

2005

## Full Issue

Sunland Tribune

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune>

---

### Recommended Citation

Tribune, Sunland (2005) "Full Issue," *Sunland Tribune*: Vol. 30 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/sunlandtribune/vol30/iss1/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sunland Tribune by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).



# SUNLAND TRIBUNE

Journal of the Tampa Historical Society

Volume XXX

30TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

2005







# THE SUNLAND TRIBUNE

## Journal of the Tampa Historical Society

30th Anniversary Edition Volume XXX 2005

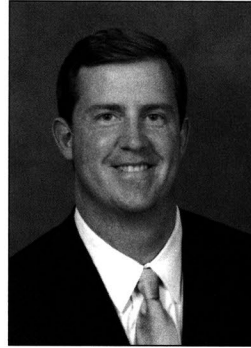
### CONTENTS

President's Message	William A. Knight, Esq.	2
	Maureen J. Patrick	3
Death and the Princess: The Rialto Theater	Maureen J. Patrick	5
Contested Ground: The 1948 Presidential Election in Tampa, Florida	Jared G. Toney	19
Tampa's Trolleys: Innovation, Demise, and Rediscovery	Meeghan Kane	31
Who Loaded What, When and Where: Capt. James McKay and the Spanish-American War	Joe Knetsch, Ph.D. and Pamela K. Gibson	45
Tampa's Black Business Community: 1900-1915	Daleah Goodwin	55
No Favors for these "Fine Little Ladies:" Employment Discrimination against Tampa's Women Workers at the End of World War II	Rebekah Heppner	65
About the Authors		77
2005 Tampa Historical Society Patrons and Membership	Sp1 coll Floridian New	79
Past Society Presidents	F 319 + 2	82
2005 D.B. McKay Award	588	82

Front cover: Members of Tampa's Rialto Theater Players, circa 1925. (Courtesy of the Tampa History Center Collection.) Back cover: Picture postcards depicting (clockwise from top): *Sulphur Springs Water Tower*. Built in 1927 by realtor/developer Josiah Richardson, the reinforced concrete tower on the banks of the Hillsborough River stands 231 feet tall. *The Hotel Floridan*. Built by architect F.J. Kennard, the Hotel Floridan dominated the Tampa downtown landscape in the 1920s. "*Beautiful University of Tampa*." The former Tampa Bay Hotel (c. 1891) sometime after its 1930s conversion to use as the University of Tampa. Picture postcards like these served both as souvenirs and a means to attract travelers to the area.

## IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

While serving as president of the Tampa Historical Society for the past three years, one aspect of our organization's progress really stands out in my opinion. Our headquarters, while still in need of some structural upkeep consistent with a building its age,



William A. Knight

has been cleaned up and revitalized. The attached apartment has been occupied now for two years, helping maintain the grounds while also providing income for us. We have started having annual events at our headquarters again, and hopefully this progress is symbolic of where our organization will continue to go in the future.

To that end, I am most pleased with the new leadership for Tampa Historical Society and its board members in new president Maureen Patrick and vice-president Hank Brown. Already their energy and dedication to making Tampa Historical Society what it should be is starting to show. *The Sunland Tribune* that you are reading now has made its long journey to its completion due in very large part to Maureen Patrick's efforts. Tampa Historical Society's future is in very good hands, as is *The Sunland Tribune's*.

It has been my privilege and honor to serve as Tampa Historical Society's president. Thank you for your continued support, faith, and patience as members of Tampa Historical Society.

Yours in appreciation of Tampa's history,

William A. Knight

*The Sunland Tribune* is published annually by the non-profit Tampa Historical Society, 245 South Hyde Park Avenue, Tampa, FL 33606, and was printed by Gunn Printing, 4415 W. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Tampa, Florida 33614.

© 2006 Tampa Historical Society, Tampa, FL. All rights reserved. No part of *The Sunland Tribune* may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without prior written permission of the Tampa Historical Society.

The Tampa Historical Society welcomes articles pertaining to Tampa, historic Hillsborough County, and Florida history for publication in *The Sunland Tribune*. Please address all correspondence regarding submission of manuscripts and materials to the Editor, *The Sunland Tribune*, 245 South Hyde Park Avenue, Tampa, FL 33606. Not responsible for unsolicited manuscripts, materials, photographs or artwork. The editor and the Tampa Historical Society accept no responsibility for

statements, ideas or opinions whether of fact or opinion made by contributors.

*The Sunland Tribune* is provided free as a benefit of membership in the Tampa Historical Society. Membership is encouraged and welcome. Copies and certain back issues are available by writing to the Tampa Historical Society.

The Tampa Historical Society has granted the University of South Florida Libraries permission to scan the entire contents of all 30 issues of *The Sunland Tribune* from 1974 through 2006, and to place the digitized, keyword searchable versions on the World Wide Web. The electronic versions of *The Sunland Tribune* are part of "Floridiana on the Web," a non-commercial, educational project funded by GTE. This dynamic website presents Florida's K-12 students with a wealth of images and text about the state's history and culture, and is freely available to anyone in the world with access to the World Wide Web.

Postage paid at Tampa, FL by the Tampa Historical Society, Tampa, FL.



## CURRENT PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**T**ampa Historical Society is entering a watershed period in its thirty-six year history. While the Society – rightfully and in fulfillment of its mission – focuses on Tampa's past, it moves forward vigorously into the future. There are markers of this forward movement.



Maureen J. Patrick

- The Knight House reaches beyond its longtime identity as Society headquarters into Historic Landmark status, heralding a new approach in the way all of Tampa thinks of the House. With the attention of professional preservationists, restorers, educators, and archivists, the House begins to assume a larger presence in Tampa's public history landscape. It and the artifacts housed within will be utilized to "teach Tampa" in new and better ways.

- A website is expanding the Society's reach to history-curious visitors all over the world. As a tool to drive

membership, education, and research, the Society's Web presence defines it as an up-to-date history organization. Board of Trustees Vice-President Hank Brown, Jr. is the prime mover behind this project, one that has boundless prospects for the Society. Visit us frequently at [www.tamphistoricalsociety.com](http://www.tamphistoricalsociety.com) and watch the site grow in both content and style.

- A regular and lively series of events is now – again – the norm for THS' calendar. Two annual Oaklawn Cemetery events (the April Ramble and the October Gothic Graveyard Walk), introduce hundreds of Tampan and visitors to the priceless historical treasure that is this c.1850 public burying ground. As well, lectures and open houses at the Knight House bring fun and immediacy to history-based learning, allowing members and guests to mingle and socialize while sharing their love of Tampa's past.
- Membership drives and initiatives are increasing THS' support base and raising its visibility in the public history landscape of Tampa Bay. By networking with other organizations – professional, historical, academic, social – the membership of the Society is expanded and invigorated.

All in all, it's a fabulous time to be a part of Tampa Historical Society, And, as always, *you*, the member, are the vital fuel that powers the Society to its goals. Interest others in joining, bring guests to Society events, let friends, acquaintances, and co-workers know about the benefits of Society membership.

Best regards,

Maureen J. Patrick



# Tampa Historical Society

2006 Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Maureen J. Patrick

VICE PRESIDENT

Henry "Hank" Brown, Jr.

SECRETARY

Claire A. Cardina

TREASURER

Elizabeth L. Dunham

BOARD MEMBERS

Anthony Arena

Mary Brown

Heidi Hanlon Guerra

Mary Reed

Shere Schiller

Lange Winckler

ADVISORY MEMBER

E.J. Salcines

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

William A. Knight

Maureen J. Patrick

Editor, *The Sunland Tribune*

Editorial Assistants

Frank R. North

Lange Winckler





# Death and the Princess: The Rialto Theater



The Rialto Theater, May 2, 1925. (Burgert Brothers Photographic Archive, Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.)

Maureen J. Patrick

I probably passed by it once a week for ten years. When I was a little girl in the 1950s, my mother and I shopped in downtown Tampa on Saturday afternoons. From our Seminole Heights home, Mom drove (with the exaggerated care of someone who learned to drive just a few years earlier) downtown via Tampa Street. In those days, downtown was crowded on Saturdays. I can remember my mother clutching my hand and dragging me along sidewalks so jam-packed with humanity that we sometimes got pushed off the curb and into the street. Franklin Street was the locus of the activity. There or thereabouts were located Newberry's five-and-dime, F. W. Woolworth's, and Kress Department Store. Shopping at these stores yielded domestic odds and ends: colanders, plastic buckets, shower curtain rings, vegetable brushes, mops and brooms. For clothing and 'better' goods, my mother went to O. Falk's and Maas Brothers, the large and fairly elegant department stores downtown. Maas' had the first escalator Tampa had ever seen and my

mother was terrified of it. Luckily for us, the store also had an elevator with a smiling black man in charge of the brass operating mechanism. At O. Falk's, we visited the shoe department. It had a Buster Brown Shoes device for measuring children's feet. It was like a scale, and children hopped onto a little platform, inserted their feet into shoe-shaped depressions, and the machine 'read' their foot size and shape. The machine also irradiated their insides, since the machine used x-rays to photograph their feet, but none of us knew that at the time.

O. Falk's, Maas', Newberry's, Kress, F. W. Woolworth's: these were mercantile landmarks in Tampa, well-established by the 1920s. In the era before shopping malls, they were temples where we worshipped the gods of commerce.

After our shopping, Mom drove back to Seminole Heights. We did not simply reverse our route. We drove north on Franklin Street to Palm Avenue, where we turned east and went to Central Avenue, the street that took us to within two blocks of our house.



The Rialto Theater, November 2, 1931, looking south on Franklin Street. (Burgert Brothers Photographic Archive, Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.)



Holtzinger Motor Co. (foreground) with the Rialto Theater in rear, January 16, 1936. (Burgert Brothers Photographic Archive, Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.)

Even in the late 1950s, Franklin Street just north of downtown Tampa was what my mother called skid row. It was going seedy and going there fast, with a few warehouses, some struggling retailers, boarded-up storefronts, and bars outside which lounged the kind of people we never saw in our neighborhood. There was one saloon that especially fascinated me; its sign was a neon martini glass, complete with olive and swizzle stick. The swizzle stick rotated, the glass tipped over, and the olive tumbled out. Then the glass righted itself, the olive and swizzle stick popped back in, and the glass did the trick again, over and over, a drinker's dream. That was on the west side of Franklin. On the east side, at Henderson Street, was the building that made the whole tiresome shopping day worthwhile for me. I thought it was a little palace, and even today it looks like one of those pocket *palazzi* that you see behind high walls and lush gardens in Milan or Florence. It had rectilinear designs in etched colored tile on the front. The Florida sun glittered magnificently on scrolling leaves of ruby, emerald, turquoise, peach, and gold. The brickwork surrounding the tile was warmly yellow, the color of Valencia oranges. There were stone sphinxes perched on each top corner of the roof line and, at the summit of the pediment, some sort of baronial shield in granite. The building had a name, but it was a funny one. HOLTSSINGER read the raised letters in a white plaster space near the top, but I could see the shadowy forms of other letters behind them: R ALTO. I thought that must be the name of the people who lived in the building.

And the people themselves? I knew they were in the little palace, somewhere. The front of the R ALTO had windows, after all, little Italianate windows with miniscule balconies that did not so much cantilever outward as suggest themselves. The windows were barred and I could just see a princess behind one of them. She's trapped in there, I used to think, her mean father won't let her marry the man she loves, who is a poor itinerant juggler and not the nobleman for whom her family has their daughter intended. Sad and imprisoned, the princess looks out from the barred windows of her chamber in the R ALTO palace, longing for a deliverance which never comes.

Dad's dark blue Mercury, with my mother driving slowly and carefully, rolled past



the little palace. I looked up at the RIALTO and saw the princess waving to me from her window. *Goodbye*, she said, *goodbye*.

He: What's the difference between a Jewish newspaper and a radio?  
She: Silly, you can't wrap a herring in a radio.<sup>1</sup>

1920s vaudeville 'gag'

The Rialto Theatre opened in Tampa, Florida on November 24, 1924. Its debut was preceded by 10 X 6-inch display ads that ran for a week in *The Tampa Tribune* and featured drawings of scantily clad dancing girls, along with the customary hyperbole attending opening nights.

High-class Musical Comedy Successes, Perfectly Presented by a Superlative Cast. Scenic Settings of Splendor – Chic Costumes Novel Lighting Effects of Surpassing Beauty.<sup>2</sup>

The play selected for the Rialto's opening was George M. Cohan's *The O'Brien Girl*. Judging by the luscious prose of *The Tampa Tribune's* entertainment critic, a lot was expected of the play and the theater which housed it.

#### THE O'BRIEN GIRL.

"The O'Brien Girl," Musical Masterpiece Successfully Produced by George M. Cohan, Will Be Initial Offering.

The Rialto Theatre, Tampa's new playhouse, will open Monday night, and will be christened with the presentation of "The O'Brien Girl," pronounced one of the greatest musical plays in the history of the American stage.<sup>3</sup>

Despite his best shoulder-shoving efforts, the critic "E.O.L." from *The Tampa Tribune* was unable to get through the crowds on opening night. He wrote:

I tried to 'get in' for the opening of the new Rialto last night, but found street and sidewalk blocked with humanity awaiting a chance to push through the entrance. Realizing that it would be difficult, if not dangerous, to attempt to crash through that crowd, I was forced to defer a visit to Tampa's newest playhouse and a review of "The O'Brien Girl" to some other evening.<sup>4</sup>

The reporter had better luck the next night and this review ran in November 26's *Tribune*.



The Rialto Theater, October 29, 1943. (Burgert Brothers Photographic Archive, Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.)

"The O'Brien Girl," the George M. Cohan musical masterpiece which shattered all records at the principal theaters of the country is this week's attraction at the Rialto Theatre, with The Rialto Musical Comedy Players, assisted by a special chorus of lively dancing specialists. . . The story is told with humorous incidents, rapid-fire laughing situations, and dialogue that has the inimitable Cohan touch.<sup>5</sup>

The Rialto, "Tampa's new playhouse," was constructed sometime during the months prior to its November opening and was probably begun in 1923, judging from the date of the sidewalk in front of the building. The Real Property Record on file with the Hillsborough County Tax assessor shows a construction date of 1947, an error that left a clerk in the Property Appraiser's office unruffled. "Oh," he shrugged, "we have lots of mistakes." A building code, now no longer in use, is 192366.000. The architects were F. J. Kennard & Son. Francis Joseph Kennard, who emigrated from England to the U.S. in 1865, was a notable architect in Sanford, Orlando and Tampa, Florida. Alone or in practice with his son Philip, Kennard designed many of Tampa Bay's most significant buildings, including Maas Brothers Department Store, The Burgert Brothers Studio, the Wolfson Building,

The Floridan Hotel, Henderson Elementary School, the Seville Apartments and several other elegant residences and churches in the Hyde Park neighborhood. The grandest of all Kennard's buildings was the Belleview Hotel at Belleair, built for transportation magnate Henry B. Plant.<sup>6</sup>

The complete file description for the Rialto Theatre property is: Borquardez Lot 2 AND N 20 \_ INS OF LOT 3 BLOCK 1. The street address of the building is now recorded as 1631 North Franklin Street, though it has been variously listed at 1619, 1621 and 1627. In Burgert Brothers photographs taken from 1923 - 1939, the address is always given as 1621. The current owner of the building is Donald William Kenney, who purchased it from Clarence Holtsinger in 1974. When Holtsinger bought the building in 1949, it was intended to house his Ford automobile dealership. Kenney is owner/manager of Bay Armature Company, to which trade the building is given over now. Both owners acquired adjacent buildings which they annexed to the Rialto to accommodate their expanding businesses and allow for office and showroom space, repair facilities and storage.

Whether the three-dimensional letters forming the name RIALTO had by then dropped off or were still in place when Clarence Holtsinger acquired the building in 1949, he replaced them with HOLT-SINGER in the white plastered blank in the top center of the façade. Some of HOLT-SINGER is now also gone, and the letters in the space read: H LSINGER. The shadowy outline of RIALTO clings like a grudge to the plaster behind the newer name.

Holtsinger gutted the interior of the Rialto to suit its auto showroom role. He also poured a concrete slab which raised the floor of the building by around six inches, grading a ramp from the floor to the side alley and installing a wide and high roll-up door (where the stage door was formerly.) The original interior partitions forming the box office, dressing rooms, administrative office, and auditorium, as well as all the fixtures and furnishings (the theater seats, stage, orchestra pit, wings, rigging, and so on) were also removed and liquidated at an unknown date. When Kenney bought the building, a small vestige remained of the "indirect lighting system" installed by Monroe Electric Company in 1924. The system

employed "varicolored lights to harmonize with music and scenes."<sup>7</sup> By 1974, all that was left of the lighting system was a row of different-colored lights arrayed in a line around the perimeter of the auditorium, each fixture about twelve or fifteen feet from its neighbor. Kenney removed the fixtures and has no recollection of their disposal. A row of holes now marches around the room about twenty-five feet from the floor.

Two enormous fans – a 1920s version of air conditioning – are still in place in a cavity above the auditorium ceiling. Large square apertures crisscrossed by wooden latticework show where they are mounted. They remain wired and theoretically workable, but Kenney doubts they have been switched on since the Rialto closed as a theater.

Wooden rigging is still installed above what was once the stage. An access ladder is fixed to the upstage wall, ascending into the gloom where once brightly colored flats and drapes were flown, but Kenney cut off the bottom ten feet of the wooden ladder to prevent horse-playing employees from climbing on the rotting structure.

The auditorium is full of large dynamos – armatures – along with neatly stacked shelves of parts, coils of wire, and hundreds of tools. There is a tall 'come along' at one end of the space, and a well-lighted repair bay at the other. It is pleasantly dim and cool under the lofty ceiling, even without the fans which haven't turned since 1939.

At the stage end of the room springs a proscenium arch that is almost painfully pretty, curved and white and gently flaring toward what would have been the audience. Its edges are fluted, and a perfectly carved border of stylized grapevines runs all around it. In this greatly altered space it looks like a lily blooming on a slag heap.

. . .

Sam: Am I happy! I've got a wife in the country.

Arnold: Who wouldn't be happy with their wife in the country.<sup>8</sup>

1920s vaudeville 'gag'

When the Rialto opened in 1924, it opened as a repertory theater. It had a resident company of theatrical artists – dancers, actors, musicians, directors – and



even a resident technical crew. The house company was sometimes referred to as The Rialto Players or The Rialto Musical Comedy Players.<sup>9</sup> A recent fortuitous estate purchase in Tampa of a trunk of old photographs, costume parts, and letters has yielded dozens of photos of the Rialto's artistic corps. (The trunk was abandoned in the attic of a house on Highland Street in Tampa, at which address resided some of the Rialto's players.) The photos show a young and lively group of performers, about half women and half men, most of them mugging, posing, balancing *en pointe* and even back-bending in costumes which display the range of the Rialto's wardrobe. Indians, fairies, circus *artistes*, black face characters, Spanish *señoritas*, WWI dough-boys, cowboys, Colonial dames: judging from the costumes, the Rialto's repertory appears to have embraced the sublime, the ridiculous and all theatrical conditions in between. This deduction is consistent with *The Tampa Tribune's* November 26, 1924 description of the venue and its artistic mission.

Tampa has every reason to be proud of the theatre, which is one of the most attractive, well arranged and artistically decorated that one could find in a long journey. It has been designed with an eye to comfort of the patrons and also to please them in an artistic sense – and it is to be unique among theatres of these times in that it will not show pictures. Musical comedy and burlesque is to be its policy.<sup>10</sup>

The Rialto's promise to "not show [moving] pictures" points to the transitional character of popular entertainment in Tampa and across the nation during the early to mid-1920s. Vaudeville, the long-lived entertainment genre that blended ethnic theater, black face minstrelsy, and European music hall traditions, then laced the resulting mixture with American grassroots humor, no longer stood unchallenged in its bid for audiences' patronage and affection. While vaudeville acts continued to play successfully in many towns (especially mid- to small size towns and cities), the art form was taking smaller and smaller bites of the American entertainment dollar. At the time the Rialto opened, *The Tampa Tribune* ran ads in its "Amusements" section for several all or mostly vaudeville theaters, including The Strand and The Victory (as well as a

handful of ballrooms, such as The Sunset Beach and Roseland, dedicated primarily to dance orchestras and social dancing.) Altered popular tastes were effecting changes, few of them salutary, in the fortunes of theaters like the Rialto that attempted to replace traditional vaudeville with its presumed successor: musical comedy. The trouble seemed to be two-sided: vaudeville wasn't getting off the stage fast enough for the likes of those who preferred musical comedy, while musical comedy was not attracting the mass acclaim its supporters predicted. To be sure, vaudeville, enjoying the longest dying scene ever mounted on the American stage, had gathered critics around its supposed deathbed as early as the first decade of the twentieth century. *Variety* remarked in 1905: "A good variety show is one of the finest tonics in the world, but vaudeville when for the most part it consists of fallen stars in mediocre wishy washy one-act plays is one of the finest producers of mental dyspepsia that I know of."<sup>11</sup> The critics were still hissing in 1911 when Louis Reeves Harrison said: "Don't you think we have had enough of the cheapest and poorest form of entertainment ever slung over the apron of the stage into the face of a self-respecting and unoffending audience?"<sup>12</sup>

The refusal of vaudeville to pass away either as quickly or as finally as many critics predicted had something to do, no doubt, with its having nearly as many fans as detractors. In fact, fervent praise of the art form that had been such a democratizer of America's diverse populations was often printed cheek-by-jowl with its critical opposite. Many of the pro-vaudeville writers leaned hard on vaudeville's cross-cultural appeal in constructing hymns to what Mary Cass Canfield in 1922 called, "art of the people, for the people, by the people."<sup>13</sup> Canfield went on, in *The New Republic*, to rhapsodize:

Perfection is the aim and sign of great art. Mr. Ziegfield's Follies, or the Winter Garden, or an afternoon of vaudeville at the Palace are perfect of their kind. . . . Vaudeville leads us breathless but interested, from acrobats to sentimental songs, from pony ballets to well-played one-act tragedy. . . . The revolving stage has a soul, it bounds forward to its task with a swagger, it prides itself on never making a mistake. . . . It is American.<sup>14</sup>

**TAMPA'S  
NEWEST  
PLAYHOUSE**  
PHONE 4796

# THE RIALTO THEATRE

**FRANKLIN AT HENDERSON**  
Offers to Tampa and South Florida, High-class  
Musical Comedy Successes, Perfectly Presented  
by a Superlative Cast.

Scenic Settings of Splendor — Chic Costumes  
Novel Lighting Effects of Surpassing Beauty

## Opening Performance

### MONDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 24th

Gen. M. Cohan's Broadway Success

## "THE O'BRIEN GIRL"

Staged and Produced by Palmer Hines

Two Big Acts! Fourteen Singing and Dancing Numbers!  
Tuneful Topical Tunes! Keen and Kindly Fun!  
GREAT SINGING AND DANCING CHORUS

**ADMISSION 50c—FIRST EVENING PERFORMANCE—7:30 P. M.**  
RESERVED SEATS FOR FIRST PERFORMANCE

Starting Performance 9:15  
Special Seats Reserved for Every Performance  
\$1.10, Tax Included

Week Commencing "FLO FLO" John Cortis  
Sunday, Nov. 30th Big Success

**FEATURING  
MUSICAL  
COMEDY**  
PHONE 4796



Matinee Daily 3:30 P. M.  
Matinee—Children, 25c (except Sundays and Holidays)  
Sunday Matinee 2:15 and 4:00 P.M.

The "Amusements" section of the *Tampa Tribune*, Sunday, November 23, 1924, displaying the pre-opening advertisement for the Rialto Theater. (*University of South Florida Libraries.*)

More recent analysts have described vaudeville's class-unconscious appeal this way: "High-society women in pearls sat side by side with humble Polish tailors and sen-

timental Italian bakers. It [vaudeville] was a cauldron in which to spice up the boiling stew of American cultural identity."<sup>15</sup>

Eventually, however, and notwithstanding the praise of its supporters (and for reasons only partially identified by its detractors), vaudeville, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, began to fade. By 1929, even its most steadfast promoters were reading the genre's Last Will and Testament:

There are still incomparable artists on the vaudeville stage, such as Sophie Tucker, Belle Baker, Bill Robinson, Owen McGivney, Toto, Brothers Arnauld, and a few others. but many of the best performers in vaudeville have gone to the musical comedy stage — George Cohan, Fred Stone, Al Jolson, Eddie Cantor, Fannie Brice, Joe Cook, Will Rogers, W.C. Fields, Fred and Adele Astaire, to mention a few. As a result, the average program even in the better class of vaudeville houses is often excruciatingly dull and talentless.<sup>16</sup>

All this being taken together, it would seem, on the surface, that the decision of theaters like the Rialto to produce musical comedies like *The Gingham Girl*, *Irene*, *Naughty Bride* and *Oh, Boy!* (all of which ran at the Rialto in its early years) rather than vaudeville was a good one, in step with the trends of the time. However, the form to which many vaudeville stars were defecting

**Grand Re-opening TONIGHT**

**Under New Management**

## MOULIN ROUGE

**NITE CLUB** ACROSS 22ND STREET CAUSEWAY

Sensational Re-opening Program Featuring  
**BEN MOSS and His Fast, Elaborate NEW YORK REVUE**

"Ben Moss and Paul Jones"—Radio Jesters of WFLA

<p><b>"CARMEN"</b> The Original Tiger Girl From the World's Fair</p> <p><b>"MARTA KAY"</b> Darling of the Dance</p> <p><b>"CLARA RHODES"</b> Little Personality Girl</p>	<p><b>"ALMA AND ROLAND"</b> Musical Comedy Favorites</p> <p><b>"PHYLLIS STERLING"</b> In Variety of Songs</p> <p><b>MANY OTHER ACTS</b></p>
--	---

Admission \$1 Includ- NO Couvert  
ing Tax Minimum

## 2 REVUES NIGHTLY 2

ORCHESTRAS TONIGHT 2

Antonio Lopez N. B. C. Orchestra  
And the Musical Ambassadors  
PHONE Y-1490 FOR RESERVATIONS  
Finest Supper Club in the South  
Open Every Night



By November 1, 1934, the *Tampa Tribune* was running ads for "Nite Clubs." With drinking and dancing the main item on the menu, night-clubs contributed to the decline of both vaudeville and musical comedy. (*University of South Florida Libraries.*)

could not and never did effectively replace vaudeville in the popular tastes. Some have blamed the repeal of Prohibition and the rise of nightclubs for the public's diminished interest in staged shows generally, since imbibing was the headline attraction of nightclubs while entertainment became a sort of living wallpaper. Other critics have suggested that musical comedy failed to engage audiences, that it was, compared to vaudeville in its glory days, a boring, overly-verbal experience. *The Nation* supplied an arch contrast between "the youthful sprightliness, concentration, and marvelous precision of perfect vaudeville," and musical comedy, which it likened to "a lady far past her prime, inordinately made up, and garrulous to an extreme."<sup>17</sup> *The Nation's* was an opinion shared, apparently, by Tampa audiences who, despite their initial enthusiasm for the Rialto's musical comedy bill of fare, did not support the theater in the long run. By equipping itself with an expensive resident repertory theater team, then announcing its decision to present musical comedies in all their expensive splendor, Tampa's Rialto committed itself to an aesthetic which the entertainment-seekers of the city would not sustain in sufficiently large numbers to underwrite its cost.

