No. 113. She is a life member of the National Council of Negro Women, Hillsborough County Charmettes, Inc., and Kappa Delta Phi Honor Society in Education. A dedicated member of Tampa's historic St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, Ms. Brady is a proud mother and grandmother.

*Things Remembered*, a unique volume of rare and never before seen photographs, were painstakingly collected and assembled

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African Americans. Beginning with pictures from the 1880s and moving through the 1960s, and including a historical perspective by Canter Brown, Historian in Residence of the Tampa Bay History Center, *Things Remembered* vividly captures through the power and truthfulness of photography, a Tampa richer for its African-American tradition, heritage, and history.

## About the Authors:

**Canter Brown, Jr.** is the Historian-in-Residence at the Tampa Bay History Center. A native of Fort Meade, Florida, he received his B. A., J. D. and Ph.D. degrees from Florida State University. His 1991 book, *Florida's Peace River Frontier*, received the Rembert W. Patrick award from the Florida Historical Society. Dr. Brown lectures frequently and conducts workshops on Tampa and Florida history. He is the author of *African Americans on the Tampa Bay Frontier*, and is currently completing *Tampa before the Civil War*, the first in a series of books on Tampa history. Brown is the recipient of the 1998 D. B. McKay award.

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**Clifton P. Lewis**, a native of New Iberia, Louisiana, retired in 1989 after almost 30 years with the Bell Atlantic Corporation. Moving to Bartow, he became immersed in the undiscovered genealogy of his wife's family and the African-American pioneer history of Polk County. He is the founding president of the Neighborhood Investment Corporation of Bartow, Inc., a member of the Board of Directors of the American Cancer Society, Board of Advisors of the Polk Youth Development Center, and a life member of the NAACP.

**Gary R. Mormino** is the Frank E. Duckwall Professor of History at the University of South Florida and the author of numerous books and articles on history including *Immigrants on the Hill: Italian-Americans in St. Louis, 1882-1982* and *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* with George E. Pozzetta. A graduate of Millikin University, he holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Mormino was the 1991 recipient of the D. B. McKay Award.

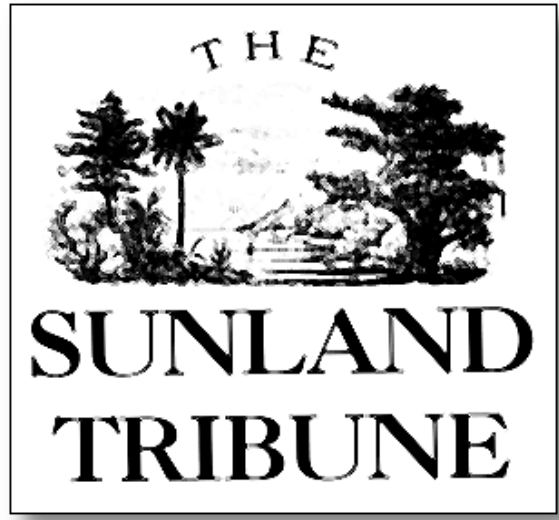
**Spessard Stone**, a descendent of the pioneer Stone and Hendry families of Florida, is a regular contributor to *The Sunland Tribune*. Reared in Hardee County, and a resident of Wauchula, Stone is the author of *John and William Sons of Robert Hendry*, *The Stone Family*, *Thonotosassa Pioneers*, and *Lineage of John Carlton*.

**Ann Shank**, Historian of the Sarasota County Department of Historical Resources since 1991, is an author of "A Look Back," a weekly column on Sarasota history in the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, and conducts an annual Sarasota history workshop, "A Peek at Paradise," for Sarasota County teachers. A graduate of The University of Rochester,

she obtained her M.A. in history from Columbia Teachers College. A history and social studies instructor in North Carolina and New York in the 1960s, she has taken additional graduate-level history courses at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Pamela Gibson** has just completed twenty-one years with the Manatee County Library System where she is Reference Librarian and Florida History specialist. Currently chairman of the Manatee County Historical Commission and vice-president of the Manatee County Historical Society, she graduated from Barry College, and has an M. A. from the University of South Florida, and MLS from Florida State University. She is the author of "Sin City, Moonshine Whiskey and Divorce" for *The Sunland Tribune*, XXI, November 1995.

**Amy F. David** is Director of the Safety Harbor Museum of Regional History. A Florida history and archeology museum in Pinellas County, it is located on the site of the Tocobaga Indian shell mound in Safety Harbor on the western shore of Old Tampa Bay.



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**Cover:**

Spanish-American War soldiers and equipment await embarkation to Cuba. Shown in a detail from an original photograph by Ensminger Brothers, courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center collection. The men, surrounded by musical instruments, are seated alongside the troopship *San Marcos* of New York docked at Port Tampa. The equipment and lyre insignia on some of the men's hats indicate they are members of a regimental band.



The Tampa Historical Society expresses its appreciation to Mr. J. Edgar Wall, III, for allowing us to reproduce his copy of Jackson's 1886 "Plan of Tampa." Most of the buildings in existence in 1886 are identified on Mr. Wall's copy of the plan.

## **D. B. McKay Award Reipients**

1972 Frank Laumer  
1973 Sate Senator David McClain  
1974 Circuit Court Judge L. R. Knott  
1975 Gloria Jahoda  
1976 Harris H. Mullen  
1977 Dr. James Covington  
1978 Hampton Dunn  
1979 William M. Goza  
1980 Tony Pizzo  
1981 Allen and Joan Morris  
1982 Mel Fisher  
1983 Marjory Stoneman Douglas  
1984 Frank Garcia  
1985 Former Governor Leroy Collins  
1086 Dr. Samuel Proctor  
1987 Doyle E. Carlton, Jr.  
1988 Leland M. Hawes, Jr.  
1989 U. S. Rep. Charles E. Bennett  
1990 Joan W. Jennewein  
1991 Gary R. Mormino  
1992 Julius J. Gordon  
1993 Jack Moore and Robert Snyder  
1994 Ferdie Pacheco  
1995 Stephanie E. Ferrell  
1996 Michael Gannon  
1997 Rowena Ferrell Brady