The Rialto was forced to raise its prices, which it did by the end of 1925, going up more than 50% for general admission, from \$.50 to \$.77 and \$.99.<sup>18</sup> At the fairly stiff price of nearly a dollar, the Rialto was in a poor position to fend off an assault on its livelihood from yet another and more lethal source: moving pictures.

. . .

A Scotland Yard Mystery –  
Crime – Murder – Suspicion.  
A SPARKLING MYSTERY DRAMA  
BUBBLING WITH ROMANCE AND  
REPLETE WITH THRILLS!<sup>19</sup>

This description accompanied The Franklin's ad for its latest film feature, starting November 26, 1924. At twenty-five cents for adults (ten cents for children) and including comedy (cartoons or short comic films), newsreels, a feature film, and an orchestra, and sometimes also displaying live stage performers (dancers, singers, acrobats, animal acts, comedic teams), the movie theater package was a hard act to follow. Among the many reasons for the demise of vaudeville and the failure of mu-

**big hearted herbert**  
with GUY KIBBEE and Aline MacMahon  
STARTS WEDNESDAY - "MRS. WIGGS of the CABBAGE PATCH"

**VICTORY**  
40c All Day—Today and Mon.  
**Stage Show**  
Footlight Frolics  
22 ARTISTS 22  
**BEAUTIFUL GIRLS**  
**8 New Acts**  
Featuring  
VAN ESSA, Dancer Direct from Hollywood Show World's Fair  
CECIL PHELPS—Punster  
CHARLIE WAGES—Mad Musician  
ORRIE, LEME and RUTH—Dancers from the Kansas Orbits  
THE THREE ACES  
JIMMY READ'S BAND

**PARK** 25c Mats. 30c Nites  
2 FIRST RUN ATTRACTIONS  
**BARBARA STANWYCK**  
and RICARDO CORTEZ  
**"A Lost Lady"**  
also  
Pat O'Brien  
Ann Dvorak  
in  
**"I Sell Anything"**  
Starts Tuesday  
"BARRETT'S OF WIMPOLE STREET"

**FRANKLIN**  
10c Today and Mon: 25c  
2 BIG FEATURES  
**GEORGE RAFT**  
"Limehouse Blues"  
also  
"ONE EXCITING ADVENTURE"  
with Binnie Barnes

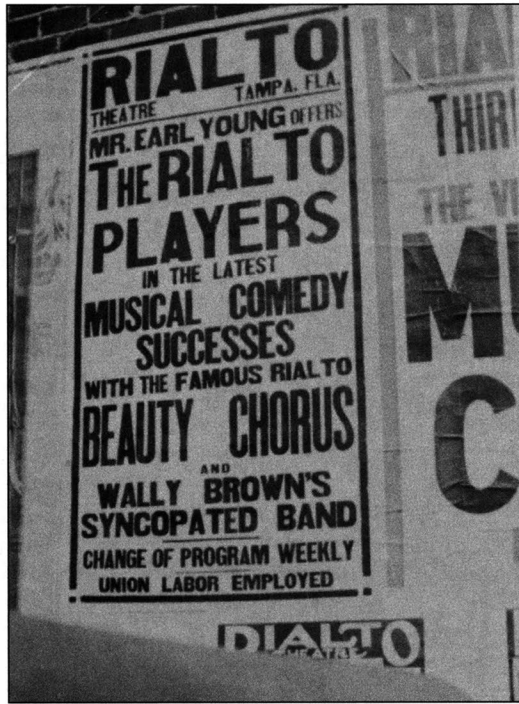
**SEMINOLE**  
10c Today thru Tues. 25c  
2 BIG FEATURES  
**Joan Crawford**  
and CLARK GABLE  
in "CHAINED"  
also  
MARY CARLISLE in  
"THAT'S GRATITUDE"

**GARDEN**  
10c Today and Monday 20c  
**"20 MILLION SWEETHEARTS"**  
With G. Rogers—Dick Powell

**NEBRASKA**  
Today and Monday  
**"STRICTLY DYNAMITE"**  
With JIMMY DURANTE  
and LUPE VELEZ, also

The "Amusements" section of the *Tampa Tribune*, November 18, 1934, showing the changed face of entertainment during the 1930s. Film houses predominated, though some theaters continued to showcase vaudeville acts.

sical comedy to replace it in popular tastes, tight money was undoubtedly one of the most powerful. Had hard times not fallen with a bang in 1929, things might have taken a different turn but, as it was, the old vaudeville gag about the buffalo on the nickel being stretched so far it was screaming just wasn't funny any more. Along with its ads for the Strand, the Victory, and the Rialto – all theaters presenting musical comedies, vaudeville, or both – the 1924 *Tampa Tribune* started running larger and more prominent ads for the Franklin and other houses that were showing films. (This pro-



Poster for the Rialto players, circa 1921-24. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

cess of conversion from legitimate houses to cinemas was accelerated by aggressive chains of movie theaters. In the South, the Sparks chain ended up owning most of the



One of the Rialto Players posing in costume. The location may be the yard of the Tampa Heights boarding house where members of the Players lived during their stay in Tampa. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

film houses in small to mid-size towns and cities.) By 1925, the Rialto's ads were much smaller than before; those of the Strand and the Victory, now both running films in addition to or in place of stage shows, were much bigger. Only the Rialto clung to its "live theatre only – resident company of players" stance, but a change of management in early 1927 meant a change in that policy as well. The Rialto began producing "package shows" rather than maintaining a resident company.<sup>20</sup> One imagines the dismay on Highland Street, where those ebullient and attractive young actors, dancers and singers were put into the street a year and a half before the Crash. In November of 1927 the Rialto abandoned the no movies promise of its premiere and began running films on its dark nights. During "the week of February 26, 1928, the theatre presented the last of its regular live commercial performances."<sup>21</sup>

With the demise of the Rialto as a venue for legitimate professional theater, only foreign language, semi-professional, club-based ethnic theater (based in Ybor City and patronized almost exclusively by ethnic audiences) remained in Tampa, supplemented by an active amateur and community theater environment. This was the *mise en scene* until 1936, when The Federal Theatre Project came to town.

. . .

The Federal Theatre Project's plan for Tampa-based production units falls into the category of things that seem like a good idea at the time. The good idea, of course, was based on the FTP's Florida-wide plan to provide repertory theater, festival productions, vaudeville and variety shows, marionette troupes, and youth teaching programs in theater technique. In this, Florida conformed to the national four-part model of the WPA Arts Projects (Theater, Music, Art, and Writers.) The FTP was essentially and optimistically regional theater. National Director Hallie Flanagan hoped not only to forge "a balance of power between the local and the national aspect of Federal Theatre"<sup>22</sup> but also to create regional and local production units that would grow out of and remain embedded in the tastes and needs of each area. Local theater was of no value, Flanagan insisted, unless "our audience sees something which has some vital con-

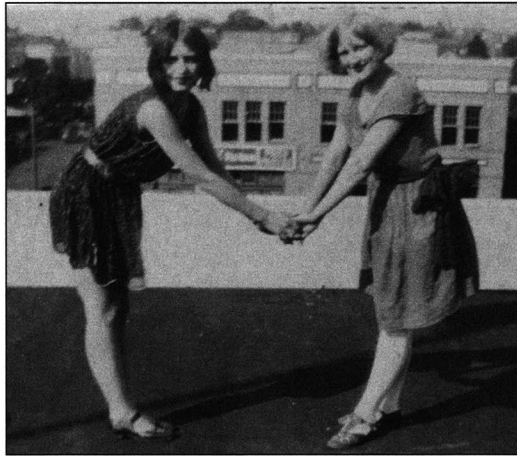


nection with their own lives and their own immediate problems.”<sup>23</sup>

In Tampa, the search for immediacy, relevance and regionalism led Federal Theatre Project directors to Ybor City, where a lively and well-supported theater tradition, dating back to the earliest years of the neighborhood and supported nearly 100% by Ybor’s resident ethnic populations (Sicilian, Cuban, Spanish, Jewish), was already in place. Much of the theatrical activity – the *revistas* (revues), *zarzuelas* (Spanish light operas), and *bufas* (a sort of Cuban *commedia dell’arte*) – as well as other events (banquets, raffles, dances, *verbenas*, youth programs, meetings, and pageants) took place in El Centro Asturiano, the capacious Spanish social club building at Palm and Nebraska Avenues in Ybor City. Built in 1914, the Centro was a locus for artistic and social activity, and was a logical choice to house what became designated in 1936 the Tampa Latin Unit of the Federal Theatre Project. Other units devoted to Italian opera, repertory theater, and vaudeville, were also housed in El Centro.

The set-up of the Tampa Latin unit was problematic from the outset, though FTP directors seemed initially not to notice. First among its problems was the nature of the existing theatrical menu in Tampa’s Latin community, a menu that included nowhere the “good plays on as wide a variety of subjects as possible,”<sup>24</sup> envisioned by Hallie Flanagan. The stock-in-trade spectacles of Tampa’s Latin performers gained little notice from Tampa’s non-Latin audiences, despite assurances by *La Gaceta* (Tampa’s longtime tri-lingual newspaper published, in the 1930’s, only in Spanish) that there were “*numerosos Americanos simpaticos*” in every crowd.<sup>25</sup> Language was, of course, an insurmountable barrier for English-speaking theater-goers, but the stock characters of the Cuban *bufa*, the complexities of Italian opera, and the multiple nuances of the *zarzuela*, Spain’s nineteenth century operetta form, were also incomprehensible to most Tampans except those whose aesthetic homeland had been Havana, Naples, or Madrid.

When Florida Federal Theatre Project director Dorothea Lynch and local supervisor Gene Brandon attempted to revise the Latin unit’s play offerings to include more mainstream and socially relevant pieces like *It Can’t Happen Here* (adapted by John



Two members of the Rialto Players posing on the roof of the theater. The view is north on Franklin Street. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

Moffitt and Sinclair Lewis from Lewis’ novel of the same name), the exercise quickly took on absurdist qualities. No Spanish translations of the play existed, and when one called *Esto lo no pasara aqui* finally did arrive it was almost entirely and woodenly literal, which did little to impress audiences used to the literary conventions and high-flown poetical devices of Spanish traditional drama.<sup>26</sup>

Other aspects of the Latin theater expe-



One of the Rialto Players “mugging” in a flapper costume. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)



A stage set in the theater with one of the Rialto Players, date unknown. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

rience – set designs, acting styles, costumes, direction – proved as untranslatable as Lewis' stage play. When *Esto lo no pasara aqui* finally opened on October 27, 1936, the production was predictably disappointing from both sides of the footlights.

Project directors were comforted during this fiasco by the fact that El Centro Asturiano was accessible for other FTP production companies. The Tampa Italian opera unit, as well as vaudeville and repertory theater units (these last two made up of predominantly non-Latin performers), had



Two of the Rialto Players pose for the camera. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

been installed in 1936 and had a promising outlook. The repertory unit produced such plays at El Centro as *As Husbands Go*, *The Perfect Alibi*, *The Drunkard*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, *Merton of the Movies*, and *Seventh Heaven*, while posters held in the Federal Theatre Project Collection suggest that other pieces, including *Pandora's Box*, *If Ye Break Faith*, *Follow the Parade* and *The Little Old Lady* were also staged at El Centro, along with a number of children's plays.<sup>27</sup> However, the arduous and time-consuming rehearsals for *Esto lo no pasara aqui* forced the non-Latin players, especially the repertory unit members, to look for alternative venues or postpone productions since they could not, for weeks at a time, gain space in El Centro or were needed to help coach the Latin unit's players as they struggled with the Lewis play. ( During this time the Italian Opera company was 'absorbed' by the Federal Music Project.)

The lack of suitable alternative rehearsal/performance space took on graver qualities in 1937, when two developments shook the Tampa FTP units and brought on major changes in their organization and locales. First, Congressional restrictions forbade the employment of aliens in WPA projects from 1937 onwards. A number of key personnel in the Tampa Latin unit were not U.S. citizens and found themselves disqualified overnight for production funds. Second was the passage, in 1936, of legislation requiring the Florida project to take ninety percent of its workers from the state's relief rolls. For the most part, the Latin unit's performers were (and had always been), part-time performers and full-time cigar industry workers. As one of the few industries to remain relatively strong throughout the Depression, the cigar industry continued to pay good wages; actors, singers, directors and technical staff could not hope to achieve WPA relief certification from the State Board of Social Welfare if they were drawing regular wages from a cigar factory, as many were. In January, 1937, many Latin specialty artists were forced out of the Tampa Federal Theatre due to their loss of eligibility.

These moves ended up closing El Centro's doors to non-Latin FTP units as well as the Latin one. It can be argued that the doors had been closing for quite some time beforehand. As early as "the end of November, 1936," said Dorothea Lynch, "it be-

came evident that the American population of Tampa did not want to support an American repertory company – or at least come to Ybor City to do so.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1937, Tampa’s Latin unit was closed. Its members who were American citizens and were eligible for relief under WPA standards were incorporated into the Tampa vaudeville unit, which then became the only functioning FTP unit in the city, though it had no regular theater venue and presented shows in such prosaic locations as the Rotary and Lions’ Clubs, the Bay Pines Veterans Hospital and a recreation hall of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad.<sup>29</sup> Only one performance, in July of 1937, was in a legitimate theater, the Victory; this was, in fact, the first WPA show to be presented to Tampan in a legitimate theater *outside* Ybor City. The repertory theater unit had nothing to do and was eventually closed. After it had been dislodged from the Centro Asturiano during rehearsals for *Esta lo no pasara aqui*, it had never recovered either a legitimate theatrical venue or a cast large enough to produce full-scale productions.

For six months, between September, 1937 and March, 1938, the FTP in Tampa gave no performances, but it was far from idle. It was then that the production unit moved to the Rialto Theater.

It takes twenty years to become an overnight success.

Eddie Cantor<sup>30</sup>

As a legitimate theater, the Rialto had been dark for some time, since 1928, in fact, when it gave the last of its live staged performances. How long afterwards it continued as a movie house is unclear, but in 1937 the building was managed by a real estate firm that leased it to an evangelical religious sect for services. Just what prompted FTP officials and artistic directors to choose the Rialto, so long removed from its role as a venue for live theater, as a home for its languishing vaudeville unit is not at all clear, but the delicate beauty of Kennard’s architecture, as well as the theater’s short but brilliant history as a legitimate house in the early 1920’s, had to have encouraged the decision. Under the guidance of Martin ‘Syl’ Sylvester Zinns, the gifted designer-technical director who served the Tampa FTP from its outset until its demise, the Rialto was leased and completely refurbished for

theatrical use. With somewhat startling efficiency, the labor for the make-over was provided by the out-of-work artists from the vaudeville unit, and the renovation (which took the six months from September ’37 to March ’38) was so successful that Hallie Flanagan described the Rialto as one of the Federal Theatre Project’s most beautiful houses.<sup>31</sup>

So it was that the little theater at Franklin and Henderson Streets enjoyed its second career as a legitimate house, a career quite a bit shorter and not nearly so brilliant as its first. Between March, 1938 and June, 1939, when the whole Federal Theatre Project was shut down by government edict, the Rialto was home to Tampa’s FTP vaudeville unit and to good reviews and fair audiences for shows which included *Ready! Aim! Fire!*, *Seventeen Hits and Highlights*, *Invitation to the Dance*, and *Television*. Plans were underway for a statewide festival and a children’s show unit.<sup>32</sup> It is ironic that the vaudeville unit’s final program was entitled *Television*, for by 1939 American audiences were most definitely moving indoors, toward the small screen, and to different pastimes that made, over the years, both vaudeville and the Rialto obsolete.

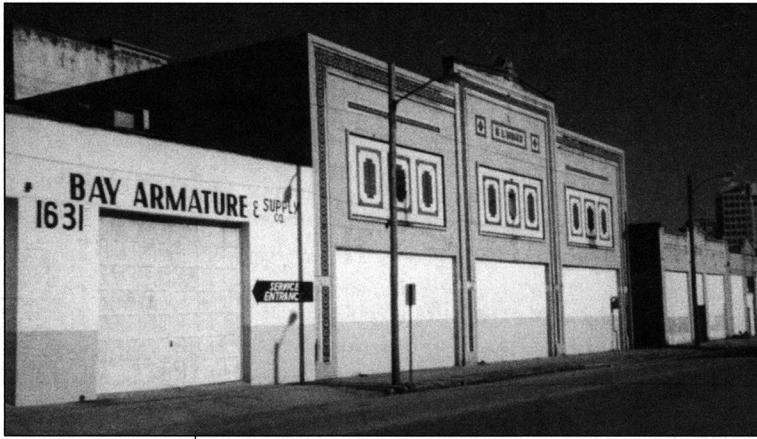
. . .

Looking at the Rialto now, with her battered face still pretty and her shopworn dignity still held bravely before the world, one gets the feeling that the old girl never really got her chance. She is like an ingenue grown old in the wings, waiting, waiting, for that one big break. Or the chorus girl whose



The Rialto Theater today. (Photograph courtesy of the author.)



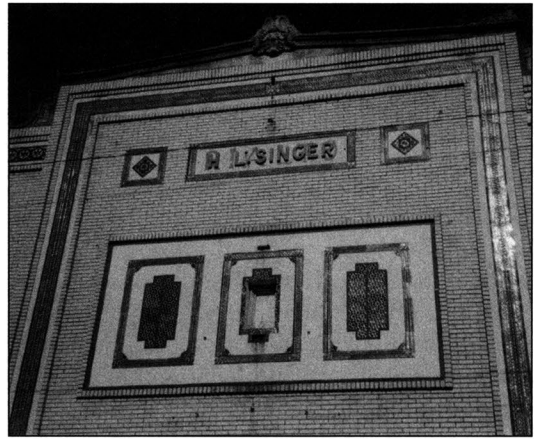


The Rialto Theater annexed to Bay Armature, looking south on Franklin Street. (Photograph courtesy of the author.)

knees have gone but who still has that nice figure, that saucy smile; if the lights are soft and the audience isn't too near why she can pass for twenty-five nearly any day, don't you think? Certainly it is not the Rialto's fault that it was, in a manner of speaking, an idea behind its time. One hates to think that F.J. Kennard, the Rialto's architect, so celebrated for his elegant and topical taste, designed a perfect dove of a theater and then stood by and watched while it was dropped into a nest of movie-mad philistines, but the Rialto, silent and dark and

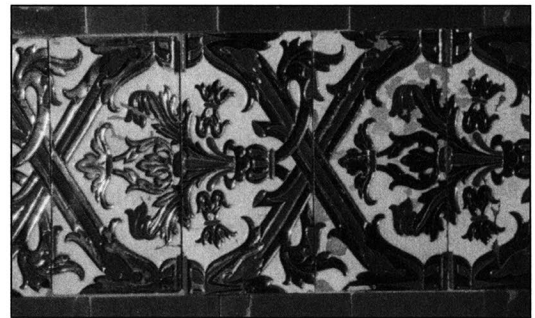


The Rialto Theater, interior view, displaying ornamented plaster proscenium surround. (Photograph courtesy of the author.)



Facade of the Rialto Theater, displaying both damaged "Holtsinger" name and "Rialto" ghost sign. (Photograph courtesy of the author.)

The Rialto Theater, detail of tile work on facade. (Photograph courtesy of the author.)



mutely reproachful, gives the impression that it is so.

And yet, in a way curiously consistent with the Rialto's stop-and-go past, the theater might come to life again. Del Acosta of the City of Tampa's Historic Preservation Board has suggested starting the process of achieving Federal recognition and registration for the theater. "We don't have architectural historians working here," he says, "We have to rely on scholars to give us the background on these buildings."

Now, Mr. Acosta has his reasons for wishing to save the Rialto and I have mine. Tampans today have only some fragments of material culture associated with the theater and its era to give us the real smell and touch and contour of the city's past: a purple velvet hat found in the Highland Street trunk, some faded FTP posters, and the Rialto itself. It is one thing to read what someone said about a time and place. It is quite another to hold it in your hand, see it with your own eyes, lean against it with your own shoulder.

Saving the Rialto. It is almost too good to



be true. I couldn't resist going to Franklin and Henderson Streets to share the dream with the little palace of my childhood. I stood by the rusty iron utility pole (the same one in the 1924 Burgert Brothers photo of the theater) at the building's southwest corner and looked up at the little barred windows in its façade. I hadn't seen the princess behind the windows for some time

but I fancied I saw her then. I waved, and she waved back. *Hello*, she said, *hello*.

*Author's Note:* Since this article was composed and submitted for publication, the building formerly housing the Rialto went on the real estate market and has been sold. Without historic designation, its future is uncertain. MJJ

## ENDNOTES

1. June Carr, "June Carr Vaudeville Routines," *Real Vaudeville*, 5. 10 April 2000. <http://www.jtr.com/junecarr/jokes.htm>
2. *The Tampa Tribune*, "Amusements," Sunday, November 23, 1924, (page number obliterated.)
3. *Ibid.*
4. *The Tampa Tribune*, "Seeing the Show with E.O.L.," Tuesday, November 25, 1924.
5. *The Tampa Tribune*, "Seeing the Show with E.O.L.," Wednesday, November 26, 1924.
6. Index by Neighborhood of Historic Buildings, "Seminole Heights", Appendix 2, *Historic Preservation Office*, Department of Business and Community Services, City of Tampa, Tampa, Florida.
7. *The Tampa Tribune*, "Amusements," Friday, November 28, 1924.
8. June Carr, "June Carr Vaudeville Routines," *Real Vaudeville*, 6.
9. Photographic Collection, *The Tampa Bay History Center*, Tampa, Florida.
10. *The Tampa Tribune*, "Amusements", Wednesday, November 26, 1924.
11. Acton Davies, "What I Don't Know About Vaudeville," *Variety*, No. 1, December 16, 1905, page 2, in *Selected Vaudeville Criticism*, ed. by Anthony Slide (Metuchen, NJ & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1988) 216.
12. Louis Reeves Harrison, "Is 'Vodeveal' Necessary?," *The Moving Picture World*, Vol. 8, No. 14, April 8, 1911, in *Selected Vaudeville Criticism*, 216.
13. Mary Cass Canfield, "The Great American Art," *The New Republic*, November 22, 1922, in *Selected Vaudeville Criticism*, 224.
14. Canfield, 224.
15. Susan Lacy, "Vaudeville," *Vaudeville: An American Masters Special*, Thirteen/WNET, KCTS/Seattle, and Palmer/Fenster, Inc., <http://www.wnet.org/ammasters/vaudeville.html>, 1; April 7, 2000.
16. Alexander Bakshy, "Vaudeville's Prestige," *The Nation*, Vol.129, No. 3348, September 4, 1929, in *Selected Vaudeville Criticism*, 235.
17. Alexander Bakshy, "Vaudeville Must Be Saved," *The Nation*, Vol.129, No. 3342, July 24, 1929, in *Selected Vaudeville Criticism*, 234.
18. Robert F. Mardis, *Federal Theatre in Florida*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Florida, 1972 (Ann Arbor Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1979) 216.
19. *The Tampa Tribune*, "Amusements," November 26, 1924.
20. Mardis, 217.
21. Mardis, 218.
22. Hallie Flanagan, excerpt from *Arena*, in Mardis, 50.
23. Flanagan in Mardis, 50.
24. Flanagan in Mardis, 49.
25. *La Gaceta*, July 9, 1936, in Mardis, 178.
26. Mardis, 183.
27. *The Federal Theatre Project Collection*, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, numerous sections and pages pertaining to Production Records, including Photographic Prints, Posters, and Titles, 1934 - 1943; not paginated.
28. *The Federal Theatre Project Collection*, n.p.
29. Mardis, 218 - 226.
30. Eddie Cantor, "Great Quotations by Eddie Cantor," *Creative Quotations*, <http://www.creativequotations.com/>, 18 April 2000.
31. Mardis, 237.
32. *The Federal Theatre Project Collection*, n.p.

## APPENDIX

List of plays staged at the Rialto Theater during the Federal Theater Project, 1939

(Courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University Library, Fairfax, VA)

*Bacchanale*. (Dance Theater.)

April 10, 1939.

*Careless Household*. (Children's Theater.)

October 8, 1938.

*Dragon's Wishbone*. (Children's Theater.)

February 1939.

*Follow the Parade*. (Musical Theater.)

May 23, 1938.

*From the Earth Spring*. (Dance Theater.)

April 10, 1939.

*Hallowe'en Program*. (Children's Theater.)

October 29, 1938.

*Hans Bulow's Last Puppet*. (Children's Theater.)

August 30, 1938.

*Hazard of Infections*. (Children's Theater.)

October 1, 1938.

*International Revue*. (Vaudeville.)

November 5, 1937.

*Invitation to the Dance*. (Dance Theater.)

April 10, 1939.

*Knave of Hearts*. (Theater.)

August 30, 1938.

*Krazy Kat*. (Dance Theater.)

April 10, 1939.

*On Dixon's Back Porch*. (Children's Theater.)

August 30, 1938.

*Pandora's Box*. (Children's Theater.)

October 1, 1938.

*Ready! Aim! Fire!* (Musical Theater.)

March 16, 1938.

*Revue Internationale*. (Vaudeville.)

July 6 10, 1936.

*Reward*. (Children's Theater.)

March 25, 1939.

*Tales from the Vienna Woods*. (Dance Theater.)

April 10, 1939.



# MARKETING The Past

The Tampa Bay History Center takes a new tack, offering a semipermanent array of collections as it awaits its home in the cultural arts district.

The Tampa Bay History Center is making an abrupt change of course as its temporary headquarters in the Tampa Convention Center are ending in the city on South Franklin Street, and soon will find a semipermanent home in the full array of collections aimed at the future.



**LELAND HAWES**  
History Writer  
lhawes@tampabay.com

Smith, former president of Florida A&M University, is speaker. The Feb. 20 event also will spotlight Professor Records of the African American Family of Tampa and Hillsborough County. The book is dedicated to the late S. Martin.

We document our community's history. And we bring to life issues that impact its future. Discover how changes affect the things you love.

# THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

LIFE. PRINTED DAILY.

TBO.COM

# Contested Ground: The 1948 Presidential Election in Tampa, Florida

Jared G. Toney

**O**n a brisk evening in Tampa, Florida in February of 1948, an integrated crowd of nearly 2500 gathered at Plant Field to hear Henry Agard Wallace articulate his progressive vision for the future of the nation. Wallace had formally emerged only months before as a vociferous challenger to many conservative American political and social traditions, and had become a champion of radical leftist interests throughout the country. Dissatisfied with the increasing conservatism of both of the “old parties,” Wallace had accepted nomination by the newly formed Progressive Party in hopes of reorienting the U.S. political system towards FDR’s contested New Deal legacy. In the tradition of Roosevelt’s reforms, he espoused the empowerment of the working class through unions, an end to discrimination, and an improvement in relations with the rising Soviet power in the East. The trail that brought him to central Florida that February evening had been full of controversy, opposition, and physical danger. The South was particularly unwelcoming to Wallace, though his convictions and perseverance inspired him to push on into hostile regions where politics were a matter of life and death. Nevertheless, his reception in Tampa was a warm one. When he emerged before the crowd at Plant Field, he was greeted by enthusiastic applause and cheers of *Viva Wallace!* from his Latin supporters, to which the appreciative candidate genially responded, *“Amigos mios”* – my friends!<sup>1</sup>

Despite its enormous appeal among



Campaign flyer for the States' Rights Party. (Reprinted from Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South.*)

transnational working-class populations in cities like Tampa, the Progressive Party campaign failed to garner significant national support. Considering only the tallied votes, the traditional American party structure remained firmly entrenched, and the public demonstrated a reluctance to abandon party affiliations or “throw away” their votes on third-party challengers. Although Wallace was to suffer an embarrassing defeat at the polls that year, his campaign was not without isolated successes. As his visit to Tampa in 1948 demonstrates, he found a strong following within the Latin communities of Ybor City and West Tampa, where a rich cultural tradition of political radicalism and social activism had thrived since the late nineteenth century. Second only to his success in Manhattan, Wallace won seven precincts from the immigrant enclaves of Tampa, an otherwise conservative Southern town a world away from the cosmopolitan atmosphere of New York City (Figure 1.1.)<sup>2</sup>

## HE WON'T BOLT



Gov. Caldwell's reluctant endorsement of Truman for reelection. (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, October 30, 1948.)

The population of Ybor City was somewhat of a regional anomaly in its progressive character. While the early years of the community were notable for frequent labor strikes, such activity had largely subsided by the Forties. The radicalizing tradition of *el lector* had been eliminated in the early years of the Great Depression, union activity decreased with the decline of a once-flourishing cigar industry, and many Latins had begun assimilation into the mainstream Anglo-Tampan population. Historians have concluded that by 1948 the last "dying breath of radicalism" in Ybor City had been expelled as residents adjusted to the increasing conservatism and exclusivity of American life. The presidential election of 1948, however, suggests a continuity of radicalism which, while altered, was never entirely squelched.<sup>3</sup>

At the other end of the political spectrum, Senator Strom Thurmond (D, SC) ignited Southern resistance to desegregation and rose to lead a third party initiative of his own: the States' Rights Party. Popularly

known as the Dixiecrats, the party found considerable support throughout the Southern states, particularly among Anglo-Americans, who united in their defense against the perceived liberal encroachment upon [white] Southern autonomy. Florida Governor Millard F. Caldwell formally declared his support for Harry Truman and the Democratic Party in February of 1948, "even though he disagree[d] with some of the President's civil rights proposals," but the Dixiecrats effectively fostered a hostile environment of racial exclusivity, social intimidation, and political repression throughout the South, including Florida.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of Thurmond's defiant challenge, most Floridians remained loyal to Truman and the Democratic Party. One native Tampan, Braulio Alonso, remembers feeling favorable towards Henry Wallace on his visit to Tampa in 1948, but his allegiance remained with the party that he felt best represented his interests. "I went to listen to [Wallace]," Alonso recalls. "But ... I wouldn't abandon the Democratic Party ... [I] had grown up with the Party ... and [I] wasn't ready to abandon it." A local newspaper editorial also qualified Wallace's popularity, asserting that, despite good attendance and high praise, his speech in Tampa "had little positive averment." Such statements accurately reflect the sentiments of the majority voters around the state who, while not entirely satisfied with Truman's domestic platform, remained loyal to the party of their fathers. Despite that loyalty, many of the accounts in local papers indicate that there was substantial (and potentially threatening) dissatisfaction with the Party.<sup>5</sup>

Newspapers across the state were divided in their endorsements of the presidential candidates. Those endorsing Truman included the *Miami Daily News*, the *Orlando Sentinel-Star*, the *Daytona Beach News-Journal*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*. An African-American newspaper, the *Miami Tropical Dispatch*, announced its support for Truman, illustrating the success of his controversial civil rights platform among disenfranchised minority populations. Thomas Dewey's following was by no means insignificant; he found support from sources such as the *St. Petersburg Independent*, the *Sanford Herald*, and the *Ft. Lauderdale News*, among others. While there was little mention of Progressive candidate Henry Wal-



lace, a number of papers – including the *Ft. Myers News Press* and the *Gainesville Sun* – endorsed the Dixiecrat representative Strom Thurmond. While endorsements varied by region, many Florida newspapers predicted that ultimately the Republican challenger Dewey would carry the state. Although the *Tampa Times* declined to make a prediction at all, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* declared the fight to be between Truman and Thurmond, while the *St. Petersburg Times* expected a battle between Truman and Dewey. Clearly, there was little consensus in the press regarding the potential outcome of the election.<sup>6</sup>

The presidential election of 1948 provides an interesting opportunity in U.S. history to analyze diverging and converging perspectives: domestic and international, ideological and political, social and economic. Following the end of the Second World War, the threat of a rising Soviet power reinvigorated anti-Communist rhetoric and fueled strong nationalist sentiments in the United States and abroad. With Churchill's articulation of the Iron Curtain and the U.S. adoption of the Truman doctrine, the world was divided into two ideological camps. These presented an uncompromising "us versus them" mentality that fueled both foreign and domestic policies for years. Belonging to one ideological camp required specific identifications, and allegiances had to be demonstrated. Competing voices clamored to advance their respective visions for the future of the nation. From Hollywood to New York City, South America to Southeast Asia, nations and individuals clashed in a global discourse on freedom and national allegiance. Within the context of polarized international politics, individuals faced important challenges within the context of U.S. society. Viewed as a matter of national security, conservative conformity (manifest most clearly in the campaign against communism) became synonymous with patriotism. Political and social conservatism became a litmus test for determining "Americanness."

While the House Committee on Un-American Activities, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, enforced exclusive notions of Americanism, other voices challenged the contradictions of social, racial, and eco-

## HAVING A LITTLE REAR END TROUBLE



Truman's attempt to maintain control of the fractious Democratic Party. (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, February 21, 1948.)

nomie exploitation within a nation that professed commitment to the values of freedom and equality. Such was the atmosphere in 1948 when four presidential candidates ran for the nation's highest office, expressing radically different visions of the world and the position of the U.S. within it.<sup>7</sup> These four candidates – Truman, Dewey, Thurmond, and Wallace – represented four streams of political thought and political action.

After three years in office, President Truman and his administration were under attack from both the left and right. Reliant upon a loosely constructed coalition of New Deal Democrats, Truman struggled to reconcile demands for reform with a renewed and increasingly vigorous Cold War conservatism. While striving to appease disillusioned liberals and critical conservatives, President Truman waged a war against domestic Communists and fellow travelers through such organizations as the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and the

## RIGHT THAT TIME, HENRY



Wallace's supposed link to the Communist Party. (*Tampa Sunday Tribune*, February 15, 1948.)

FBI, hugely expanded under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover.

Blamed for the Depression and criticized for its isolationist policies, the Republican Party maintained an peripheral role throughout much of the 1930s. By the mid 1940s, while Truman struggled to unite increasingly disjointed interests on the left, the Grand Ole Party capitalized on the return of post-war economic prosperity to gain renewed support from a growing middle class. One Tampan editorialized that, despite a Republican split over foreign policy issues, the Party maintained a united front with an eye towards the approaching election. "With the apparent certainty that the GOP will win in November, it isn't likely that party leaders will indulge in any break-up of party unity." Still, the nomination of Thomas Dewey, a moderate Republican, first in 1944 and again in 1948, illustrated the GOP's acknowledgement of the more liberal character of the U.S. politics at mid-century. As one Tampa newspaper columnist summed up the situation, "[It's

all liberals now. It's different now. Today nobody is a 'conservative' – for the present anyway." With the fragmentation of the Democratic Party and the overwhelming Republican victory in the mid-term congressional elections of 1946, many predicted that the GOP party convention in 1948 was in fact nominating the next president of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Situated on the outskirts of mainstream U.S. politics were third-party challengers Wallace and Thurmond. In early 1948, a cadre of Southern representatives walked out of the Democratic Party convention in protest of Truman's concessions to African-Americans. To them, the civil rights platform had carried the Democratic Party much too far to the left. White Southerners felt betrayed by the party of their fathers and grandfathers, and many were convinced that representatives of both parties had subordinated the interests of their Southern constituents to other programs and ideals. One historian observes that fears of racial integration created personal and political animosity toward Truman, "who had become something of a Judas figure overnight," embedded in a Democratic Party that no longer represented Southern interests.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, a coalition of governors from the Deep South, led by Strom Thurmond, formed the independent States' Rights Party to "emphasize the broader issue of centralization and federal paternalism of which civil rights was only one, albeit the most objectionable, offshoot." Rallying around Thurmond's commitment to the historical principles of the Democratic Party, Southerners grew increasingly critical of the perceived "liberalization" of mainstream U.S. politics. As such, the Dixiecrat cause became a defense of Southern convictions regarding the social, economic, and political organization of the region. Though couched in the rhetoric of rights and regionalism, race was the paramount issue around which disparate groups of Southerners united to endorse Thurmond's bid for the presidency. "It was impossible to create a mood of solidarity and defiance without emphasizing the very issue that had sparked off the issue in the first place – that is, race." Determined to halt increasing concessions to minority constituents and the "socialization" of big government, the Dixiecrats hoped that the Solid South would win enough elec-

toral votes to swing the November elections to their favor.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to Thurmond's States' Rights Party, the Progressives believed that the Democratic Party had swung too far to the conservative right. After an unsuccessful attempt to work within the Democratic Party, Henry Wallace, former Secretary of Agriculture and third term Vice-President under Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was nominated to run for president on the Progressive Party ticket in early 1948. Though expressing a reluctance to leave his old party behind, Wallace concluded that his liberal vision was incompatible with the conservatism of both traditional parties, and believed that only through a new political organization could his programs be successfully advanced. While Wallace championed a domestic platform committed to a continuation of the principles of FDR's New Deal, his foreign policy programs generated vociferous opposition from Democrats and Republicans alike. Pointing to his entrenched criticism of Truman's Marshall Plan and his unpopular espousal of favorable relations with the Soviet Union, opponents labeled Wallace a political radical and Communist dupe, with questionable allegiances and suspicious intentions.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing the appeal of Wallace's civil rights program among African-Americans, President Truman's Democratic administration underwent a controversial political realignment in order to accommodate minority demographics, thereby securing their votes. As the black musician and activist Paul Robeson asserted, "strong pressure" from the Wallace campaign, in addition to international pressure from the United Nations, stood as the "two prominent reasons for Mr. Truman's stand in the civil rights battle." Truman recognized the progressive threat from the left and, at the advice of his chief aide Clark Clifford, sought to counter Wallace's support by making concessions – albeit superficial ones – towards labor, civil rights, and social welfare.<sup>12</sup>

In February 1948, the *Tampa Tribune* reported that Truman had petitioned Congress to pass federal laws against discrimination "in voting or employment" on the grounds of race or ethnicity. Rejecting Southern claims of state-level autonomy, Truman asserted that, "The Federal Government has a clear duty to see that constitutional guarantees of individual liberties



"Not a third party, or even a second party, but the real first party," Wallace emphasized.

## 3RD PARTY CANDIDATE GIVES VIEWS IN GREAT DEBATE OF '48

Wallace at a luncheon in St. Petersburg.  
(*St. Petersburg Times*, February 18, 1948.)

and of equal protection under the laws are not denied or abridged anywhere in our Union." Southern leaders reacted quickly to such pronouncements. That same month, Governor Wright of Mississippi organized a meeting of five thousand members of the Democratic Party to "[blast] the leadership of Northern Democrats in backing so-called 'anti-Southern' legislation." Said Wright, "They have stolen from us the Democratic Party, and we are going to run those scal-awags out and keep them out." Perhaps a Tampa reporter was correct in declaring that, as a result of his civil rights agenda, Truman risked the wrath of the South.<sup>13</sup>

While candidates campaigned with varying degrees of success around the country, the U.S. South proved to be an exceptionally hostile region, unwelcoming to political interlopers and social reformers committed to change. If Southerners saw Harry Truman as betraying the true ideals of the Democratic Party, Henry Wallace's campaign

**H-E-A-R**  
**HENRY A. WALLACE**  
**TONIGHT 8 P. M. AT**  
**PLANT FIELD (Fairgrounds)**  
**TAMPA, FLA.**

ADMISSION 50c

**HENRY A. WALLACE**  
**LUNCHEON**  
**TODAY AT 1 P. M. AT**  
**DETROIT HOTEL**  
**TICKETS \$2.00**

Reservations Not Necessary But Available Through  
 Robert H. Chapman, Phone 7-9846



This advertisement sponsored by friends of Henry A. Wallace

Newspaper ad for Wallace's appearance in Tampa. (*St. Petersburg Times*, February 17, 1948.)

was viewed as downright treasonous. Nevertheless, Wallace embarked on tours into the Deep South, first late in 1947 to advance the progressive spirit, then again in the fall of 1948 as a third-party presidential candidate. The campaign clearly challenged white hegemony in the region, but also sought to undermine the traditional economic structure through the propagation of unionism and racial empowerment. In August of 1948, just months before the election, Wallace followed the campaign trail into the ideologically conservative and racially polarized states of the American South. Racist whites turned out in droves to protest Wallace's speaking engagements, at which he insisted on integrated audiences. In many towns, the police force, if one existed, afforded little protection to the traveling campaigners. Wallace and his entourage were greeted by a particularly hostile mob in Burlington, North Carolina, where protestors far outnumbered his own supporters. "Each time he started to speak," one eyewitness recalled, "the crowd shouted him down. But he remained physically fearless as he stood in a sea of angry ... workers, any one of whom ... could have pulled a knife and slit his gut open." On a

number of occasions, hecklers pelted Wallace with eggs and rotten fruit as he gave speeches. Aside from Wallace and Senator Thurmond, neither Dewey nor Truman dared venture into the hostile southern states.<sup>14</sup>

While each of the four candidates in 1948 appealed to particular demographics, all found audiences within the eclectic multi-ethnic atmosphere of Tampa, Florida. An isolated military outpost during the early 1800s, the town's late nineteenth century cigar industry propelled Tampa into regional prominence. The area continued to grow and prosper in the early twentieth century, and by 1940 Tampa was home to over 100,000 residents. Just ten years later that number had climbed to nearly 125,000 within the city limits and 250,000 in Hillsborough County (Figure 1.3), making the city the third largest in the state of Florida.<sup>15</sup>

Historians generally agree that World War II was tremendously beneficial to industry and economic growth in Tampa. Utilizing the G.I. Bill, returning servicemen and women advanced their educations in ways they would not otherwise have been able to do. Veterans also took advantage of federal subsidies to abandon old neighborhoods and purchase homes in rapidly expanding suburbs. As one historian aptly observes, "The G.I. Bill rewrote the American dream."<sup>16</sup>

By the late-1940's, America's "Cigar City" was no longer defined exclusively in terms of its relation to the tobacco industry. Instead, central Florida became increasingly reliant on burgeoning phosphate and shipping industries. Additionally, a revived local economy in Tampa depended upon "military defense spending, small-scale manufacturing, retail-service spending, agricultural products, and the housing-construction business."<sup>17</sup>

For many years Tampa's immigrant enclave Ybor City had operated as a self-contained immigrant community autonomous from the explicit influence of mainstream Southern and Anglo institutions. By the 1940s the enclave's character began to change considerably as residents moved out into the surrounding neighborhoods. The collective experience of World War II facilitated a common American identity that softened the more pronounced ethnic divisions between Anglos and Latins and al-



lowed for the gradual integration of communities. Post-war federal incentives empowered veterans and their families to settle in new areas and take advantage of educational and employment opportunities beyond the parameters of the immigrant enclave. Additionally, with the influx of African-Americans into the neighborhoods around Ybor City, upwardly mobile second- and third-generation immigrants abandoned historically Latin areas. In large numbers, Latins moved into the already established community of West Tampa, which served as Ybor City's "halfway house" to suburbia. "It was like a mass migration from the inner cities to the suburbs of Tampa," recalled long-time resident Jorge Garcia. "It was the thing to do among members of my generation." While these demographic shifts picked up momentum in the immediate post-war years (aided by urban renewal programs), the Ybor City enclave retained much of its Latin character and influence into the 1950s.<sup>18</sup>

As Election Day, 1948 approached, Tampa became a battleground for a variety of disparate interests. From staunch States' Rights supporters advocating racial segregation to progressive "radicals" campaigning for Henry Wallace, citizens battled over definitions of Americanism and democratic principles. Although Truman and the Democratic Party carried Florida, the relative successes of the three challengers for the Oval Office are indicative of widely contrasting perspectives and agendas within a fairly concentrated demographic.

The *Tampa Morning Tribune* featured daily questions asked of citizens from the local community. In one survey, when asked what the country's primary objective should be in 1948, all six people polled expressed concerns over taxes and domestic inflation, while five of the six suggested an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union. From salesmen to housewives, the six agreed that, "It is important that we have some understanding with Russia in the near future." Though economic concerns were on the minds of many, such problems were often subordinated to international affairs. "If we don't have an understanding with Russia," asserted one woman, "we will have another war and all these problems will still be here." Clearly, the experiences of the Second World War continued to inform the manner in which people

evaluated and legitimized global affairs.<sup>19</sup>

Many residents of Tampa, while committed to the Democratic Party, were resigned to a Republican victory in the upcoming presidential elections. Although "the last sixteen years have been fairly good years under a Democratic president," one Tammpan asserted, "I don't believe Dewey will have any trouble getting elected this time." Another self-proclaimed Democrat conveyed a similar sentiment, noting that, "I'm inclined to believe that Dewey will win the next election and he should be a pretty good president." Still another man expressed concern that Truman no longer represented the New Deal legacy of former president Roosevelt. "Truman has done more good for other countries than he has for our country," he argued. "Most everyone seems to think the Republicans will win the election and I'm inclined to agree with them."<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, African-Americans in Tampa, though responding favorably to Henry Wallace's progressivism, generally united to support Truman's newly introduced civil rights platform (see figure 1.2). Those initially drawn to the Progressive Party's desegregationist platform found a receptive, and more secure, home in the Democratic Party. Empowered by the Supreme Court decision of *Smith v Allwright* (1944), African-American constituents challenged the practice of segregation and lobbied for racial equality throughout the Southern states. As one Tampa historian observed, "[The year] 1948 marked the first time in a half century that African-Americans registered and voted as Democrats." While disparate populations of disenfranchised minorities throughout the South advanced more forthright civil rights legislation, the entrenched Anglo power structure violently resisted such efforts, personalizing the political issues and leading a violent counter-assault against a perceived infringement on regional interests.<sup>21</sup>

Though Thurmond eschewed an exclusively racist platform, many white Southerners united around the States' Rights defense of segregation (and the implicit assertion of Anglo superiority.) Numerous incidents of violent repression marked an atmosphere of racial intimidation, fostered by the acts of racists in the U.S. South. As early as February of 1948, local papers announced a procession of Ku Klux Klan

## CALLING HIS SHOTS AS USUAL



Truman's attempt to "bridle" the civil rights issue. (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, February 4, 1948.)

members parading through the small towns of central Florida. On one occasion, a cross was burned near the planned site for the registration of African-American voters. In Pinellas County, a "fiery cross" was found burning in the front yard of a Gulf Beach home – the first reported in that county in nearly seven years. As the elections drew closer, incidents were reported in local newspapers with increasing frequency. "Tonight was the first time in recent years," reported the *Tampa Tribune* on the eve of the election, "that the Klan has attempted to make a show of strength in Florida." The atmosphere was increasingly charged with racial friction and hostilities, evidence of the significance that the upcoming election held for so many varying interests. By late October, many local residents had become fed-up with such behavior. The demonstrations, one columnist wrote, "Can tend only to arouse and inflame racial feeling ... The evident purpose is to deter Negroes from voting in the election – a right granted them by the Constitution of the United States."<sup>22</sup>

As evidenced by his harrowing experi-

ences on the campaign trail, no candidate more explicitly challenged Southern social and racial constructions than Progressive Party nominee Henry Wallace. Though Wallace met fierce resistance throughout the states of the "Solid South," scholars have largely overlooked his experiences in central Florida where he found unprecedented support from Tampa's immigrant enclave.

After weeks of exhaustive campaigning through the states of the U.S. South, Henry Wallace found an oasis in Ybor City, where a community of Spaniards, Cubans, and Italians welcomed him with open arms. Rejecting the Cold War rhetoric of intolerance that implied exclusive definitions of citizenship, politically conscious immigrant workers embraced those domestic and international programs perceived as radical and un-American by the overwhelming majority of voters. Following Wallace's speech at Plant Field that February evening, the *Tribune* again polled its readers, this time asking what observers thought of the Progressive Party rally. Not surprisingly, of the six Tampa residents polled, all expressed concern with his "radical policies," his "non-segregation platform," and his perceived connection to Soviet Communism. One woman assessed the success of Wallace's visit in terms of the polling place: "Wallace will get a few votes from his speech in Tampa, but not enough to make a difference." Another suggested that while his policies might be well received in the North, he would find little support among Southerners. One housewife refused to attend the speech in protest of the integration of Wallace's audiences. "I didn't hear [the] speech, but I did not approve of both Negroes and white people sitting together at the rally." Wallace's domestic program faced significant hostility from white Southern audiences, and his foreign policy faced even more opposition. "I believe Wallace is supported by the foreign element all over the country and I don't like him," one man adamantly declared. "I think Wallace is definitely on the Communist side, so I didn't go to the speech or read about it in the paper."<sup>23</sup>

Even Truman, the incumbent, had no easy ride in the presidential election of 1948. Despite, or perhaps because of, sixteen continuous years of Democratic representation in the White House, voters expressed dissatisfaction and disappointment

with many of the Chief Executive's policies and positions. While a growing left forced Truman to adopt a more liberal domestic program, many disillusioned conservatives rallied behind a significant opposition. Not surprisingly, after the pronouncement of President Truman's civil rights platform in early 1948, Southerners abandoned the Democratic Party en masse either for the moderate Republican Dewey, or the more extreme Senator Thurmond.

When Anglo Tampanans were asked their opinions of President Truman, many expressed little confidence in his bid for re-election. Two individuals conveyed vigorous opposition specifically to his position on the civil rights issue. "I am wholly opposed to Mr. Truman's civil rights bill and I am opposed to his nomination," declared one local woman. Another Tampa resident agreed, explaining, "I do not like the stand he has taken on the civil rights program and I believe that will cost him the election." Finally, one male warehouse worker chalked it up as a character flaw on Truman's part, suggesting that, "[He] is easily influenced by what others think." He, too, expressed little hope for re-election.<sup>24</sup>

Apart from the candidates, a number of other visitors came to the Tampa Bay area during the 1948 presidential campaign. In October, Paul Robeson spoke to an audience of 500 at Plant Field on behalf of Wallace and the Progressive Party. During his speech in Tampa, Robeson raised the issue of U.S. foreign policy, declaring that in the continued fight against oppression and tyranny on behalf of all people, "We have an obligation to see that this nation never recognizes [Francisco] Franco [of Spain.]" Through his allusion to the struggle for democracy in Spain, Robeson sought to capitalize on the internationalist character of the Latin community in Tampa, many of whom adopted such ideological struggles as their own. Robeson also praised Henry Wallace's campaign efforts in the South despite marked opposition, asserting that Truman had "cancelled his trip to the deep South because he couldn't take what Wallace had."<sup>25</sup>

Also in October, Senator Robert Taft of Ohio campaigned in neighboring Pinellas County on behalf of Dewey. Senator Taft found a receptive audience among Floridians anxious to see a changing of the guard in the nation's highest office. "I like Dewey,"

# St. Petersburg

SECTION TWO

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1948

## Paul Robeson Claims Five States for Progressives



**PAUL ROBESON**, famous singer and national co-chairman of the Progressive Party, and Dr. Clark Foreman (left), national treasurer for the Progressives, talk over political prospects with Dr. William Levine of Indian Rocks, Pinellas County Progressive. Levine introduced Robeson at a reception held here at the Melrose Branch YMCA yesterday, and Foreman introduced him at a Progressive Rally held in Tampa last night.

Paul Robeson and Clark Foreman pictured with a Progressive Party member from Pinellas County. (*St. Petersburg Times*, October 5, 1948.)

said one local resident, "because I think a president and a congress of the same party could accomplish more than has been accomplished lately." Another agreed, noting that, "Dewey ... is a good administrator and ... will make a good president if he is elected." One woman expressed some dissatisfaction with "politics as usual," and espoused the virtuous character of the Republican challenger. "I think he is honest," she explained. "I don't believe Dewey would tell us one thing and then do another. I believe Dewey will be the next president, and he

should be a much better president than Truman.”<sup>26</sup>

. . .

Though the presidential race was largely decided between two candidates, the election is significant for the multiple issues it raised and the contesting voices it displays. With the Second World War in recent popular memory, candidates sought to balance national security and a tenuous foreign policy with their idealistic domestic visions for the future of the United States. Disparate peoples from all corners of the nation found some sense of political representation through which to express their respective opinions and advance collective interests. Because of its geographic context, eclectic racial composition, and vibrant cultural history, Tampa captures the essence of the moment's combative rhetoric and political discourse. At the conservative right, Strom Thurmond found significant support for his States' Rights program, while Henry Wallace on the progressive left united much of the local working-class Latin community. While Truman won the state, Republican challenger Thomas Dewey polled relatively well in the historically Democratic region. African-Americans also exercised a newly invigorated voice in local politics, reviving Truman's campaign in the South.

As Figure 1.4 illustrates, most of the candidates polled well among the Southern states. Henry Wallace's numbers in Florida – far overshadowing those elsewhere in the South – were markers to the substantial (and politically active) immigrant communities that endorsed him in Tampa and throughout the state. Though Truman clearly carried the state, the numbers are indicative of the amount of dissension and socio-political fragmentation among Floridians. It was a time and region of contrasts, and the vote effectively served as the mouthpiece for disparate interests around the state and nationwide.

Most significantly, the 1948 election served as an occasion in which a variety of people and voices, empowered within the institutional parameters of American democracy, projected and contested visions for the future of the nation and their places within it. Ironically for many of the immigrant “radicals” of Ybor City, dissent itself, perceived by many as un-American, became

a sort of vehicle of assimilation. In many ways, the U.S. political system – characterized by open debate – was mirrored and legitimized by the local chorus of voices that rose during the elections of 1948.

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 February 1948.
2. *Tampa Morning Tribune* and the *New York Times*, November 3, 1948.
3. See Maura Barrios, “Tampa y Cuba: Cien Anos”, Master's Thesis, University of South Florida, 2001. Barrios writes that, in fact, many elderly residents of Ybor City “refer to the major strikes to mark the decades of their past.”
4. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 4 February 1948.
5. Alonso, interview with the author, 22 March 2002; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 19 February 1948; Because Florida was a “one party” state, if one was not registered with the Democratic Party, they were unable to vote in the primary elections, and were thus deprived of a significant voice in the electoral process.
6. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 29 October 1948; Those papers predicting a victory for Dewey were: the *Bradenton Herald*, *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, *Miami Beach Sun*, *St. Augustine Record*, *Lakeland Ledger*, *Lake Worth Leader*, and the *Winter Haven News Chief*; Interestingly, even the *Clearwater Sun* could “not see Florida going for Truman.”
7. Though in the years following the First World War the U.S. maintained a strict isolationist policy, its involvement in WWII quickly ushered the nation into the international arena and established an important precedent of global containment and preemptive action in the ensuing years; For an insightful discussion of Senator McCarthy and the HUAC campaign against Communist subversion in the U.S., see Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co.), 1998; For a contrasting view on anti-Communism in the Cold War U.S., see John Earl Haynes, *Red Scare or Red Menace? American Communism and Anti-Communism in the Cold War Era* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee), 1996.
8. Gary A. Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey* (Louisville, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 4; the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 18 June 1948; the *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, 13 June 1948; Donaldson contends that there were, in fact, a succession of “liberal” Republican presidential candidates through the 1930s and 1940s, including Alf Landon in 1936, Wendell Wilkie in 1940, and Thomas Dewey in 1944 and 1948.
9. Robert Garson, *The Democratic Party and the Politics of Sectionalism, 1941 – 1948* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 235.
10. *Ibid.*, 285, 283; For a comprehensive and effective analysis of Thurmond and the States' Rights Party, see Kari Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt and the End of the Solid South, 1932 – 1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); The formal name for the independent southern party was ‘States' Rights,’ but by mid-1948, the movement was more popularly referred to as the Dixiecrat Party.
11. The Progressive Party also faced vocal opposition from the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA),



- an organization that espoused a more liberal alternative to the Democratic Party's domestic platform. The ADA was highly critical of Henry Wallace's foreign policy programs and his purported links to the Communist Party. Wallace defended communist support as a matter of principle, declaring, "I will not repudiate any support which comes to me on the basis of interest in peace. If you accept the idea that communists have no right to express their opinions, than you don't believe in democracy." From Guenter Lewy, *The Cause that Failed: Communism in American Political Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 207.
12. Philip S. Foner, ed., *Paul Robeson Speaks, 1918-1974* (New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers, 1978), 182
  13. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 3 February 1948; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 13 February 1948.
  14. Patricia Sullivan, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 261; Sullivan provides a particularly insightful analysis of New Deal reform in the twentieth-century U.S. South; A number of excellent monographs have been devoted to Henry Wallace and his progressive campaign, see Graham White and John Maze, *Henry A. Wallace: His Search for a New World Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Also selections from John C. Culver and John Hyde, *American Dreamer: The Life and Times of Henry A. Wallace* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).
  15. Statistics adapted from Robert Kerstein, *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2001).
  16. Gary R. Mormino, *Hillsborough County Goes to War: The Home Front, 1940-1950* (Tampa: Tampa Bay History Center, 2001), 131; Historian Lizabeth Cohen disputes the effectiveness of the G.I. Bill among African American veterans in her book, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003).
  17. *Ibid.*, 134.
  18. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 1987), 300.
  19. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 February 1948.
  20. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 30 September 1948. Residents were asked by the *Tribune*, "Do you think times are better during a Republican or Democratic presidential administration?" Only one of the six polled answered Republican, explaining that, "I don't believe we had particularly good times during the long stretch of Democratic presidents."
  21. Gary R. Mormino, "Tampa at 1948", in the *Sunland Tribune* (25/1 1999), 121; The Supreme Court decision of *Smith v Allwright* (321 US 649; 12 January 1944) overruled it's previous declaration (*Grovey v Townsend*, 1935), and guaranteed the rights of African Americans to vote in state primaries.
  22. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 14 February 1948 – this incident occurred in Ft. Myers, and is indicative of the racially charged atmosphere that characterized many of the outlying areas; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 1 June 1948; *Tampa Morning Tribune*,

- 28 October 1948.
23. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 21 February 1948.
24. "Tribune Talkies" in the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 17 June 1948.
25. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 5 October 1948.
26. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 7 October 1948.



## Hyde Park Architects

Charles F C Jordan  
PRINCIPAL

1509 WEST SWANN AVENUE  
SUITE 270  
TAMPA FLORIDA 33606-2557  
813 • 251 • 6909  
FAX 813 • 250 • 1668  
HPACHAS@AOL.COM

LIC NO AA F000096

## APPENDIX

Figure 1.1

### Winning precincts for Wallace

Precinct	Location	Wallace votes	Total Votes	Percent
9	Main & Albany	255	502	51
10	3109 Armenia	367	695	53
18	1801 9th Avenue	178	431	41
22	1709 26th Avenue	359	705	51
24	1822 12th Avenue	264	430	61
25	2507 16th Street	357	549	65
26	Columbus & 12th	215	385	56

Figure 1.2

### Registered votes in predominantly African American areas

Precinct	Dewey	Truman	Wallace	Thurmond
1	121	143	9	34
13	114	476	28	32
14	96	147	19	27
15	145	256	16	58

(Votes for Thurmond in these areas may illustrate the presence of working-class Anglos within predominant African-American neighborhoods.)

Figure 1.3

### Population Growth in Florida, 1880-1950

Year	Florida	Hillsborough County	Tampa
1880	269,493	5,814	720
1890	391,422	14,941	5,532
1900	528,542	36,013	15,839
1910	752,619	78,354	37,782
1920	968,470	88,257	51,608
1930	1,468,211	153,519	101,161
1940	1,897,414	180,148	108,391
1950	2,771,305	249,894	124,681

Figure 1.4

### Votes by Party in the U.S. South

State	Republican	Democrat	States' Rights	Progressive
Alabama	20,570	-	104,321	1,019
Arkansas	20,748	64,115	21,595	319
Florida	160,481	215,337	66,250	10,293
Georgia	51,670	170,776	66,644	1,576
Louisiana	43,199	62,601	87,770	2,905
Mississippi	2,356	9,291	84,594	3,207
North Carolina	213,648	418,368	61,073	2,843
South Carolina	5,101	30,498	89,440	178
Tennessee	155,326	215,014	59,813	1,162

Figure 1.5

### Votes by Party in Hillsborough County

Democrat:	18,602
Republican:	13,356
States' Rights:	4,702
Progressive:	3,778 (Highest recorded in the state.)

# Tampa's Trolleys: Innovation, Demise, and Rediscovery

Meeghan Kane

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a desire to escape the clamor of a city's downtown for the serenity of its surrounding neighborhoods sent people spilling out into the countryside. Immigration and a general population surge, propelled by the pursuit of the American dream, led to this mobility, and the streetcar facilitated this dynamic.

The decision to bring the streetcar to Tampa was an easy and initially profitable one.<sup>1</sup> Cigar factories, an active port, and a phosphate industry fueled Tampa's growth, and the social and cultural dynamics of the population intensified. The streetcar brought opportunity and a transportation revolution. At its peak in the 1920s, the trolley cost a nickel to ride, crisscrossed areas of Hillsborough County with fifty miles of track, and carried twenty-four million people each year.<sup>2</sup>

By the mid-1940s, transportation became increasingly dominated by buses, cars, trucks, and taxis. A booming post-World War II economy, the promise of interstate highways, and the proliferation of corporate enterprise all contributed to the abandonment of the trolley system. After years of neglect and competition with the auto industry, Tampa's trolley system was simply outdated and losing money. By comparison to the trolley, automobiles and buses provided quicker and quieter transportation. Automobiles, dramatically increasing in size and number, vied for space with trolleys that barreled down the center of the city's major thoroughfares. Already a

city of neighborhoods where residency depended upon race, class, and religion, Tampa's racial and ethnic divisions promoted the development of suburbs (many restricted) and unincorporated enclaves; these reached further and further beyond the city's center.<sup>3</sup> The ever-increasing distance between city and suburb coincided with a shift in the perception of the automobile: cars quickly changed from a luxury commodity to a daily necessity. Profit and convenience drove the decision to close the trolley lines, and on August 3, 1946, the era of the nickel ride became a memory.<sup>4</sup>

The transition from trolleys to cars and buses marked an extraordinary shift in civic, social, and cultural sensibilities amid the changing identity of a nation. Labor tensions, politics, and the waking giant of corporate influence all contributed to the transition. Recently, there has been a romantic return of Tampa's trolleys that adds another dimension to the discussion. To understand these dynamics, we must look at the history of Tampa's streetcars.

Both the beginning and the end of the trolley system speak to Tampa's aggressive commercial ambition. Predating the electric lines, the first street railway system in Tampa began in 1885. The Tampa Street Railway Company, incorporated (in part) by one of Tampa's most diligent pioneers, John T. Leslie, operated "a wood-burning engine with several cars over a narrow gauge track from downtown, along Franklin Street, to the adjacent town of Ybor City."<sup>5</sup> The passenger cars consisted simply of scaled-down railroad cars. The tracks ambled from downtown Tampa, through the



Tampa Suburban Company streetcar on Ballast Point route, 1892. (Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

sparsely settled “Scrub” area northeast of the city, and ended at the newly established cigar-making center, Ybor City. Vicente Martinez Ybor, who founded Ybor City in 1886, also held a stake in the Railway Company.<sup>6</sup> Although primitive compared to the labyrinthine systems of some other cities, the Tampa Street Railway Company’s line connected two vastly different communities: the conservative white mainstream city of Tampa and the politically radical, ethnically diverse enclave of Ybor City. Inextricably tethered to one another through local politics and economy, the cultural distinctiveness of Ybor City and Tampa were prescient indicators of the ability of the trolley to connect and yet forever separate.

As a result of the innovations of Frank Sprague of Richmond, the electric streetcar was born in 1887. Sprague developed a four-wheeled prototype that was pulled along by an overhead wire that transmitted electricity to the cars. Originally called a “troller,” the more affable name “trolley” was quickly adopted.<sup>7</sup> As word of this new technology spread, commercial enterprise kicked-in, and electric companies made haste to con-

solidate, merge, expand, and diversify, all to exploit the new invention. Private companies now entered the transportation business on a grand scale. Like the railroad magnates that controlled the travel and trade of a nation, local companies or regional conglomerates influenced the expansion patterns and internal transportation needs of a city. These influences not only affected the development of neighborhoods and suburbs, but also affected individual careers and employment, commercial trends and industrial growth, the success of local vacation destinations, and how people spent their leisure time.

In 1892, the Tampa Street Railway system combined with the Florida Electric Company to form the Tampa Street Railway and Power Company. That same year, Peter O. Knight joined the competition for the trolley market. Forseeing the potential profits, Knight formed the Tampa Suburban Company. The company sought to take advantage of the growing commercial interests in Tampa, principally the magnificent new Tampa Bay Hotel, opened in 1891. Knight also understood the role of the first





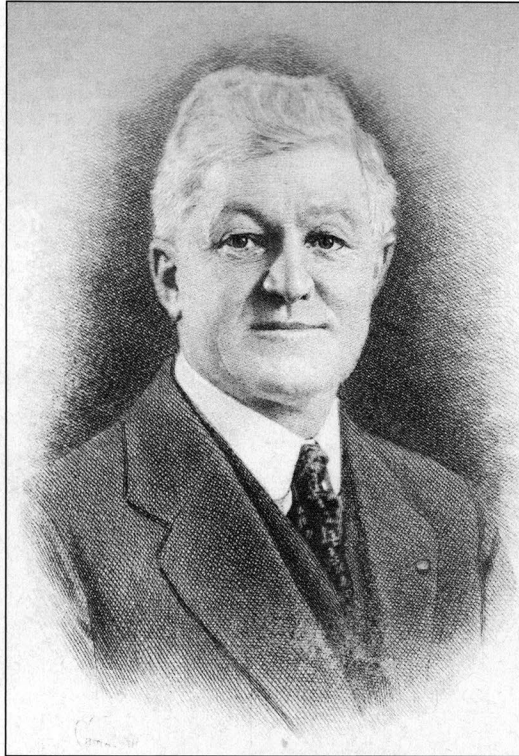
Streetcar barn interior, with trolley and spare parts, 1911. (Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

suburbs in realizing, for many Tampan, the American dream. Like the much later developments of cookie-cutter homes and retention ponds beyond the school districts of inner cities, the suburbs of the 1890s offered the middle class an escape. Just far enough to escape the grit of downtown Tampa, these neighborhoods depended on the streetcar to connect residents with work, school, shopping, and recreation. However, the Tampa Street Railway and Power Company was not ready to surrender its share of this growth market to Knight. The company immediately secured an injunction to stymie further operation of its new rival's lines. While the appeal was pending, Knight restructured the company to organize a new corporation, selling stock to Tampa citizens. In 1894, the Consumers Electric Company, Knight's new company, emerged as the dominant streetcar system, winning a rate war against its adversary and buying them out on June 18 of that year.

Tampa's earliest suburbs were developed at the discretion of the streetcar stockholders with consideration for prominent local merchants and builders. Many prominent

businessmen resided in Tampa Heights and Hyde Park, places served by the first streetcars. Access to new areas facilitated expansion of the lines, increasing the financial gain of investors. Bayshore Boulevard denizens Chester E. Chapin and his wife, Emelia, played major roles in the development of that area.<sup>8</sup> Since the Chapins were significant contributors to the Consumers Electric Light and Power Company, that service quickly answered the ardent requests of these benefactors and laid tracks from downtown Tampa along Bayshore Boulevard to Ballast Point.<sup>9</sup> The line gave Mrs. Chapin the perfect opportunity to ride her personal trolley car, "Fair Florida," into town. The company also created an amusement park at the line's terminus in Ballast Point.<sup>10</sup> Hugh MacFarlane, a principal in the West Tampa Latin cigar making community, and his associates helped the Consumer Electric Light and Power Company to finance a streetcar service to West Tampa.<sup>11</sup> The streetcar lines had truly begun to shape and reconfigure the city of Tampa.

The trolley system continued to grow, forging new paths or simply following the



Peter O. Knight, longtime director of Tampa Electric Company and the man most responsible for the streetcar system's longevity in Tampa. (Courtesy of Tampa Historical Society Archives.)

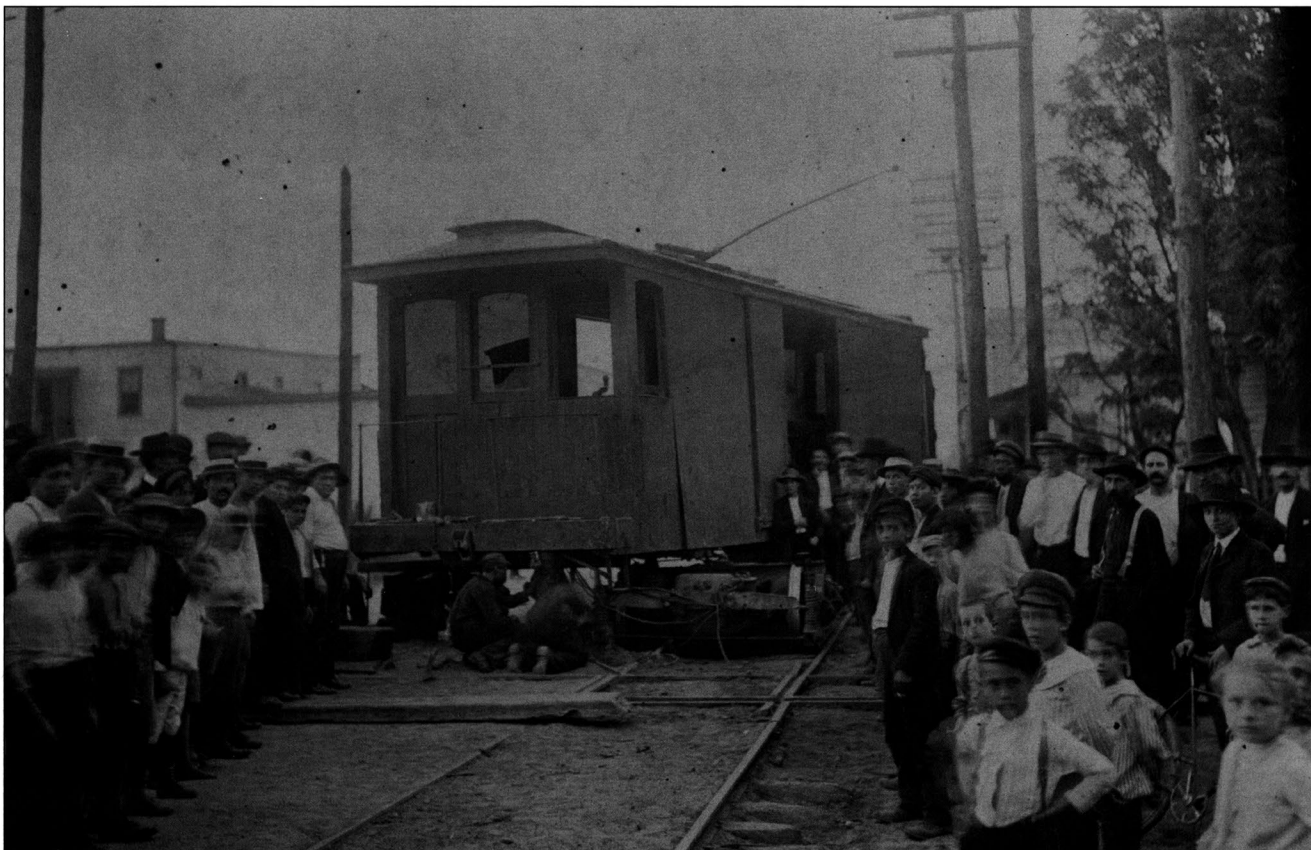
demographic patterns of Tampa's soaring and diverse population. Problems arose, companies formed and dissolved, and competition was fierce. Consumer Electric's Ybor City line proved the most disruptive in its tactics. With lines running parallel to those of the Tampa Street Railway Company, a rate war was instigated by Consumer Electric, which dropped streetcar fares on the Ybor lines to two cents. Unable to compete with the strong financial backing of Consumer Electric, Tampa Street Railway Company declared bankruptcy and was purchased by Consumer Electric in 1894. Although Consumer Electric itself went into receivership in 1899, Peter O. Knight reorganized the firm, this time as Tampa Electric Company (TECO).<sup>12</sup> Later, in 1907, the Tampa & Sulphur Springs Traction Company entered the competition, first forming a line to Sulphur Springs to promote the area as a tourist spot and soon establishing lines across Tampa. By 1911, Sulphur Springs Traction Company had declared bankruptcy and Tampa Electric picked up the company's lines in 1913.<sup>13</sup> TECO then owned all of the streetcars and lines, and became

the sole provider for both electricity and public transportation in the Tampa area.<sup>14</sup> Trolley use would reach its peak in the 1920s and fluctuate thereafter, hitting a spiraling after World War II.

Peter O. Knight, was and is considered a monument to the trolley's legacy. A man of many talents and responsibilities, Knight served as legal counsel for Tampa Electric Company, as its vice president, and then as its president from 1924 to 1946. He was also the lawyer for the Florida Central and Peninsula Railroad (FC&P), the Seaboard Air Line Railway, and the Tampa Northern Railroad.<sup>15</sup> Knight organized or sponsored an impressive and diverse array of companies including the Ybor City Land & Improvement Co., Tampa Phosphate Co., Tribune Publishing Co., Florida Brewing Co., Tampa Shipbuilding & Engineering Co., Exchange National Bank of Tampa, and the Tampa Gas Company.<sup>16</sup> Needless to say, his interests were stretched thin and they sometimes conflicted, but most locals agreed that his influence in Tampa went far and wide, ranging from politics and promotion to industry and public utilities.

Decades later, following the last day of streetcar service in Tampa, the *Tampa Daily Times* extolled Knight as "one of the city's greatest and best-loved builders." Despite his role as an early advocate and organizer of the trolley system and a former president, with a twenty-year tenure, of Tampa Electric Company, Knight met the streetcar's end with surprising silence. The *Tampa Daily Times* described Knight's reticence to respond to the end of an era: "Like the older motormen, some with as much as thirty years' experience on the streetcars, who stopped by the [streetcar barn that day] to say goodbye, the small, white-haired man had little to say. He sent word that he had no formal statement to make on the abandonment of the trolley."<sup>17</sup> Having given up the Tampa Electric presidency the previous year due to illness, Knight died in 1946, a few months after the death of the trolleys in Tampa. He had once told friends, "I have been highly privileged to have lived in a Golden Era. I lived to see Tampa and Florida grow to tremendous proportions, undreamed of before. I am sure they will grow in the same way in the future."<sup>18</sup>

Tampa's change-over to bus public transportation came at the end of World War II, a time of incredible transformation,



Crowd gathered at streetcar accident on Tampa Street (3500 block), 1914. (Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

with those in power geared towards the growth of Tampa and their own financial success. Political scientist Robert Kerstein describes the period: “the governing coalitions were generally narrowly based, including white business and professional interests and politicians who constituted a growth-oriented, cohesive regime and gained electoral support from much of the white middle class, while excluding African-American concerns and, more generally, those of the lower income population.”<sup>19</sup> Those who depended on the trolley and its populist five-cent fare, particularly those in lower income brackets, now relied on Tampa Transit Lines, owner of the bus lines.

Controversy had dogged Tampa Electric Company, which Knight founded in 1899. During the late 1930s, the city formed the Tampa Utility Board (this responsibility was eventually transferred to the state under the Florida Railroad Commission, later renamed the Florida Railroad and Public Utilities Commission) to regulate utility rates, a major point of contention dating back to the turn of the century. A protracted legal battle finally ended in 1941 with the Flori-

da Supreme Court upholding the Tampa Board’s decision to force Tampa Electric to lower rates by thirty percent. In 1943, a judge ordered the company to refund overcharges to customers.<sup>20</sup> Some of these excess funds had subsidized the trolley’s operation, and now made the system a liability.<sup>21</sup> Later, in 1945, an attempt to make Tampa Electric a publicly-owned company failed, but only after considerable debate and powerful political influences tugging at either side of the issue.<sup>22</sup> Through it all, TECO remained a formidable force. The decision to replace the trolleys with buses and to remove TECO from the transportation industry eliminated some facets of the empire and assuaged a few critics. Ultimately, however, the change did little more than usher in a new era of complicity between TECO and the automotive industry. Some observers suggested the converse: that complicity with carmakers ushered in a new era of transportation.

Clearly, by 1946, the streetcar system was a misplaced cog in Tampa Electric’s corporate wheel. In 1945, the company derived its greatest source of income from the



sale of light and power. Street railway revenues dropped by over \$60,000 and usage had decreased by over a million passengers by 1944, but the electric company continued to grow reporting an increase of 3199 customers from 1944 to 1945, and another 1117 customers in the first months of 1946.<sup>23</sup> To continue operation of the trolley, TECO claimed that it would have to invest \$2,700,000 in new cars and equipment. "Except during [World War II], the streetcars [had] been operating at a loss for more than ten years."<sup>24</sup> The city grew and the demand for electricity increased, yet fewer rode the rails. Some felt the streetcars were too old and unreliable, and TECO neglected to build new routes to reach the city's outermost suburbs.<sup>25</sup> Buses took the place of trolleys in the distant suburbs; these could easily reach those areas without the expense of laying new rail.

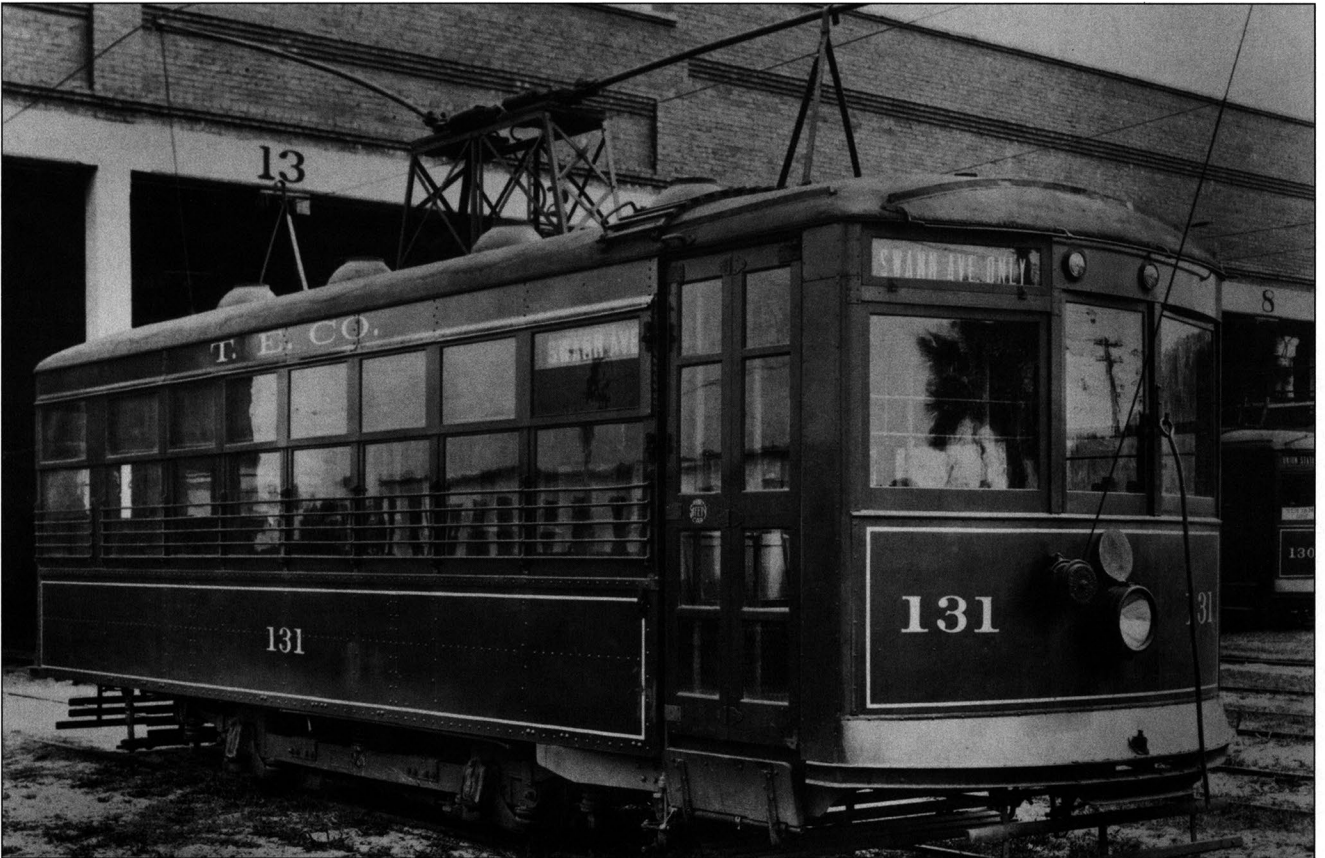
Tampa Transit Lines first entered the scene in 1940 on a small scale in collaboration with the Jacksonville Transit Company. "Jacksonville had buses; they had gotten rid of their streetcars. It was the trend—it was Tampa's turn." A.B."Tony" Grandoff spoke these words decades after he first leased four small buses on a mileage basis, operating on a route stretching through downtown from Jackson Heights and Palma Ceia. Tampa Transit Lines culled its drivers from Grandoff's other business venture, Economy Cab. Grandoff promptly wanted to expand, but Tampa Electric effectively lobbied to block the permits to do so. Grandoff remembers, "With Tampa Electric's clout, I was turned down when I applied for the Florida Avenue permit. We already had the buses for the run in Tampa, so I ran an ad in the Tribune about the turn-down of the application and asked the citizens of Florida Avenue to accept a free bus ride to City Hall during the next City Council meet[ing.] They flooded the Council Chambers, but to no avail; we were turned down again." However, Grandoff's following did not let him down, increasing their numbers at the following meeting where he finally received his first permit. He ran the company until September 1941 when he was bought out by a Chicago-based operation, National City Lines, that ran the system under its trade name Tampa Transit Lines for the next thirty years, wielding considerable political "clout."<sup>26</sup> Although the company had no "visible connection" to

General Motors, the director of operations came from a GM subsidiary, Yellow Coach, and members of its Board of Directors hailed from Greyhound, which was founded and controlled by General Motors. In fact, Greyhound provided the funding to start National City Lines. By 1946, the company controlled public transportation in eighty-three cities. Investigated for antitrust violation by the U.S. Department of Justice for twenty-five years, General Motors added another dimension to controversy over the shift from trolleys to buses.<sup>27</sup>

The buses won the transportation war in Tampa, as they did in most cities across the country. Since 1940, the electric company in Tampa had been trying to sell the streetcar lines, and on April 24, 1946, after months of meetings and proposals, the official announcement was made. Both Tampa Transit Lines and Tampa Electric "stated that negotiations in process for the last two years have been closed between [both companies], whereby streetcars will discontinue operations on [August 1] and buses will begin giving complete service to all areas now served by both companies." The announcement sparked months of fervent debate colored with political intimidation and coercion. Signed by both F. J. Gannon, president of TECO, and Robert H. Farrell, of Tampa Transit, the agreement still needed the approval of the Florida Railroad Commission, the City of Tampa, and other government authorities. The companies agreed that the trolleys would continue to operate until the August 1 date settled upon, and Tampa Transit paid \$85,000 for the cars to be stored in Tampa Electric's car barns until eventually sold to foreign markets. Farrell made only vague references to job security and transferable seniority, and, when asked about the five-cent fare, he replied simply that his company would "give it a fair try."<sup>28</sup> Although the news of the deal surprised no one, consumers feared price hikes and lost or forgotten routes once the tracks vanished. Tensions mounted between bus drivers and streetcar motormen, both represented by the same union. Many locals simply mourned the loss of the romance of the trolley and the memories it evoked.

Customers remembered their rides on the streetcars with great fondness. It was the "main source of transportation," recalled one man, years later. Recalling his





Swann Avenue T. E. CO. streetcar No. 131, in front of 7th Avenue car barn, 1919. (Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

days riding the streetcars as “a joy,” Bob Martinez, the former mayor of Tampa and former governor of Florida, added that they were “safe and reliable transportation. Most people lived within reasonable walking distance of a streetcar line. They were built to follow the cigar factories and other job markets. It caused businesses to locate along with them.”<sup>29</sup> Before World War II, people walked or rode the trolley. Most began riding the streetcar alone as a teenager. It represented independence, much like the automobiles of later years. Perhaps more importantly, the neighborhood lines also supported the concept of community. Many of the open-air cars were a source of neighborhood gossip, virtually showcasing the working and the jobless, who sat with whom, and who came home later than they should have.<sup>30</sup> Typically for neighborhood fixtures, trolleys often fell victim to school-boy pranks. Artist Ferdie Pacheco recalled in his memoir *Ybor City Chronicles* that greasing the trolley tracks rendered the car a “stationary target.” “We would take a small brown paper bag, fill it with loose grey

Tampa sand, mix in Tampa sandspurs, tie the top, and fling it with all our might at the four parallel black iron railings of the streetcar. The bags would break, the sand would spill all over the passengers, and we would run through the neighborhood back alleys to our secret hiding place.”<sup>31</sup> Trolleys carried people to the amusement park in Sulphur Springs, the Oriental pavilion at Ballast Point, and the recreation area at Palmetto Beach. For many Tampan, their best memories included the streetcars.

Memories of the streetcars were not limited to the reveries of passengers or recollections of adolescent pranksters. Former employees also expressed feelings of loss at the streetcars’ demise. E. G. Perez, a transportation inspector for Tampa Electric, worked for the company thirty-three years, starting at age twenty-two. He said, “I like to see Tampa progress, but I hate to see streetcars go. After all, I have been working with them during the best part of my life.” W.H. Brown, a streetcar operator starting in 1915, said, “I’ll feel lonesome without streetcars.” Other workers articulated sim-

ilar sentiments, but future employment remained the dominant concern for most. "Progress" now seemed irrevocably bound to the new bus system.<sup>32</sup>

Just prior to the announcement of the sale, the streetcar drivers had finally received a ten-percent pay increase. The increase brought them to the "same top rate, eighty-eight cents an hour, as the Tampa Transit Lines bus drivers."<sup>33</sup> The decision came a week after the bus drivers had received their eight-cent raise, and two days before the official announcement of the abandonment.<sup>34</sup> All the operators initially belonged to the same union, the Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America under the American Federation of Labor (AFL). A provision in the agreement between TECO and Tampa Transit stipulated that the bus company would employ as many of the motormen as qualified for that position, in addition to any others the company could "reasonably make use of."<sup>35</sup>

This ambiguous promise failed to ease the worries of men without pensions, and ignored the issue of recognizing the employees' established seniority. Some men had driven the streetcars for decades, up to thirty years. Many of these "old-timers" doubted they would be hired on by the bus line, agonizing over their mortgages and other expenses. Gannon, the president of TECO, called these men "victims of obsolescence." The electric company had no pension plan but, as their deadline approached and several months had already passed, the company tried to work out a plan of relief for those men deemed unqualified by the bus lines. Gannon commented, "We didn't want to promise anything until after we found out how many would be without work after the streetcars are abandoned, because we thought some might be reluctant to apply for bus jobs if they knew they would get a pension from us."<sup>36</sup> He also revealed his attempts on three occasions to sell the streetcar company to the union for one dollar, and further insisted that the workers knew for years about the company's intention to sell the system. The president of the union, G. A. Fox, maintained that the union, like the company, would not have been able to sustain the trolley system.<sup>37</sup> Seniority remained a poignant yet unanswered question.

A schism over seniority rights grew be-

tween the bus drivers and the streetcar operators in the union. Drivers from both companies wished to maintain their current status. Older streetcar operators, whose seniority far surpassed those of bus drivers, threatened the status of the Tampa Transit employees when they transferred to the company. Amidst nationwide railroad strikes, Tampa's transportation woes reached a fevered pitch. On May 30 – two days before the expiration of the unions contract with Tampa Transit – members called a vote to strike in demand for seniority. Only a "handful of bus drivers" attended. While the streetcar operators voted to strike if Tampa Transit failed to meet their demands, bus drivers looked for new representation. A. F. Steele, special representative of Amalgamated Association of Street Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America AFL, said, "I understand that the bus drivers have joined the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (BRT), which has promised them that the streetcar drivers would get no seniority rights." Steele and a group of the streetcar operators organized a picket line in front of the bus station that effectively blocked off both the streetcar and the bus lines. Even as the union began to splinter, Steele remained confident that bus drivers, out of a sense of union solidarity, would not break the picket line.<sup>38</sup> A representative from the U. S. Conciliation Service arrived to begin negotiations between Tampa Transit and the streetcar workers' union, easing tensions and delaying the possibility of a strike.<sup>39</sup>

However, the employment status of the streetcar workers complicated matters. Not yet Tampa Transit employees, the operators feared a strike might diminish their chances in an increasingly competitive qualification process to become bus drivers.<sup>40</sup> On July 20, Raymond Sheldon, state senator and attorney for the streetcar workers' union, filed a petition with the Florida Railroad Commission opposing abandonment of the railway system, and claiming that Tampa Transit had not acted in good faith according to their original agreement to hire the trolley operators. Because abandonment of the street car system under present provisions, would leave some TECO employees in "a worse position of employment or rights," [Sheldon] contended, the public interest would be damaged, and he reminded Commissioners that it was part of



Streetcar, automobile, and pedestrian traffic on Franklin Street (600-700 block), looking northeast, 1925. (Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

their duty to see that public interest [was] protected.”<sup>41</sup> Witnesses testified that they considered the hiring procedures unfair. However, the commission remained skeptical of their complaints.

Ultimately, all but one of the Tampa Transit bus drivers quit the streetcar union and joined the BRT.<sup>42</sup> Tampa Transit hired seventy-five of the over one hundred streetcar drivers, bringing to 185 the total number of bus drivers. C. J. Helbing, Tampa Transit Manager, commented, “Thirty-one TECO employees who applied for bus jobs failed to qualify for physical reasons, but some will be hired after their ailments have been corrected. A few were rejected because they did not know how to drive automobiles. The age limit was waived for streetcar motormen, but they were given the same training course as any other applicants.”<sup>43</sup> In a showing of postwar gender equality, four women, two of whom transferred with the streetcar operators, were hired as bus drivers.<sup>44</sup> By August 3, the last day of scheduled streetcar service in Tampa, the seniority issue remained unresolved, but no strike

was on the horizon.

While labor struggled with their bosses, the bosses proceeded to ready the city for the transition and the city planned for the future. Immediately following the announcement of the abandonment, Tampa Transit petitioned to end free transfers on its bus lines. Already sensing the end of competition, the application read, in part, “Privilege is serving no useful purpose: is expensive for petitioners to maintain; produces much daily confusion and overcrowding of the buses in a manner detrimental to their orderly operating and that discontinuance will not only foster operating economies but will permit the petitioned to furnish fast and more satisfactory service to bus riders in the City of Tampa.”<sup>45</sup> Hillsborough legislator Sheldon again rallied to the cause, insisting that the Tampa Utility Board fix the rates. However, this time Sheldon used his support of rate reductions as part of his reelection campaign; his perceived pandering brought him into the crosshairs of election-year crossfire. Frank R. Crom accused the senator of supporting





Franklin Street, looking south at Zack Street, showing streetcar, automobile and pedestrian traffic, 1935. (Courtesy Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Libraries, Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection.)

special interests and ignoring the legislative control over transportation rates until after Tampa Electric sold its streetcars. Other critics insisted that the power to govern transportation lie in the hands of city representatives and the state remain out of the matter. "The State Senate has no control over buses, but if it does I will fight for five-cent fares and free transfers, too. The power lies with your own City Representative," claimed Hugh L. McArthur, another political opponent of Sheldon.<sup>46</sup> The Utility Committee of the Board of Representatives eventually approved the ban on free transfers, and Tampa Transit expected a three to four percent increase in revenue. The company also made plans to spend \$800,000 on new bus services, including sixty-five new buses, to take on their new routes. To keep the buses running smoothly, Tampa Electric

pledged to tear up the bumpy railway tracks. "Gleefully, Mayor Hixon announced that the city soon will undertake its most extensive street repair program in history as the Tampa Electric Co. carries out its obligation to rip up miles of street car rails and replace the nine-foot strip in the middle of the streets with smooth pavement."<sup>47</sup> By May of 1953, the last of the tracks finally disappeared in a massive project to remove all traces of the streetcar from Tampa.<sup>48</sup> On July 31, TECO's last hurdle was cleared when the Florida Railroad Commission granted its request to "abandon and discontinue" the railway service.

With the bus companies moving ahead, city leaders planned for a smooth transition from the old trolley system to the new bus system. Parking measures that aimed to provide restrictions and assign reserved



spaces for the buses were discussed. Officials analyzing traffic surveys publicly gushed at the possibilities of "super-roads." Editorials delighted in the decision to end the trolley's long run in favor of the buses, claiming that public transportation had long been "inadequate and inconvenient" and had supported a flourishing taxi cab industry.<sup>49</sup> The *Tampa Morning Tribune* ran a week-long series acquainting readers with Tampa Transit's new bus lines, which now covered "113 miles of city and adjacent suburban thoroughfares" and would travel 92,313 miles weekly.<sup>50</sup>

But did the citizens of Tampa want buses? On the last day of the streetcar's run, Senator Sheldon filed a reply to the Florida Railroad Commission, "pointing out that no evidence [had] been offered, other than by officials of Tampa Transit and TECO, to show that the public favored the elimination of the streetcars." Sheldon's statement also claimed that seating capacity declined by 1,580 seats in the transition.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, during the morning rush of the first day of operations, the buses filled to overflowing, resulting in the confusion and frustration predicted by opponents of the new system. Yet, the customers seemed impressed by the speed, while City Traffic Director, Captain Hamm, foresaw a lessening in traffic problems with the coming of the buses.<sup>52</sup> All in all, there was little apparent reason to protest. No one wanted to take on the responsibility of operating the streetcars any longer, the mayor delighted in the removal of the tracks, the city was growing and spilling into the countryside, and people needed a reliable way from home to work. Although some workers were left behind, Tampa Transit employed a majority of the former streetcar workers. Dr. Gary Mormino writes that the streetcars were "victims of neglected maintenance, postwar affluence, and collusion between Detroit automakers and utility companies." Many felt this was simply progress. Moreover, Americans, recovering from the sacrifices of depression and war, wanted cars.

With all these changes in Tampa transportation, one thing remained constant: the segregation of the transportation lines.<sup>53</sup> In 1923, all cars operated by Tampa Electric were equipped "with Bennett Adjustable Race Separation Signs," implementing a policy that all blacks must sit behind the sign and all whites in front. Up until that

point the trolleys filled up from the back and front with blacks and whites respectively. The State Railway Commission insisted upon the signs in accordance with state law. Interestingly, in an ad issued by Tampa Electric, Manager T. J. Hanlon, Jr. distanced the company from the decision by blaming it on the complaints of "one, Scott Leslie."<sup>54</sup> Dependent on the patronage of all races, particularly in the racially diverse community of Ybor City, Tampa Electric practiced caution in its observance of state segregation laws. In 1904, the company removed its race separation signs after a series of disturbances and a "delegation of colored citizens urged that the regulation be withdrawn."<sup>55</sup> One such disturbance occurred when a white man, Theodore Kennedy, complained to a black woman about where she was seated. The woman replied with what the *Tampa Morning Tribune* called a "torrent of abuse." According to the report, the woman told Kennedy that "she was as good as he was" and "that the company gave her as much right on the cars as the 'white trash' and that she wouldn't allow any 'cow-faced cracker' to throw off on her." The incident culminated in Kennedy striking the woman and both being arrested, although Kennedy bore the burden of the larger fine.<sup>56</sup> While the removal of the signs marked a victory for Civil Rights before the term was coined, the even greater successes of Jim Crow laws and disenfranchisement proved effective in securing public and corporate policies on segregation. The tide changed in the 1940s and 50s as federal rulings began to chip away at Jim Crow laws, but Florida remained one of the last states relinquish these remnants of the "peculiar institution" of slavery.

Overall, the excitement of transportation progress veiled lurking conspiracies, forgotten streetcar workers, and the passing of a social institution. At 2:30 a.m. on August 3, 1946, the last of the 168 streetcars that had traveled 9,000 miles a day over 53 miles of track came to a halt and was stored in the trolley barn, along with others, along Hillsborough River in Tampa Heights.<sup>57</sup> Tampa Transit stripped the cars and sent most of the hardware to South America. The gutted shells were divided and sent in different directions. Some were simply tossed in scrap yards, some were torched, others became chicken coops or even apartments, and six went to Pensacola to become

a Christian camp.<sup>58</sup>

Fading into history, the cars resurfaced in 2002 in what would become a divisive move by the city to encourage tourism through revival of the streetcars. A single line once again connected Ybor City to downtown Tampa. Instead of bringing workers to and from work and home, the new trolley lines connected a festive entertainment, arts, and shopping district via a refurbished channel district to a struggling downtown area (still awaiting its commercial and cultural facelift.) Neither a necessity nor a regular option for most Tampan, the \$53 million project sparked debates over pragmatism versus romance. Romance won with the indefatigable industry and lobbying by the Tampa & Ybor Street Railway Society. The Society, founded in 1984, was backed at various times by influential politicians such as former mayors Bob Martinez and Dick Greco, and relied on the fundraising support of local artist Ferdie Pacheco.<sup>59</sup> While the city laid trolley tracks through Ybor City for the second time in its history,

low-cost public housing was torn down a few blocks away. This was replaced by facilities that house a significantly smaller number of people, displacing the poor. Funding for more housing and social services remains relatively low. Not without continued debate, the city embraced the revitalized streetcar and the heritage tourism it plays to — both requiring large-scale funding support from municipal sources.

From innovative technology to inconvenient relic to romantic memory to restored artifact, the streetcar either captained growth or anchored the city to its past. The growth of Tampa (and most cities) drives its decisions from era to era. Tampa's ventures into tourism and a general re-evaluation of its image have intensified and rekindled interest in the city's past, and the streetcar embodies the link between that past and the city's future. Whether a product of the self-interested dreams of commercial developers or a genuine reminder of local history, the trolley now guides Tampan into an era of rediscovery.

*“South Florida’s Pioneer Paper House”*



PAPER, PAPER BAGS AND TWINE, WOODENWARE,  
GALVANIZED WARE AND PAPER SPECIALTIES

*Founded 1911*

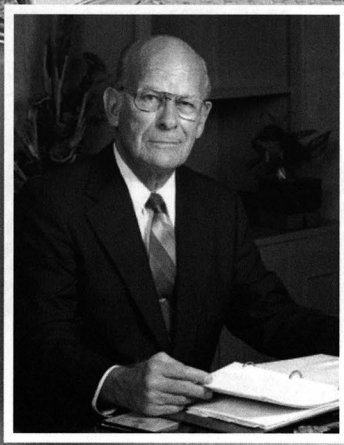
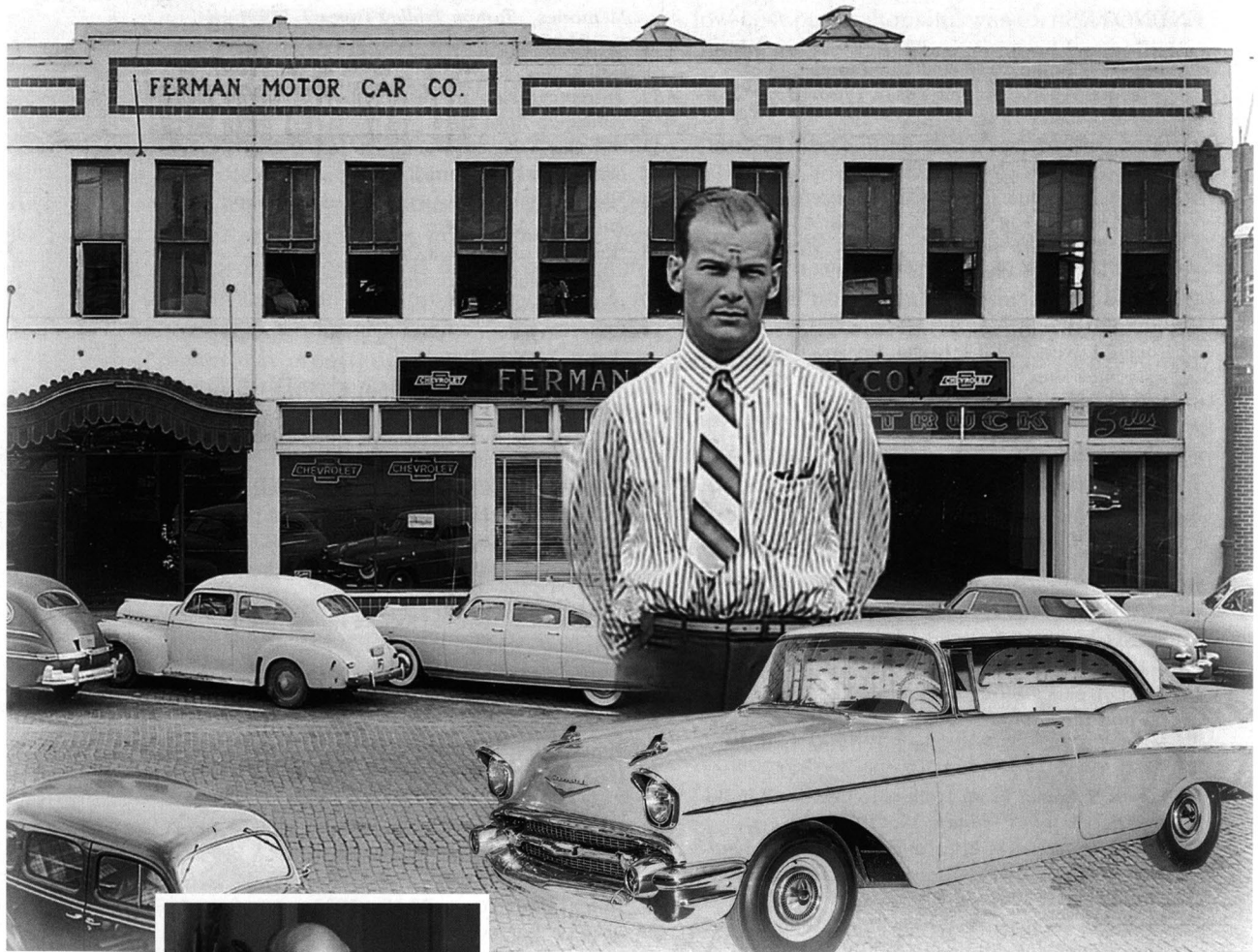
*“Four generations of family ownership - three presently active”*

*5101 East Hanna, Tampa*

*(813) 621-3091 • FAX (813) 623-1380*

## ENDNOTES

1. Robert Lehman, "Streetcars in Tampa and St. Petersburg: A Photographic Essay," *Tampa Bay History* 19 (1997): 37.
2. Kurt Loft, "Tampa's Colorful Streetcar History," *Tampa Tribune*, 18 October 2002.
3. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998.
4. Leland Hawes, "Streetcars Stopped 50 Years Ago," *Tampa Tribune*, 4 August, 1996.
5. Donald J. Ivey, "John T. Leslie: Tampa's Pioneer Renaissance Man," *Sunland Tribune* 21 (1995): 15.
6. Lehman, 37.
7. Ibid.
8. Michael Canning, "Heiress gave lights, trolley line," *St. Petersburg Times*, 30 August 2002.
9. Charles A. Brown, "Bayshore Boulevard: A Brief Look at its Historic Past," *Sunland Tribune* 20, (1994): 51.
10. Canning.
11. Arsenio M. Sanchez, "Tampa's Early Lighting and Transportation," *Sunland Tribune* 17, (1991): 31.
12. Lehman, 38.
13. Karl Grismer, *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida*. St. Petersburg: The St. Petersburg Printing Company, 1950, 199.
14. Robert E. Sims, "From Trolleys to Buses and In Between," *Sunland Tribune* 14, (1988): 16.
15. Robert Kerstein, *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001, 32.
16. Nancy L. Rachels, "Peter O. Knight: Pioneer and Spokesman for Florida," *Sunland Tribune* 5, (1979): 5.
17. "Streetcars Monument to Peter O. Knight," *Tampa Daily Times*, 3 August 1946.
18. "Death Takes P. O. Knight at Home Here," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 27 November 1946.
19. Kerstein, 120.
20. Ibid, 94.
21. Sam Corson, "TECO Subsidized the Ride in the Heyday of Streetcars," *St. Petersburg Times*, 1 July 2001.
22. Ibid, 101.
23. "Teco's Net Income Less Than In 1944," *Tampa Daily Times*, 15 May 1946. Complete statistics quoted in the article: "Revenue from the street railway department was \$1,052,100, a decrease of \$63,500 from 1944. Streetcars carried 21,282,252 passengers excluding transfers, 1,265,974 fewer than 1944." However, the company "had 59,683 electric customers at the end of 1945, a gain of 3,199 over 1944, and reported an additional 1,177 customer during the first three months of 1946
24. "Loss Involved In Streetcar System Told," *Tampa Daily Times*, 19 July 1946.
25. Sims, 24.
26. Ibid, 19.
27. Jim Klein and Martha Olsen, "Taken for a Ride," New Day Films, PBS, August 1996.
28. "Railways to End Half Century of Service to City," *Tampa Daily Times*, 24 April 1946.
29. Cornan.
30. Jennifer Paul, "Oral History Project Yields Many Memories," *Tampa Trolley Times* 7, (1996): 4
31. Ferdie Pacheco, *Ybor City Chronicles: A Memoir*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997, 94.
32. "Streetcar Men to Miss Trolleys," *Tampa Daily Times*, 25 April 1946.
33. "Trolley Operators Granted 10% Raise," *Tampa Daily Times*, 22 April 1946.
34. "Bus Drivers Get 8-Cent Increase," *Tampa Daily Times*, 13 April 1946.
35. "Railways to End Half Century of Service."
36. "Tampa Electric Co. Hearing Concludes," *Tampa Daily Times*, 20 July 1946.
37. "Teco President Replies to Union," *Tampa Daily Times*, 14 May 1946.
38. "Strike Voted By Street Car Workers Here," *Tampa Daily Times*, 31 May 1946.
39. "Conciliator Here in Transit Row," *Tampa Daily Times*, 8 June 1946.
40. "Streetcar Union Delays Action," *Tampa Daily Times*, 1 June 1946.
41. "Tampa Electric Co. Hearing Concludes."
42. "Bus Drivers Quit Street Car Union," *Tampa Daily Times*, 15 July 1946.
43. "75 Streetcar Men To Operate Buses," *Tampa Daily Times*, 29 July 1946.
44. "Four Strong Women Ready to Drive Buses," *Tampa Daily Times*, 19 July 1946.
45. "Buses Ask to Stop Free Transfers," *Tampa Daily Times*, 29 April 1946.
46. Hampton Dunn, "Bus Fare Stand of Sheldon Rapped," *Tampa Daily Times*, 1 May 1946.
47. "Electric Co. Will Rip Up Miles of Rails," *Tampa Daily Times*, 30 July 1946.
48. "TECO Removing Last of Trolley Tracks Here," *Tampa Daily Times*, 23 May 1953.
49. David E. Smiley, "First Order of Business for Bus Lines is Service," *Tampa Daily Times*, 1 August 1946.
50. "Street Cars to Quit Here Next Sunday," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 29 July 1946.
51. "Motormen to Become New Drivers," *Tampa Daily Times*, 3 August 1946.
52. "Riders Find Smooth Switchover to Buses," *Tampa Daily Times*, 5 August 1946.
53. Gary Mormino, "The Summer of '46," *Sunland Tribune* 22, (1996): 82.
54. "To Streetcar Patrons," *Tampa Morning Tribune*, 12 June 1923.
55. "Color Line Lifted," *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 June 1904.
56. Canter Brown, Jr. and Larry Eugene Rivers, "Negroes are there to stay': Development of Tampa's African-American Community, 1891-1916," *Sunland Tribune* 22, 2003, 68.
57. Cornan.
58. Babita Persaud, "Rolling Back to the Future," *Tampa Tribune*, 19 October 2002.
59. Brady Dennis, "Station Clears Road for More Trolleys," *St. Petersburg Times*, 31 January



James Laurens Ferman, Sr.  
1915-2003

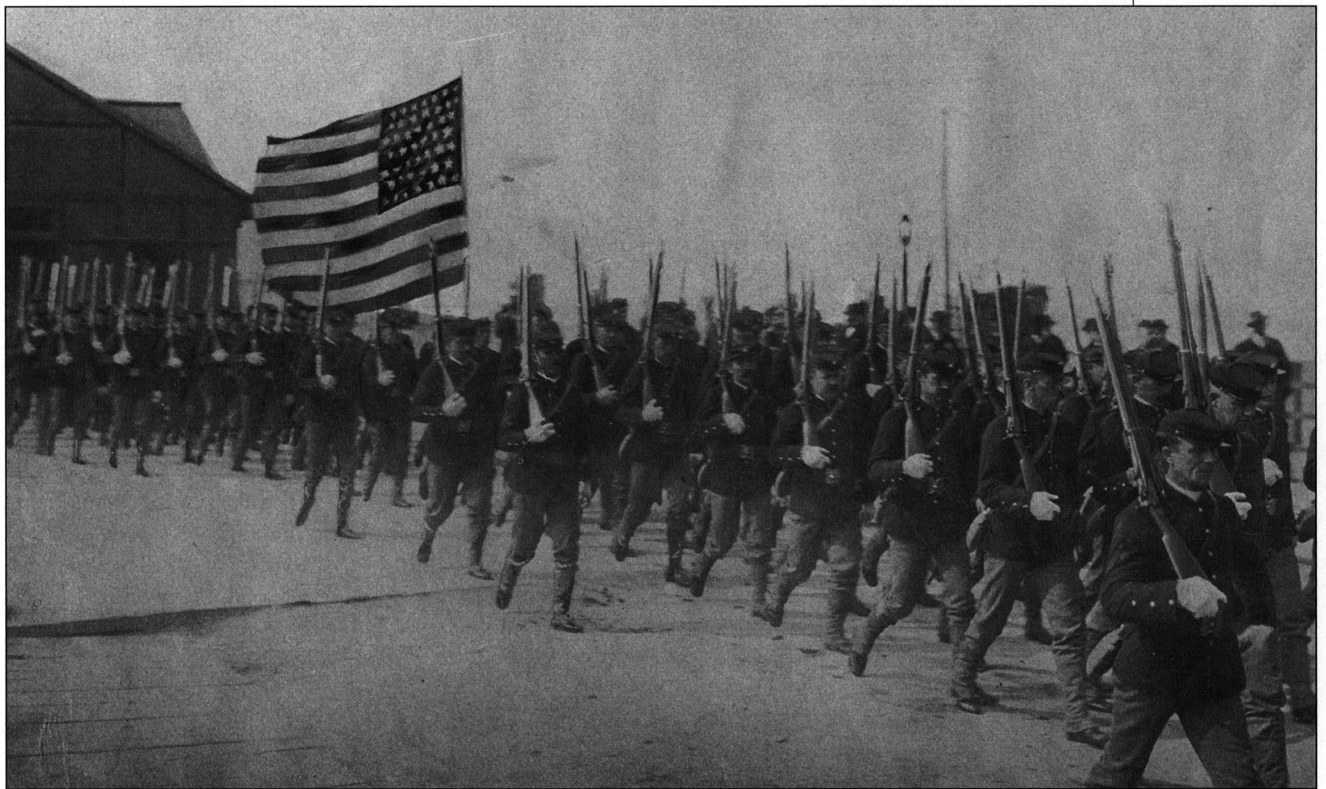


Service, Selection And Value Since 1895.

Acura • BMW • Chevrolet • Chrysler • Harley-Davidson  
Jeep • Mazda • MINI • Nissan • Oldsmobile • Suzuki • Volvo



# Who Loaded What, When, and Where: Capt. James McKay and the Spanish-American War



Arrival of a battalion at Tampa in 1898. (Courtesy of the Henry B. Plant Museum Photographic Collection.)

Joe Knetsch, Ph.D.  
Pamela K. Gibson

**T**he usual story of the Tampa-based preparations for the Spanish-American War is one of confusion, incompetence and near chaos on the waterfront. Testimony of many high-ranking and important officers and volunteers noted the general lack of organization in the loading of the transport fleet prior to the invasion of Cuba. Most of the regular officers also noted the lack of transports, the fact that only one rail line went to the Port of Tampa, and that the railroad cars were mostly unlabeled and had to be opened individually to discover their contents. Sto-

ries of rotten beef, spoiled hardtack, and railroad cars sitting for weeks on sidings with perishable foodstuffs inside: all these made spectacular headlines in many newspapers. The infamous “embalmed beef” scandal played well in the “Yellow Journalism” of the day. Public outcry demanded that all of these horrific events had to be investigated to provide an answer to the question: How can they be prevented from ever happening again? The real question is, did they ever happen at all? And, whether they happened or were invented, who was to blame?

In one of the more startling chapters in the history of the “Splendid Little War,” an entire army was fitted out in Tampa, Flori-

da and prepared to invade Cuba. Tampa in 1898 was a growing town of just over 14,000 souls with few modern facilities. Its municipal streets were unpaved and mostly covered with Florida's ubiquitous sand. Few buildings were up-to-date; most were run-down unpainted wooden structures. The only spectacular building in the area was Henry Bradley Plant's luxurious Tampa Bay Hotel, opened in 1891 on the banks of the Hillsborough River. The town did have two railroads entering it but only one track went to Port Tampa, nine miles south of the Tampa town center. There, one major quay awaited the military transports of the War; that quay normally accommodated nine ships with ease. In an emergency, Tampa could have handled an army of about 5000, but not one of nearly 30,000, which is approximately what finally showed up for the affair.<sup>1</sup>

Tampa was one of three major points chosen for the gathering of the army. New Orleans and Mobile also played minor roles in the impending war, but Tampa was designated by the joint Army-Navy Strategy Board as the point of debarkation in the original plan for the invasion of Cuba. This plan called for an army of about 6000 men to be shipped to the southern coast of Cuba and to deliver arms, ammunition and other supplies to General Maximo Gomez, the leader of the Cuban forces in the Eastern Provinces. The troops headed to Cuba under this plan were to be a reconnaissance-in-force and not an actual invasion group. On April 29, 1898, General of the Army Nelson Miles chose Brigadier General William Rufus Shafter to assemble this force at Tampa. Shafter was advised to avoid any direct action in Cuba and to "give aid and succor to the insurgents, to render the Spanish forces as much injury as possible, [while] avoiding serious injury to your own command." The men Shafter commanded were all to be regular army, with no volunteers contemplated. But war had been declared on the 25th of April and the pressure on President William McKinley and Congress was intense and argued for the use of a large volunteer force. Admiral George Dewey's surprising victory in Manila changed the battle plans, and what had started out as a diversionary attack now brought on the possibility of greater action and acquisition.<sup>2</sup> The Philippine victory would have major consequences for Tampa.

On April 30, President McKinley and Secretary of War Russell Alger sent a note to General Shafter canceling his reconnaissance-in-force and advising him to continue troop preparations. In Washington, the Army and Navy were debating which strategy was to prevail. The Navy insisted on the blockade and bombardment of Havana and other major positions. By coordinating the Army, the Navy, and the Cuban insurgents, Admiral William T. Sampson and others felt that the Spanish Army in Cuba could be starved into submission. The potential hitch in this plan was the whereabouts and power of the Spanish Navy, led by Admiral Pascual de Cervera. As it turned out, the U.S. Navy strategists over-estimated the power, speed, and ability of the Spaniards. Many of the Spanish fleet's ships were not as well-armed as thought. Some were not even completed vessels and were still under construction when the fleet left the Cape Verde Islands for the theater of engagement. Overall, U.S. intelligence about the fleet was limited and the overseas network of agents very amateurish. The Office of Naval Intelligence was relatively new, understaffed, and saddled with more responsibilities than it could handle at that stage of its development.<sup>3</sup> Added to the intelligence deficit was Admiral Sampson's lack of effective blockading vessels with enough fire-power to effect his plans. Thus the President, Secretary Alger, General Miles, and others sent new orders to Shafter.

In analyzing the force needed to take Cuba, the Army debated the force's size and the site of invasion over and over. Following a report from Shafter that his advance command was ready to move, Alger and Miles instructed him to be ready to move out on May 9, 1898. Shafter's command was to be augmented by the regular forces then at Chickamauga and the Gulf ports. The additional 12,000 to 15,000 men, the strategists reasoned, would be enough to take Mariel and possibly Havana if they acted quickly and decisively. During this same time McKinley issued his famous call for volunteers, which would bring the invasion force to about 70,000. Most of the volunteers were National Guardsmen, with a strong lobby in each state capital. The political pressure to swear in and activate these troops was tremendous, but so were the problems. Many of these troops were already partially trained in Army fashion, but



View of the wharf at Port Tampa during the Spanish-American War. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

most had obsolete weapons. Few had uniforms and most did not seriously train every month. Consequently, the mobilization was slow. With the Spanish Navy still at large in the Atlantic, potentially posing a threat to the North American coastline, the orders to sail were delayed.

A direct assault on a fortress as well-defended as Havana was reckoned to be costly. The timing of the battle plan would also place any possible attack at the beginning of the rainy season, complicating the operation even more. General Nelson Miles strongly urged against such an assault, based upon his experiences in the Civil War and his vast knowledge of military strategy and tactics. Instead, the General advised an attack on the southern coast of Cuba, preferably on the weakly defended eastern end. An offensive launched from this location would be less costly in lives and present the best opportunity to use the Cuban forces to help destroy Spain's hold on the island. The discovery of Admiral Cervera's fleet in the area of Martinique on May 13 allowed the administration a "publicly acceptable excuse for postponing a campaign that the Army was not yet ready to launch."<sup>4</sup>

Between May 9 and 14, Shafter was re-

inforced by about 6000 troops, bringing his command to approximately 12,000 men. A plan was launched to send the majority of this force to Key West, until it was discovered that the drinking water in that island city was running short with just the demands made upon it by the Navy and the civilian population. Water would have to be shipped into that port before any assault could be launched from there. The Key West plan was scratched and the new volunteer troops and other regulars from along the eastern seaboard were sent to Tampa, which by May 25 had over 17,000 men under arms awaiting the word to invade Cuba. The number of troops in Tampa then outnumbered the city's civilian population. The camp at Tampa Heights and the one at the Port of Tampa were already overcrowded. The City of West Tampa opened its arms to the incoming forces until it also had more than it could handle. Troops were transferred to new camps in Lakeland and Jacksonville.<sup>5</sup>

The constantly changing plans, strategy and orders put a heavy strain on Shafter and his command. Additionally, the command also had to assist in preparing and staffing three separate expeditions to Cuba

to deliver guns, ammunition and medical supplies to the Cuban insurgents. Two of these excursions were led by Captain J.H. Dorst of the Fourth Cavalry. The first of his attempts to land supplies and troops met with stiff opposition by the Spanish command at Point Abolitas, about forty miles east of Havana. The commander of the Spanish forces, Colonel Balboesis, was killed in the action, but his men succeeded in driving the United States troops off before they could accomplish their goal. The second expedition was very successful in delivering 7500 rifles, 1,300,000 rounds of ammunition and 20,000 rations to the Cuban forces at Port Banes on the northern coast of Cuba. The last of the three expeditions, under the command of Lieutenant C.P. Johnson, consisted of men of the Tenth Cavalry, the famed Buffalo Soldiers, and 375 armed Cubans. This hugely successful expedition included the troop- and supply-carrying ships *Florida* and *Fanita*, the latter owned by Captain James McKay of Tampa. Landing near Palo Alto, the party met resistance from a Spanish force. The Army took casualties (one dead and nine wounded) in the short but spirited engagement that followed. These shipments and deliveries of arms, ammunitions and supplies were an added burden to Shafter and his staff, but they helped to keep up morale and interest in the impending Cuban invasion.<sup>6</sup>

The United States Army was organized during this war into eight different Corps. Each Corps was approximately 30,000 men divided into three divisions. The divisions were further divided into three brigades and these divided into three regiments. The Corps were composed only of infantry. Cavalry and artillery units were assigned to assist each Corps, but were relatively independent in operation. The Fifth and Seventh Corps called Tampa home at the beginning of the conflict. The Fifth Corps was composed mostly of regular troops augmented by some volunteer units as they arrived in camp. It was the Fifth Corps that received the honor of spearheading the invasion of Cuba.<sup>7</sup>

The biggest obstacle to the invasion of Cuba was the lack of nearly everything. Transports were the first priority for the Army, but it had never before had to build, rent or contract for such a large number of vessels. The U.S. Army had only invaded one other country (Mexico) in its history

and that was in the 1840s. It had no experience with water-borne invasions. The only sea-going transports available to the Army were run-down old coastal vessels, the Navy having taken most of the faster, lighter vessels for use as cruisers.<sup>8</sup> Congress was not helpful. That august body was chronically resistant to any enlargement of the Army during peace-time. Since the Civil War, the Army had been consistently cut in size and was under-funded in almost every department. It had only enough weapons on hand to field a force of 25,000 men, yet in 1898 it was fighting essentially a two-front war in Cuba and the Philippines. The Quartermaster Corps was relatively small at the outbreak of the war and had not ordered enough materials to handle an army of more than 25,000, the approximate size of the effective troops available for service.<sup>9</sup> At the beginning of the War, it should be remembered, the plans did not call for a full-scale invasion, and the Quartermaster's and Commissary's staffs were gearing up for only a small reconnaissance-in-force type of operation. No U.S. military leader had ever led a force larger than a regiment. Most of the activity between the Civil War and the Spanish-American War had been against the western tribes of Native Americans, and these campaigns rarely required more than a regiment. Most of the companies in the regular regiments had not worked together at all. Regimental-scale war games or maneuvers were unheard of until later. All told, the Army was simply not prepared to undergo an operation like the invasion of Cuba. Everything had to be learned from experience and that was going to be a hard teacher.<sup>10</sup>

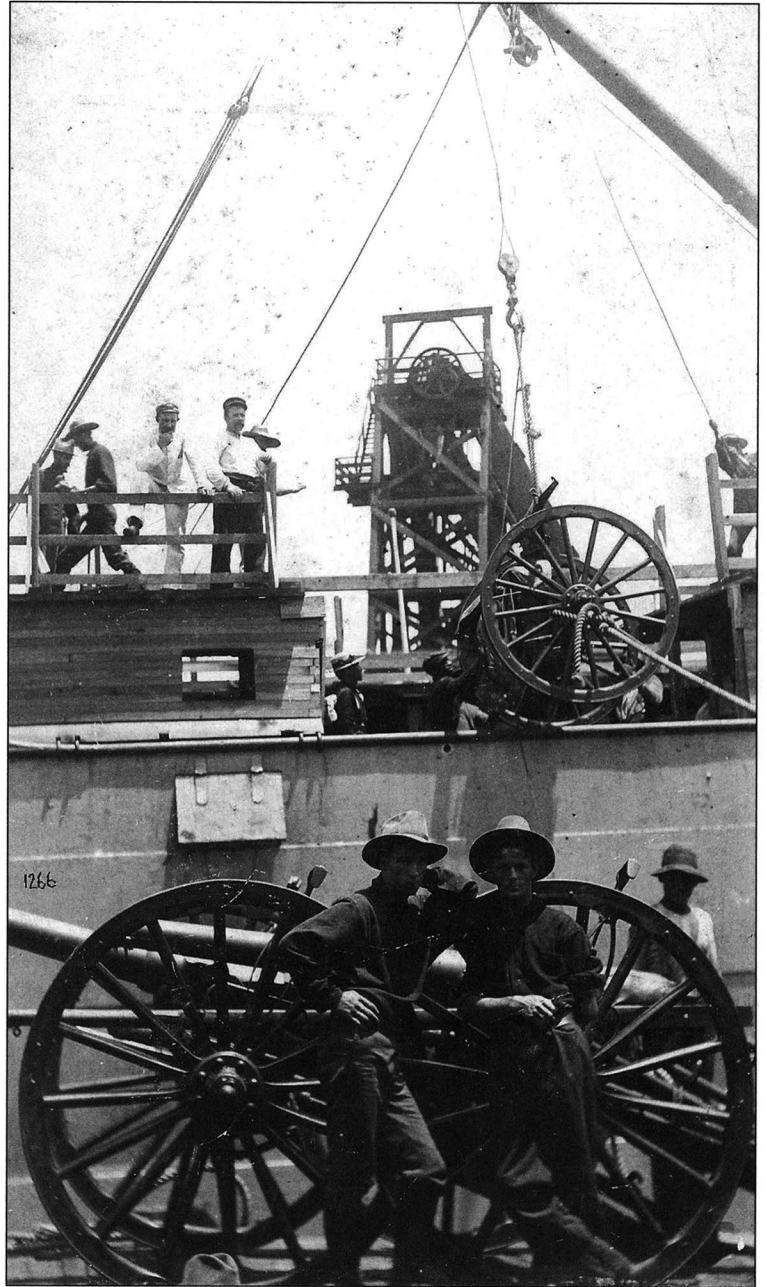
The general lack of military readiness was exemplified by America's coastal defense. Military historian Walter Millis, in his classic *Arms and Men: A Study of American Military History*, made the following observation: "In 1897 the truest symbol of American military policy was still the heavy, immovable and purely defensive sea-coast gun." When the war seemed unavoidable, McKinley asked Congress for additional funding and received in return the "Fifty Million Dollar Bill" to fund the war. The Army, reflecting outmoded thinking and responding to the fears of Congressmen from the coastal states, spent the majority of its allotment on coastal defense. Very little funding went to the Quartermaster's Corps,



the Medical Corps or the Signal Corps.<sup>11</sup> When the Endicott Board met in 1885, it had recommended 2362 gun emplacements and batteries be installed to defend the American coastline. At the outbreak of the Cuba war only 151 had been installed. Congressional under-funding haunted even this well-thought out plan.<sup>12</sup> The coastal defense system may have been the “truest symbol” of United States policy, but it did little to solve the problem of assembling the largest invasion force seen to date by the American public.<sup>13</sup>

At Shafter’s headquarters in Tampa, the biggest problem was getting the transports and loading them efficiently so they could be unloaded in the briefest time possible. An amphibious landing of the size contemplated for Cuba had never before been attempted by the Army, and Shafter had no experienced help on his staff to solve the loading problems. At that juncture, the Quartermaster, Colonel Charles F. Humphrey, discovered the talent needed was close at hand in the person of Captain James M. McKay, Jr. McKay had already been involved in the Cuban revolution and had run both guns and volunteer fighters to the island on the *Fanita*, his fast new ship.<sup>14</sup> The Captain had long familiarity with the Cuban maritime trade. He earned his title of “Captain” by sailing with his father in their beef business in Havana, and as the owner of the family shipping line at his father’s death. In 1886, he threw in his lot with the Plant Steamship Company and captained the Plant System steam packets *Mascotte* and, later, *Olivette*. Both those ships and his own *Fanita* were to play important roles in the invasion and subsequent events. (McKay’s long and distinguished career would later include two terms as a Florida Senator, United States Marshal for the southern district of Florida, two years as Mayor of Tampa, and Postmaster of Tampa in 1914.) McKay’s knowledge of the waters around Tampa Bay and along the Cuban coasts made him a valuable person to the invasion, however it was his intimate knowledge of the loading and unloading of ships that made him indispensable.<sup>15</sup>

Colonel Humphrey was very pleased to have someone of McKay’s experience on hand to assist in the complicated operation. In testimony before the Committee Investigating the Conduct of the War (often called the “Dodge Committee” after its chairman,



Loading an artillery piece onto a transport at Port Tampa. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

General Grenville M. Dodge), Humphrey stated: “He [McKay] was my principal assistant. He came to me by order of the Secretary of War and was a most valuable man. He had been a steamship captain, and a United States marshal more recently.” The Colonel went on to describe his “principal assistant,” in the following terms: “He was an exceedingly level-headed man. At Port Tampa, and subsequently in Cuba, his range of duties with ocean transportation were exceedingly great. He did everything



Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, left, speaks to Captain Lee of the British Army near one of the campsites in and around Tampa during the build-up to the Spanish-American War. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

an exceptionally good man could do in that very responsible position.” Colonel Humphrey also noted it was McKay’s natural disposition to try and accommodate people, and he tried to procure for any officer whatever they requested. Most of the time, Humphrey noted, McKay was miles away from the war command and did much of the supervising of the unloading by himself.<sup>16</sup> This was a tremendous responsibility for a civilian working under a military commander in time of war.

Captain McKay’s biggest problem was the loading of the materials at Port Tampa. To load the materials of war onto thirty-eight transport ships not designed for wartime use meant that each one be fitted out for its new role. Cargo ships had to be made comfortable for the transport of troops and horses. Accommodations had to be fitted for the officers and medical staff. Supplies had to be placed in such an order so as to be convenient for debarkation in Cuba. All of this was made more difficult by

the fact that many of the railroad cars filled with provisions, ammunition, weapons, forage, etc., were unlabeled and the bills-of-lading had not arrived in Tampa to allow them to be sorted out before loading onto the ships. Colonel Humphrey described the resulting problems: “The loading of the transports was at best difficult, owing to the limited wharf facilities and not having on hand full cargoes; it being necessary to bring transports into the canal to be loaded, and often before loading could be completed sent them into the harbor, to be brought back in a future time to complete cargo.”<sup>17</sup> Somehow, space had to be found for 16,154 men and 834 officers, along with the large amount of military stores needed to conduct the campaign.<sup>18</sup> It was miraculous that the entire operation was completed between 2:30 a.m. on June 7, 1898 and 9:00 p.m. on the following day. Given the severe problems with unmarked railroad cars, impatient officers and men, a severe lack of lighters to haul materials to ships at anchor and a lack of trained stevedores on the docks, this was truly a miracle.<sup>19</sup> That this was done with a relatively minimal number of breakdowns in the process is a tribute to Humphrey and McKay.

During the operation, Captain McKay was involved in a number of high-level decisions that profoundly affected the expedition. The original estimate for the number of troops that could be transferred to Cuba in the available ships was given as over 30,000 men and material. McKay, with his expert knowledge of transports, advised Shafter that this number was too high and revised it to accommodate 24,000 men more comfortably. When the loading was in its final stages, McKay, along with General Henry W. Lawton, was assigned the task of adjusting the arrangements by moving troops from one ship to another, in order to give them as much room and freedom of movement as possible. McKay also oversaw the loading of the materials so that the ammunition and rations would be off-loaded first, followed by the forage and medical supplies.<sup>20</sup> For a civilian to undertake such responsibilities demonstrated McKay’s abilities and acumen, as well as the faith others had in him. When General Shafter appeared in front of the Dodge Commission, he specifically noted the service of Captain McKay and declared: “I regard him as a most efficient man; I am not a seafaring



Supplies stacked next to the gangways, awaiting loading onto transports at Port Tampa. (Courtesy of the Tampa Bay History Center Collection.)

man, but when a man goes about everything and makes no back steps, you don't have to have an expert opinion on him." Every essential person involved in the loading operation knew that Captain McKay was in charge. He was obeyed as if he were a ranking officer in the regular service.<sup>21</sup>

This positive picture of the process of loading the troops and materials differs substantially from that offered by two of the more famous critics of the affair, Colonel Leonard Wood and Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt. The "standard" version of the story comes almost directly from Roosevelt's classic, *The Rough Riders*. In this highly colorful — and colored — account, the loading is filled with drama and foreboding, but ends with the happy seizure of the *Yucatan* by the Rough Riders and the fending off of the troops from the Seventy-First New York Volunteers. Of course, the Second United States Regular Infantry are graciously allowed to board their vessel in time for departure. The story also suggests that the procedure was total chaos with no one in charge. Colonel Humphrey, in the account, "might just as well have been asleep, as nobody knew where he was and nobody could find him, and the quay was crammed with some ten thousand men,

most of whom were working at cross purposes." Only after a frantic search did Wood and Roosevelt find, by separate routes, Colonel Humphrey, and get the assurance that the *Yucatan* was their assigned transport.<sup>22</sup> It was after this initial drama that the Rough Riders got to their ship and prepared for their final destiny and future fame.

Few have ever questioned this account by the future President, and nearly every biographer of "T.R." has repeated the story intact, but why not question Roosevelt's version of the event? Historians have long known that the future President was an "unreliable witness" when it came to many aspects of the war in Cuba. From his assertions that he suffered with his troops in the sandy camp at Port Tampa while officers enjoyed the luxury of the Tampa Bay Hotel (where, in fact, Roosevelt stayed for three days with his wife Edith), to his claim that his unit attained the summit of Kettle Hill first (it was as likely that soldiers of the Ninth Cavalry did), Roosevelt's credibility is far from airtight.

One of the key features in Roosevelt's portrait of confusion and chaos at the embarkation point in Tampa was the fact that there were, in the space of forty-eight



hours, nearly 17,000 men and provisions loaded onto the transport fleet and only one rail line feeding the quay. The image was of a mass of disorganized men and horses trying to get onto their various ships. Stacking the vessels three wide in the canal also presented a picture of relative disorganization. However, given the enormity of the task and the efficiency with which it was performed, it is hardly likely that chaos reigned. Roosevelt, it must be remembered, was a Lieutenant Colonel of a regiment; orders may not have reached down that far in the chain of command. Both Humphrey and McKay testified that Shafter had approved a list of units to be placed upon each ship and that almost all reached their assigned destination in fairly good order. Most telling, as far as the accuracy of Roosevelt's account is concerned, is the fact that although reports indicate that everyone knew that McKay was in charge of the loading, "T.R." seemed unaware of that fact. He wrote the Dodge Commission that: "I never saw Captain McKay, and, indeed, never heard of him until I heard of his testimony [to the Commission.]"<sup>23</sup> As famous, energetic and politically astute, as he was, Roosevelt could not have had knowledge of everything, especially since he was relatively far down on the chain of command.

James McKay's own testimony before the Dodge Commission sheds a great deal of light on the activities of this "level-headed" man and, as well, on the activities so criticized by Roosevelt. During the greatest part of the brief war McKay was on active duty as Colonel Humphrey's assistant. He served from May 4 until August 30, 1898 with only ten days away from active duty. The ship captain testified that he was in charge of loading the stores of the commissary, quartermaster and artillery along with mules and wagons. McKay noted that each ship carried no fewer than 100,000 rations aboard and that many had more. This was enough to feed the troops while in transport and for the first few days after landing. The captain also stated that he only found five ships overcrowded in the initial loading and that these were soon relieved, with the surplus troops being sent to less crowded vessels. The Plant System steamer *Olivette* served as a hospital ship for the first part of the invasion. McKay oversaw the loading of 124 wagons for the immediate forces and an additional 60 to 80 for those of General J. C.

Bates. There were enough horses and mules loaded onto the transports to power these wagons. The biggest producer of later criticism was the lack of ambulances, which Shafter had personally ordered left behind, rationalizing that the rough roads of Cuba would not cause anyone wounded to notice the difference between an ambulance and a wagon. The greatest problem for loading all the stores was the lack of space on the railroad line leading to the port. The congestion and confusion of not having properly labeled cars also greatly hampered the loading of the stores.<sup>24</sup>

Captain McKay's testimony about the Rough Riders and the seizing of the *Yucatan* is most interesting. When questioned by General Dodge about the orders allegedly received by these troops, the captain did not hesitate to declare that it was part of their orders to report to that ship. When asked about Colonel Wood's knowledge of the orders he stated: "He must have known it. He marched right aboard." When asked point blank about the Rough Riders seizing the *Yucatan*, McKay replied: "They didn't do anything of the kind." All of the boarding went pretty much as scheduled with little confusion, according to the captain. McKay presented a paper with notations of the troops to board the *Yucatan*. General James A. Beaver of the Pennsylvania Volunteers read this paper aloud: "*Yucatan* designated No. 8, headquarters band and companies C, D, G, and B, Second United States Infantry, First Regiment U. S. Volunteer Cavalry." General Beaver asked McKay if all that was designated before anyone went on board. "Yes sir; that was designated," replied McKay.<sup>25</sup> It was this testimony of Captain McKay, countering Roosevelt's story of the event, that prompted "T.R." to write the Commission.

General William R. Shafter had a good laugh over Roosevelt's seizure story. Upon hearing of the Roosevelt riposte to McKay's statements the gruff old veteran wrote to the Dodge Commission himself. In his letter of December 21, 1898, the General quoted a letter he had received from Major Leon S. Roudiez of the Quartermaster's Corps. Major Roudiez wrote: "I have a distinct recollection of meeting the wild and woolly 'Rough Rider' [Roosevelt] at the foot of the gang plank as he was about to embark on a transport. His men had halted and were in a double column behind him. I did not know



him at the time and, not noticing his rank, I asked for the officer in command ...He stated that he was in command of the regiment temporarily during Colonel Wood's absence." Roudiez's letter continued: "I then informed him that he was assigned to the transport before us and that he could march on board at any time. As we were talking Colonel Wood appeared upon the upper deck of the ship and hailed us. I repeated to Colonel Wood what I had said to Colonel Roosevelt, and went on. The 'Rough Rider' then galloped on board." Roudiez's final comment speaks directly to the discrepancy between Roosevelt's and McKay's version of the boarding. "There are a great many funny things testified to by various parties," he wrote, "who appear before the commission, and I really don't know whether it is worth while to worry about their statements or even pay the slightest attention to them."<sup>26</sup> Given Shafter's views on headline grabbing, the General undoubtedly enjoyed forwarding Roudiez's letter to the Commission.

Some stories, scandals, and conflicted accounts of the War are not as well researched as others. The widely publicized embalmed beef scandal, for example, was tackled by two different government commissions and found to be untrue. That the meat was the victim of being left on a side-track for days on end in the heat of a Florida June is not disputed. The heat did break down some of the chemical components of the beef packing and made some changes to the taste, but the product was not the cause of the illnesses reported. Indeed, more war-time diseases were attributed to the heat, mosquitoes, and dehydration of the troops than to any foodstuffs sent for their meals. General Nelson Miles' charges of bad beef and inedible bread made his testimony sensational, but it did not make it true, as the two investigating commissions discovered.<sup>27</sup> Unsanitary conditions in many camps also added greatly to the suffering of the troops. As in the case of the overcrowding on the ships and the confusion on the docks, much of the controversy was stirred up by those reporting – accurately or inaccurately – on the War, or by those wishing to politically damage the McKinley administration.

The service rendered by Captain James McKay, Jr. in the course of the Spanish-American War was difficult and dangerous. He oversaw the loading and unloading of the

supplies of the Fifth Corps in Tampa and at Daiquiri, and even accompanied some of these supplies to the front. The Captain assisted the Quartermaster for the Fifth Corps and earned that gentleman's unwavering trust. McKay also earned the respect of the commanding general and most of the members of his staff. To load nearly 17,000 officers and men onto 38 transports from a quay serviced by only one railroad line and do it in less than forty-eight hours is a remarkable feat. General Shafter had promised President McKinley that this would be done and Humphrey and McKay made it happen. At the other end of the line, McKay had to oversee the unloading of the stores at Daiquiri while Humphrey was doing similar duty at Siboney. Left alone with such responsibility, Captain McKay made sure of the safety of his vessels first and waited until the pier was refurbished by the Army Corps of Engineers and it was safe to unload. Most of the stores he then unloaded were medical supplies in heavy demand at the front. Testimony by General John Weston shows that McKay did his job well, promptly, and with utmost safety.<sup>28</sup> That nearly everyone in command positions believed Captain James McKay, Jr. did his job efficiently is ample indication of the value of his services. More specific and public commemoration of this gallant service is long over-due. Captain McKay deserves to be recognized for his service in the war that opened the "American Century."

#### ENDNOTES

1. Karl H. Grismer. *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida*. St. Petersburg: The St. Petersburg Printing Company, 1950. 207-211. Also see James W. Covington. "The Rough Riders in Tampa." *Tampa Bay History* 20 (Spring/Summer 1998): 5-16.
2. Graham A. Cosmas. *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1971. 111-125.
3. Jeffery M. Dorward. *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's First Intelligence Agency, 1865-1918*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1979. 63-67.
4. Cosmas. 126-130.
5. Cosmas. 130-131.
6. Russell A. Alger. *The Spanish-American War*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1901. 42-44.
7. Cosmas. 130-133.
8. Allen R. Millett and Peter Maslowski. *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. New York: The Free Press, 1984. 271-277.

9. William A. Ganoe. *The History of the United States Army*. [Revised Edition] Ashton, MD: Eric Lundberg, 1964. 370.
10. Cosmas. 35-110. Also see Ganoe. 355-370.
11. Millett and Maslowski. 271.
12. Ganoe. 361.
13. Walter Millis. *Arms and Men: A Study of American Military History*. New York: Mentor Books, 1956. 149.
14. Grismer. 211.
15. Grismere. 319-320. For his services with the Plant Steamship Company see Arsenio M. Sanchez. "The Olivette and Mascotte of the Plant Steamship Line." *Sunland Tribune*. 20 (November 1994): 49-50. And Edward A. Mueller. *Steamships of the Two Henrys: Being an Account of the Maritime Activities of Henry Morrison Flagler and Henry Bradley Plant*. Jacksonville: Edward A. Mueller, 1996. 24-27.
16. United States Senate Document No. 221. 56th Congress, 1st Session. 1900, Volume 7. Report of the Commission Appointed by the President to Investigate the Conduct of the War Department in the War with Spain. 3655. [Hereafter "Dodge Commission" and page number.]
17. Ibid. 3667.
18. House of Representatives Document No. 2. 55th Congress, 3rd Session. 1898. Annual Report of the Secretary of War. 90.
19. Dodge Commission. 3668.
20. Dodge Commission. Testimony of General Shafter. 3208-3209.
21. Ibid. 3209.
22. Theodore Roosevelt. *The Rough Riders*. New York: New American Library, 1961 edition. 44-45. He also gives a similar story of this event in a letter to the Dodge Commission. See pages 524-525 of Volume 8.
23. Dodge Commission. Letter of Theodore Roosevelt. Volume 8. 524.
24. Dodge Commission. Testimony of Captain James M. McKay. 2655-2679.
25. Ibid. 2659.
26. Dodge Commission. Letter of General William R. Shafter. Volume 8. 525-526.
27. Millet and Maslowski. 286.
28. Dodge Commission. Testimony of Brigadier General John F. Weston.

**DISCOVER THE PAST**

The Tampa Bay History Center welcomes you to learn about our area's rich past.

Discover our unique history and see how the past continues to shape the events in the Tampa Bay area today. We make history come alive through:

- lectures, workshops and gallery exhibits
- research library, artifacts and special events

For more information call 813-228-0097.

Located at the Tampa Convention Center Annex, 225 S. Franklin Street, Tampa

**TAMPA BAY HISTORY CENTER**  
*You make it happen*  
[www.tampabayhistorycenter.org](http://www.tampabayhistorycenter.org)

# Tampa's Black Business Community: 1900-1915

Daleah Goodwin

The origins and development of a black business class in southern towns and cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have interested scholars in recent years. Juliet E.K. Walker's *The History of Black Business in America*, for example, provides a general history of black businesses. Unfortunately for Floridians and those interested in the Florida experience, relatively little of the scholarly work on this topic has centered on the state history of the African-American business community. A few volumes, such as Marvin Dunn's *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century*, offer some information regarding development of the business class in Florida, but generally studies focus their attention on more recent developments and do so only as part of a general examination of the black population.<sup>1</sup>

Even a major urban center such as Tampa can lack a general history of the city's African-American community, much less an in-depth examination of the development of its pioneer black middle class. This is so despite excellent period and limited studies by a number of noted scholars. Susan D.Greenbaum's *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* covers a relatively small segment of the black population, while essays co-authored by Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr. lay a foundation for a general understanding of the African-American community's experience up to 1916. Rowena Ferrell Brady, Robert W. Saunders, Sr., Nancy Hewitt, and others have added

significantly to the body of knowledge as well, but much more remains to be researched and published.<sup>2</sup>

This essay looks specifically and only into Tampa's thriving black business efforts as they appeared in the early twentieth century. An examination focusing on this time frame provides insight into the progress of the local black middle and entrepreneurial class following the end of national Reconstruction efforts. Socio-economic and political circumstances compelled many African-Americans to live in racially segregated districts and to rely principally upon themselves for goods and services. Additionally, the effect of Booker T. Washington's philosophy was felt in many areas, reinforcing and furthering local self-reliance. A look at whether and how such forces played out in Tampa adds further insight and understanding.

Several questions must be asked in order to identify what – if anything – was unique about Tampa's early black business climate. Obvious questions will be about the individuals who played key roles, and the businesses they operated. In some cases, questions should extend to which business sectors they eventually dominated. Less obvious inquiries include which local conditions changed over time and, if so, what circumstances compelled change? Further, what limitations constrained these entrepreneurs and how were those limitations overcome, if they were overcome? Finally, what role did gender play? Did black women occupy unusual and unexpected positions of influence, or enjoy remarkable success?



An image of the Scrub, Ybor City. No date. (Courtesy University of South Florida Libraries, Special Collections.)

The process of answering these questions begins with a glimpse of black mercantile Tampa at the start of the twentieth century. The city (soon to emerge as Florida's second largest metropolis) contained nearly 16,000 inhabitants. Despite this promising statistic, many African-Americans lived outside the city limits or in unincorporated adjacent communities such as Fort Brooke.<sup>3</sup>

Since the Civil War's end, the city's black community increasingly had focused on the Scrub area, where Central Avenue and Scott Street, along with Polk Street and Nebraska Avenue, were the main thoroughfares and boundaries. Inside and on the borders of the Scrub, black citizens created a lifestyle for themselves that promoted positive growth. During the 1870s, the area had attracted the attention of developers, who inaugurated subdivisions and housing projects. Onlookers described the homes of some members of Tampa's black community as "decent cottages," "beautiful homes," and "magnificent homes." Following the new developments were several churches, the Harlem Academy School, and other so-

cial organizations. These institutions doubled as training grounds for developing business skills and as frameworks for propelling and sustaining business activities. In addition, the neighborhood church indisputably served as the leading business enterprise among blacks.<sup>4</sup>

Life within the black community of Tampa paralleled the political and economic climate nationally, although exceptions to the rule existed. Blacks experienced varied degrees of oppression in social situations, economics, politics, and education. In Tampa, many blacks struggled with social/moral challenges such as "brawly houses," and battled economic restrictions due to low educational attainment and resulting menial-level employment.<sup>5</sup>

Tampa's early black business efforts can be traced to the late 1800s from advertisements in local newspapers. In one paper, Henry Brumick proudly advertised his shoemaking business. According to his notice, the craftsman "keeps on hand an assortment of leather and is prepared to do substantial and neat work at a fair price." By 1866 Brumick's success had permitted





Allen Temple A.M.E. Church, 1116 E. Scott Street. 1926. (Courtesy University of South Florida Libraries, Special Collections.)

him to expand his reach into real estate development, and three years later he boasted a personal worth in excess of \$15,000. Success permitted Brumwick to ensure quality of education for his children. Daughters Iola and Mamie emerged in the twentieth century as educators and civic leaders.<sup>6</sup>

Brumick's illustration, though, fails to come close to telling the whole story. By 1899, when they comprised nearly thirty per cent of the city's total population, blacks engaged in a variety of business activities, but not all were recognized officially. To the casual observer it might appear at first glance that black business growth failed to keep pace proportionally with overall population gains. Several factors must be taken into consideration, however, before reaching such a judgment. First, there was a myriad of social problems plaguing blacks. These problems meant black Tampanans had to operate under the tensions of Jim Crow Laws, disenfranchisement, discrimination, and violence, including lynching and forced segregation. Next, regulatory licensing by business boards required examination and in some cases annual fees. As a result, many businessmen

pursued their callings "off the books" and thus out of sight to regulators. Within limiting conditions over which they in most cases had no control, blacks achieved competitive positions in the business efforts they did pursue.<sup>7</sup>

These early black Tampa entrepreneurs enjoyed the support of a powerful national ally in their grasp for success. Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute, considered the most influential black man in the nation and a leading educator, pressed for black business expansion through the encouragement and support of his National Negro Business League (NNBL.) Tuskegee Institute under Washington's leadership became the center of operations for demonstrating the philosophy of black economic, social, and political relief through black-owned businesses and business efforts. The NNBL, an instrument of the larger Tuskegee Machine (a term coined to describe the extensive influence and activities of the Institute), brought together businesspeople across the United States, many of whom were already engaged in successful ventures. It provided an important network for like-minded individuals to share work expe-



The Armwood family's Gem Drug Store, which was located on Central Avenue. Opened circa 1914. (Courtesy University of South Florida Libraries, Special Collections.)

riences and edify other blacks.<sup>8</sup>

Businessmen and women in Florida – at Pensacola, Jacksonville, Ocala and other locales – joined the Washington-led movement. When a Tampa group led by Lee Roy Thomas, George A. Sheehy, Edward Byrd, George S. Middleton, James Elliot Bryant, William H. Green, and Thomas McKnight responded to the initiative with a status report in 1900, it opened a window on local conditions. According to the report, business-minded persons met in Tampa on August 15, 1900, to analyze opportunities and discuss local business operations. Their re-

port contained a specific analysis of fifty-six business enterprises owned, conducted by, or in affiliation with African-Americans. The report also gave testimonies and personal accounts from and on many of the businesspeople, businesses, and activities.<sup>9</sup>

The Tampa report provided detail and insight. It began with a description of geographic locale and economic possibilities for black proprietors and workers. Interesting parallels, it illustrated, existed between entrepreneurs and political leaders within the community. Black community leaders involved in politics (i.e., those who created

civic organizations and spoke out against unfair practices) often proved to be the same individuals who conducted gainful business ventures. In broad terms, the report creates an impression that the persons listed held strong and unwavering attitudes toward black self-determination within the Tampa community. Many of the individuals who contributed to the report, such as grocer Joseph A. Walker and tailor Isaac H. N. Smith, were among the founding members of the local black business community.<sup>10</sup>

On a merely statistical level, the size of some enterprises is surprising. The largest business enterprise listed in affiliation with the NNBL of Tampa, the Hillsboro Undertaking Company, was under William H. Green's ownership. In 1900, after being in business only three years, Green had amassed a total business value in the (then) considerable amount of \$4,000. Furthermore, Green superintended an electrical plant and could claim precedence as the only colored man locally to pass the examination required of stationary engineers. The popularity of John L. Saulter's saloon, Saulter's Place, is demonstrated by its \$2,500 evaluation. Saulter's Place's boasted "fine wines, liquors and cigars," as well as a "pool and billiard hall." One R. Donaldson operated two saloons. The West & Marshall Drug Store on Polk Street, operated by E.V. West, one of Tampa's three black physicians, likewise thrived. Merchandise included "drugs, patented medicines, French perfumeries, soaps and all kinds of toilet articles as well as giving special attention to filling prescriptions." Even the jewelry industry was listed among enterprises operated by blacks. In this business, Y. K. Meeks prospered.<sup>11</sup>

The list went on to include more varied merchant endeavors, and these responded to local conditions with local initiatives. Large African-American businesses operated in the tobacco, grocery, livery, fashion, cosmetology, and restaurant industries. Tampa's cigar industry had traditionally employed Afro-Cubans. However, the NNBL reported that one African-American cigar company, directed by W. O. Perry and his associates, had business collections totaling over \$1,200. Local grocers, to cite another example, constantly upgraded their enterprises to remain competitive. According to a report published during the era by an out-of-state newspaper, "The Beasley Grocery

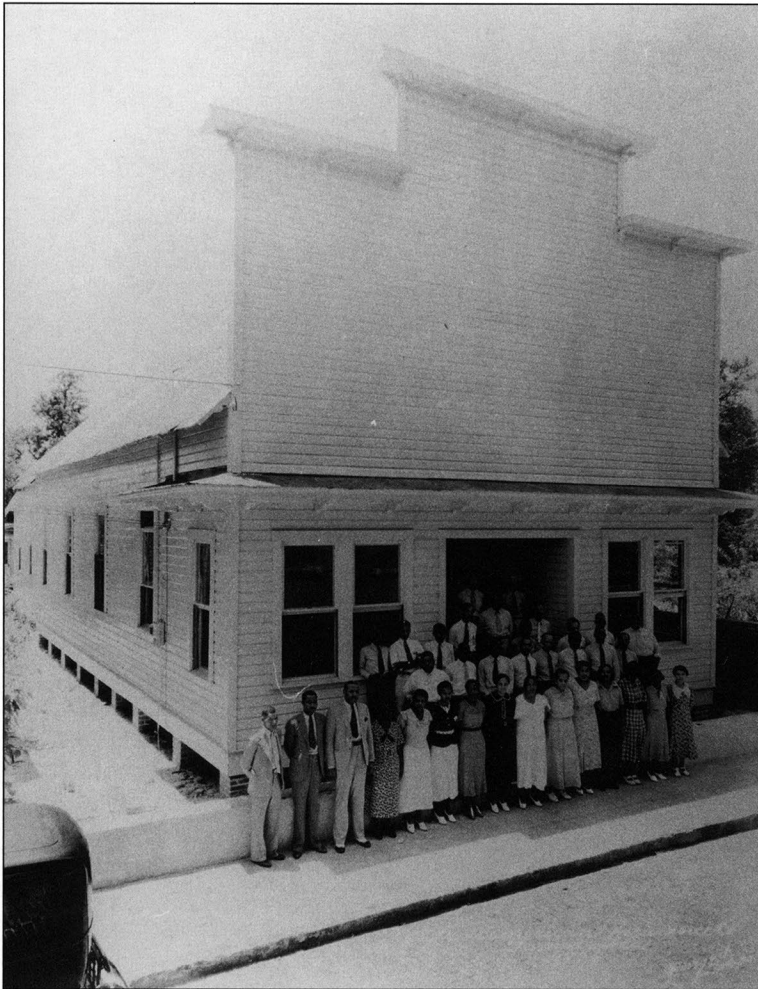
Store . . . has installed an up-to-date meat market in connection with its store." Moreover, Beasley operated a restaurant. The Beasley Grocery Store and restaurant combination was a pattern appearing in the enterprise of others. For instance, J. Taylor, through his wife's help, made a solid living. While he maintained a store, she operated a restaurant. (The latter reportedly was among the best in the city.) H. Williams and Mrs. A. P. Mills also ran a restaurant in a city that was gaining fame for its tasty and varied cuisine. Interestingly, of all the enterprises discussed in the NNBL report of Tampa, only the restaurant industry credited women's participation.<sup>12</sup>

The fashion industry additionally offered a sizeable market for blacks, though this, like other aspects of the mercantile community, showed local characteristics. While other cities reported large numbers of dressmakers and female milliners, this was not the case in Tampa. Instead, mostly male shoemakers and tailors operated businesses making good profits. The business of J. W. McConnell fared so well that he could donate \$100 worth of clothes to a Jacksonville charity. Furthermore, one of the city's premier tailors, Isaac H. N. Smith, possessed business properties amounting to \$3,000. Yet, the name of his wife, Theresa Smith, could not be found listed in the Tampa NNBL report as a dressmaker – though she was one.<sup>13</sup>

Barbers and barbershops made up the largest segment of black businesses in Tampa. Referred to as tonsorial artists, black barbers comprised almost one-third of all people employed in the barbering profession and led the city as the largest black industry. The only all-black barbershop, the firm of Thomas & James, welcomed customers on Polk Street. B. J. McCullough, a leading barber, expressed the concern (shared by his colleagues) of being forced by local regulations to close their businesses on Sundays and the ultimate effect that this would have on other black businesses and their patrons.<sup>14</sup>

This glimpse of achievements registered by 1900 is the only manner in which the spirit of era and locale can be captured. City directories and additional sources permit closer views of conditions, lesser business ventures, other persons involved in businesses, and changes over time. These local sources cumulatively show that over





An African American insurance company, Tampa. 1936. (Courtesy University of South Florida Libraries, Special Collections.)

time additional industry areas emerged, including the culinary craft (butchers, cafes and restaurants), confectionaries, and more grocers. Along with fashion, cosmetology, undertaking, and medical businesses, these growth industries constructed the framework within which blacks would later pursue other business opportunities in Tampa.<sup>15</sup>

Before examining the long-range impact of these developments, one must note that the business community in Tampa had by 1912 reached such a level of sophistication that it merited Booker T. Washington's personal attention. Washington conducted tours of selected states, usually sponsored by the state chapter of the NNBL and the state lieutenant of the Tuskegee Machine. Essentially, Washington and his entourage traveled to major cities to bolster and promote the Tuskegee ideology and gain a sense of the nationwide black state of affairs. In Florida, Washington stopped in

Pensacola, Tallahassee, Lake City, Ocala, Tampa, Lakeland, Eatonville, Daytona and Jacksonville, and passed through numerous others, giving lectures. During the tour of Florida, Washington spoke in Tampa. Several accounts relating the content of his speeches and lectures on self-sufficiency surfaced in local newspapers during the tour. His Tampa speech praised Florida A&M College and called for good race relations as a means of progress for the entire black race. He encouraged the need for economic self-sufficiency, not only in Tampa, but all over Florida. In Pensacola, "he urged black farmers to acquire land while prices were low and to keep abreast of production techniques."<sup>16</sup>

In the years following Washington's tour of Florida, black business ventures began to rise in Tampa, as elsewhere in the state. It is reasonable that this rise resulted partially from Washington's inspirational messages. A Washington visit was seen as a catalyst for renewed action and advancement. One year following Washington's visit, for instance, Ocala blacks established the Metropolitan Savings Bank.<sup>17</sup>

By 1915, just three years after the Washington tour of Florida, a change for the better appeared in Tampa as African-Americans expanded their participation in different business ventures. Blacks went into areas they previously had avoided or else conducted on a small scale. These areas included the operation of a printing shop and the establishment of hotels and boarding houses. At the time, black bed-and-breakfast inns were spreading throughout the United States, as seen in the reports of different leagues of the NNBL. Railroad expansion created higher mobility among blacks, creating a need for accommodations where they could stay in peace without discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

Greater numbers of blacks locally began creating and managing their own businesses. Twice as many black-owned cleaners, pressers, and restaurants operated in Tampa in 1915 as in 1912. The black entrepreneurial community added another insurance agency and real estate company. The Afro-American Industrial Insurance Agency employed sixteen agents to conduct its local business.<sup>19</sup>

Other enterprises experienced expansion as part of this general progress. John Larkins' grocery store expanded to include



a meat market. The notions and dry goods store already operated by R. L. Williams carried "several thousands of dollars of stock." Additionally, an array of confectionaries, soft drinks and ice cream parlors prospered under black ownership. (Just three years previously, only three soft drink facilities, one of which belonged to Dave Hendricks, served customers. Hendricks then went on to build up a confectionary business.) One of the most successful black Tampa businessmen, John Andrew Williams, owned the Williams Cigar Company. His cigar distribution served to highlight local black achievement. With the smoking of cigars constituting a widespread social ritual, Williams' product was enjoyed not only in the United States but as far away as China.<sup>20</sup>

Through these years, Tampa's black women often acted independently or alongside men to build stable businesses and futures. Dorcas Bryant, who worked as a laundress for white families, set an early example by building family security in a manner that eventually would reach beyond Tampa to influence the state. Many women followed her example. Mattie Lee successfully took over operation of their business after her husband's death. Prior to William Lee's demise in the early 1900s, he had run the "largest livery, feed and sale, stables, undertaking and embalming [business] in this city." Mattie Lee managed easily to sustain that business legacy. Accounts of other women's enterprises occasionally surfaced in newspaper reports. Amanda Threadcraft owned real estate while working as a caterer. Christina Johnson-Meacham ran a grocery store in addition to teaching school.<sup>21</sup>

Nationally, black women associated themselves in this era with certain industries. These included culinary activities, domestic service, laundries, dressmaking, millinery, and cosmetology. The profile applied well to the employment of Tampa's black women, although they did not produce large numbers of business owners or managers in these industries. In Tampa, according to the NNBL account, black female entrepreneurs apparently engaged solely in the restaurant industry. (Occasionally, early twentieth century American black women ventured into other fields. A noted example was Dr. Julia Coleman of Newport News, Virginia, who operated a well-patronized pharmacy.)<sup>22</sup>

In most cities such as Macon, Georgia, Birmingham, Alabama, Denver, Colorado, and Tampa's mirror city of the era – Jacksonville – African-American businesswomen seemed to have been more or less in line with the traditional business activities of black women nationally. Reports from the cities' local NNBL chapters confirm these activities as typical of women. As the years progressed in Tampa, black women slowly began to establish themselves as principals and managers within these industries.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, a significant amount of women's participation in the local black business community may have been overlooked. Often, women oversaw business activities without recognition. Perhaps the role of black women in business was obscured because women made more of the prestige and status of marriage, listing businesses in their husbands' names or in their married surnames. Sometimes, using a man's name on the business registration carried more perceived influence; whether or not he was the woman's spouse. Such social patterns hide the real roles women may have played and cause difficulties now in identifying those persons who actually oversaw and facilitated the work done with the businesses.<sup>24</sup>

In some instances locally, as elsewhere, women did not directly involve themselves with the businesses of their husbands, yet still contributed to their development. The successful Williams Cigar Company traced its roots to family matriarch Rachel Williams. Although not heavily involved in the cigar industry, she strongly influenced her son, John Andrew Williams, proprietor of the successful company. Her work ethic and drive directly shaped the development of his business, as she worked "indefatigably for their [her children's] welfare and education." Black Tampa's wives and mothers in family businesses gave comfort and helped carry the financial and emotional strains of a business. For instance, Mrs. John Andrews' dinner parties for Williams Cigar Company affected many of the social aspects of the family's business. When Washington visited Tampa on his tour of Florida, he lodged at the home of Rev. Daniel A. and Mrs. Rowena A. Perrin, typifying the close relationship between church and business in the black community.<sup>25</sup>

Women, through their association with businesses, formed parallel organizations

such as the Florida Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the Phillis Wheatley Association and the National Association of Colored Women. These single-sex organizations allowed women "to adopt strategic modes of action appropriate to their diverse goals and to meld their influence as women with their power as members of the larger black community." Organizationally, women busied themselves in economic, political and social issues, as well as the condition of blacks and women locally and beyond Tampa. The same women who worked with their husbands in various enterprises used their social status to gain local support and lead these organizations. Margaret Murray Washington, wife of Booker T. Washington, is a classic example of how this worked. In 1913, a year after her husband's tour of Florida, Mrs. Washington conducted a similar tour, visiting many of the same cities. In this tour her audiences were women's groups such as the Phillis Wheatley Art Club of Tampa. Another example is that of Rowena Perrin, wife of Rev. Daniel A. Perrin, who was heavily involved with the Florida Women's Club at Tampa.<sup>26</sup>

Beyond the omission of women's business leadership in the Tampa NNBL report or in city directories, several types of local black businesses went unnoticed as well. Because some firms were not listed does not mean there was no black activity in a given business area. In the case of black hair goods and hairdressers, only one operation, that of Lila Kinsler in 1912, could be discovered in Tampa, and by 1913 Kinsler's business was no longer listed in the city directory. However, it is certain that across the United States in the early twentieth century, black beauty products experienced remarkable sales growth, particularly in hair-straightening products, bleaching creams, etc. Possibly, Tampa women who sold a black hair care line did so door-to-door. Two national hair product lines, Madam C. J. Walker of Indianapolis, Indiana and Dr. Julia Coleman's of Newport News, Virginia, operated as door-to-door and mail-order businesses. These direct marketing enterprises did not require a woman to utilize a storefront, were seldom formally regulated, and would have been overlooked by the local city directory.

"Non-legitimate" businesses, described as persons who utilized their trades or skills without the formal knowledge, licensing or

taxing of government, also escaped published notice. Self-employed child care workers, housekeepers, handymen, and yard workers – widely employed in Tampa – fall into this category. Often these business enterprises supplemented the practitioner's income from other sources. For example, black laundresses and seamstresses employed in larger businesses often undertook entrepreneurial work. A seamstress had access to fabric scraps from the dress shop where she worked; these were used to create outfits at home. When her unique ensembles became a sensation among her neighbors, the seamstress' services were then in demand. Although legally she did not have a business permit, she was an entrepreneurial businesswoman. Many men and women in Tampa or Macon or Indianapolis undoubtedly entered business in a similar manner.<sup>27</sup>

The Tampa black business community waxed and waned like other business communities, responding to local conditions. The Negro Board of Trade and local versions of the NNBL became Tampa's networks to support and encourage formation of black businesses. Businesses here, as elsewhere, experienced competition among themselves, but it does not appear to have been a negative factor. Saulter's Place and the Chappelle Theatre both competed in the entertainment market, but each business had a slightly different focus and appealed to different audiences. As some businesses developed, others closed due to various reasons, primarily financial. Overall, Tampa blacks sought to build an economically self-sufficient community. Support of black businesses was a concept the NNBL stressed amongst its members. When support of black businesses began decreasing, a plea "to patronize their own [black] establishments" was issued.<sup>28</sup>

The capacity for blacks to employ other blacks surfaced as one of the most profitable features of the business landscape locally. Black employer-employee relationships left both individuals with positive self-images. Black employers did not, or at least to a far lesser extent than in mainstream society, enact discriminatory practices, job mis-treatment, and prejudicial wages. The willingness of black businesses to hire black personnel – and to create jobs where few might have otherwise been found – is demonstrated by Williams Cigar Company

as “helping to solve this great problem by employing their race in the office and factory.” This same approach is found in most period black businesses in Tampa. Many blacks worked in the groves of William and Mattie Lee, for instance. Of course, it is possible that black entrepreneurs had only black applicants for jobs. Nonetheless, this employment worked to the benefit and overall advancement of blacks.<sup>29</sup>

The variety of business ventures undertaken by blacks created, in several industries, the ability for blacks to function without much immediate contact with or interference from whites. In the culinary industry, for example, blacks dominated the Tampa cook shops. Each year, blacks comprised at least ninety percent of the population working in these shops. There were other race-specific employment practices in Tampa in the era. The Cubans in Tampa commanded most of the work in the cigar industry. The Chinese, as in other regions, were heavily involved in the laundry business. Because an industry was heavily race-specific, however, did not mean that it excluded interaction with other racial groups. Sometimes these were driven by

necessity. In the larger context of black business locally, since blacks owned few wholesale distributors (apart from cigar manufacturers), they had, in order to obtain most merchandise, to rely on whites.<sup>30</sup>

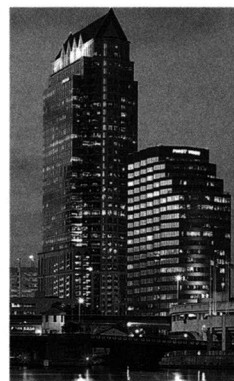
In spite of the racially divisive climate affecting economics and political advancement, blacks in Tampa still managed to pursue their business endeavors. Perhaps seeing the advancements of other blacks through the NNBL and in the nearby cities of Jacksonville and Ocala encouraged business development. Clearly, Booker T. Washington’s influence nurtured local black business efforts. How these early efforts continued and expanded following Washington’s influence in 1912-15 remains to be examined by the scholarly eye. It is certain that established black businesses in Tampa today are built upon those nascent years of growth and determination. As Tampa’s blacks in the early twentieth century entered and attempted to establish themselves in each aspect of public life – education, politics, economics – their forays into the business world reflected that drive, coupled with local responses to local pressures and opportunities.

## HOLLAND & KNIGHT

**Proud of our century-old roots in Tampa’s civic and business community**



Exchange National Bank, 1899  
Peter O. Knight offices on second floor  
Photo Courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County  
Public Library System



Holland & Knight  
offices in the  
AmSouth Building,  
Suite 4100, 2003

HOLLAND & KNIGHT LLP • Tampa, Florida

813-227-8500

[www.hklaw.com](http://www.hklaw.com)

Annapolis • Atlanta • Bethesda • Boston • Bradenton • Chicago • Fort Lauderdale • Jacksonville • Lakeland • Los Angeles • Miami • New York • Northern Virginia  
Orlando • Portland • Providence • St. Petersburg • San Antonio • San Francisco • Seattle • Tallahassee • Tampa • Washington, D.C. • West Palm Beach  
International Offices: Helsinki • Mexico City • Rio de Janeiro • São Paulo • Tokyo • Representative Offices: Caracas • Tel Aviv

The hiring of a lawyer is an important decision that should not be based solely upon advertisements. Before you decide, ask us to send you free written information about our qualifications and experience. Copyright © 2003 Holland & Knight LLP

## ENDNOTES

1. Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997); Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race and Entrepreneurship* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998); On Black business class development generally, see, for example, David H. Jackson, Jr., *A Chief Lieutenant of the Tuskegee Machine: Charles Banks of Mississippi* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002).
2. Susan D. Greenbaum, *More Than Black: Afro-Cubans in Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002); Larry Eugene Rivers and Canter Brown, Jr., "Rejoicing in their Freedom": The Development of Tampa's African-American Community in the Post-Civil War Generation," *Sunland Tribune* 27 (2001), 5-18; Canter Brown, Jr., and Larry Eugene Rivers, "The Negroes are their to stay": The Development of Tampa's African-American Community, 1891-1916," *Sunland Tribune* 30 (2004), 57-77; Rowena Ferrell Brady, *Things Remembered, An Album of African-Americans in Tampa* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 1970); Robert W. Saunders Sr., *Bridging the Gap: Continuing the Florida NAACP Legacy of Harry T. Moore, 1952-1966* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2000); Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880-1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).
3. Rivers and Brown, "Rejoicing in their Freedom", 8; *Thirteenth Census of the United States taken in the Year 1910, Volume II* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), 298-99.
4. Rivers and Brown, "Rejoicing in their Freedom", 8; "Notes of Travel", *A.M.E. Church Review* 25 (April 1909), 459. On Black church involvement generally, see, for example, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).
5. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, February 7, 1993; Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa: A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida* (St. Petersburg, Fl.: St. Petersburg Printing Company, 1950), 151.; Jackson, *Chief Lieutenant*, xi.
6. Brady, *Things Remembered*, 27; Canter Brown, Jr., and Barbara Gray Brown, *Family Records of the African-American Pioneers of Tampa and Hillsborough County* (Tampa: University of Tampa Press, 2003), 33.
7. A. E. Sholes, *Sholes' Directory of the City of Tampa, 1899* (Savannah: Morning News Print, 1899), 1; David H. Jackson, "Booker T. Washington's Tour of the Sunshine State, March 1912," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 81 (Winter 2003): 254-78.
8. Kenneth Hamilton, *Guide Introduction to the Records of the National Negro Business League* (Bethesda, Md.: University Publications of America, 1995), 1-5.
9. *Report of the 1st Convention of the National Negro Business League*, (Chicago: R. S. Abbott Publishing Company, 1901), 235-42 (microfilm copy available on part 1, roll 1, National Negro Business League Papers, Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama) (hereafter, NNBL Papers).
10. *Ibid*; Brown and Brown, *Family Records*, 222-23, 262.
11. *Report of the 1st Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 239, 241; *Indianapolis Freeman*, November 2, 1901; Sholes, *Directory of City of Tampa* 1899; Brown and Brown, *Family Records*, 213.
12. *Report of the 1st Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 239, 240-41; *Indianapolis Freeman*, December 4, 1915.
13. *Report of the 2nd Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 58-60, *Tampa Morning Tribune*, May 1, 1901; Brown and Brown, *Family Records*, 222-23.
14. *Report of the 1st Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 240, 242; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 4, 1901.
15. See, generally, 1899, 1912, 1913, 1915 Tampa city directories (available at State Library of Florida, Tallahassee).
16. Jackson, "Booker T. Washington's Tour," 262; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, March 5, 1912; *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, February 7, 1993.
17. Jackson, "Booker T. Washington's Tour," 268; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, March 5, 1912.
18. Walker, *History of Black Business*, 254-58; See, generally, 1915 Tampa city directory.
19. See, generally, 1912 Tampa city directory; 1915 Tampa city directory, 957, 988, 1007-9; *New York Age*, April 15, 1915.
20. See, generally, 1912, 1913, 1915 Tampa city directories; 1915 Tampa Classified Business Directory, 959, 988; *New York Age*, March 15, 1915; *Indianapolis Freeman*, May 13, 1911, March 14, August 12, 1914; *Harrisburg (Pa.) Advocate Verdict*, March 17, 1911; Jackson, "Booker T. Washington's Tour," 268.
21. Brown and Brown, *Family Records*, 55; "Notes of Travel", *A. M. E. Church Review* (July 1908), 81; *New York Age*, March 28, 1912.
22. 1912 Tampa City Directory, 784; *Report of the 1st Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 58-61, 230; *Report of the 13th Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 154-155; *Report of the 14th Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 210-212; *Report of the 9th Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 97-103.
23. *Report of the 1st Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 58-61, 230.
24. *Report of the 5th Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 68-78.
25. *Indianapolis Freeman*, March 23, 1912, July 31, 1915.
26. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort*, 148-49; *Indianapolis Freeman*, May 3, 1914, March 5, 1913; Ralph W. Tyler, "The Phillis Wheatley Association: A Negro Women's Achievement," *Southern Workman* 30 (March 1920), 121-26.
27. *Report of the 2nd Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 36-8; *Report of the 7th Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 141-44.
28. *Indianapolis Freeman*, March 14, 1914; Brown and Rivers, "The Negroes are there to stay," 21-22.
29. *Indianapolis Freeman*, February 25, 1911; *Report of the 9th Annual Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 103; *Report of the 1st Convention of the NNBL*, NNBL Papers, 239; Brown and Brown, *Family Records*, 142, 151.
30. See generally 1899, 1912, 1913, 1915 Tampa city directories.



# No Favors for these “Fine Little Ladies:” Employment Discrimination against Tampa’s Women Workers at the End of World War II

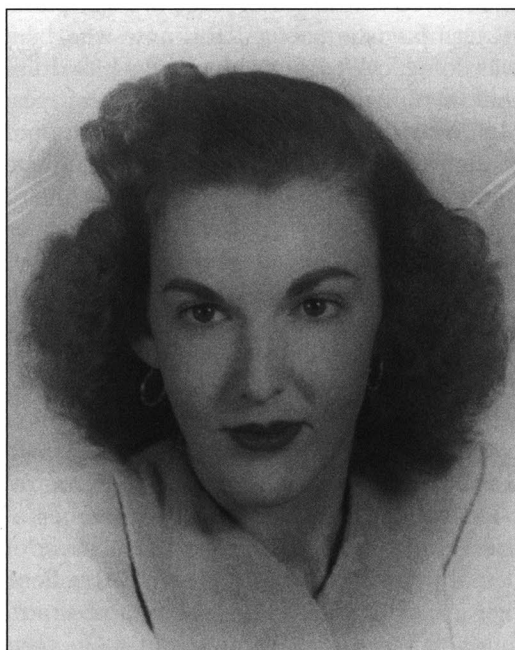
Rebekah Heppner

Upon opening their daily newspapers the morning of July 28, 1942, Tampa residents were introduced to their first woman welder, Mrs. Alma Brown of Tampa Shipbuilding Company. Here is how the paper chose to “spin” the story:

Mrs. Brown is 35, weighs 135 pounds, is five feet six, and the mother of two youngsters, a daughter 3½ years old and another younger . . . and let it be said right here for the boys, from the bigshots to the fellow at her elbow, they were gentlemen, trying to ease a rough road for a fine little lady. . . making 89 cents an hour as a ‘welder learner,’ and no favors.<sup>1</sup>

In the months following Pearl Harbor, the nation was desperate for workers on the home front. Employment at Tampa Shipbuilding Company, for example, had been at 1350 in 1940. At the beginning of the war, it had grown to 9000 and it peaked in 1944 at 16,000. In May 1942 American shipyards were turning out merchant vessels at the unprecedented rate of five a day. In Tampa, workers commuted from rural areas to participate in the greatest economic boom of their generation. It was estimated that shipyards in the gulf area could use 30,000 more employees.<sup>2</sup>

Turning to those “fine little ladies” for help was unavoidable, although most men still did not want their wives to work. A 1943 Gallup Poll showed that 79 percent of married men opposed war work for their wives and 78 percent of female homemak-



Plucked, poised, cool, and coiffed: the womanly ideal of the 1940s collided with the realities of women in the workplace. (*Juanita Heppner, c. 1945, Courtesy of the author.*)

ers agreed.<sup>3</sup> But by mid-1944, the Tampa area War Manpower Commission appealed to every non-working woman to take a war job. By the end of the war, over 17 percent of workers in Tampa’s shipyards were women, nearly double the national average.<sup>4</sup>

The women of Tampa took over jobs vacated by men who had gone to war and filled many new jobs created by the war. In addition to the story of Tampa’s first woman welder, the *Tampa Morning Tribune* wrote of women driving buses, repairing typewriters, farming, patching airplane parts, repairing flying equipment, and reporting the

news. As well, the paper ran feature stories and photo essays of women butchers, bank tellers, pilots and an air traffic controller at Peter O. Knight airport.<sup>5</sup> The coverage of these atypical women continued steadily throughout the war. Many of the stories included personal descriptions (and condescending verbiage) like that in the story of “Tampa’s first honest-to-goodness woman electric welder”: coverage that would be considered inappropriate (and possibly actionable) today.

These are some phrases used by the Tampa press corps to describe these avidly-recruited and truly valuable war workers. “With her rose sprigged frock and pearl ear bobs beneath neatly bobbed auburn hair, she looked a little out of place in an airplane hangar but she seemed to know what she was doing.” “Wearing a blue and white dress that matched the deep blue of her eyes, Mrs. Warfield hastily patted her hair and straightened her collar before posing for the photographer.” “Chubby little Mrs. Vera Sylvester.”<sup>6</sup> In a story headlined “Another Man’s Field is Invaded; Girl Becomes Typewriter Repairer,” eighteen year-old Inna Mae Cox garners this compliment: “There isn’t a lazy muscle in Miss Cox’s trim little body.”<sup>7</sup>

This distinctive journalistic approach was not reserved for women in industrial work. The *Tallahassee Daily Democrat* reported that Mary Lou Baker, a member of the Florida legislature who made a career of defending women’s rights, had “led a floor fight . . . with such poise, ability and strategy as to prove that women can make first rate legislators. We offer her in evidence as Exhibit A.”<sup>8</sup> The Jacksonville Journal described the legislator as an “attractive St. Pete attorney.”<sup>9</sup>

Granted, these stories were written in a very different era and it is unfair to judge the Florida newspaper reporters of the 1940s by today’s standards. While it is hard to say how the women themselves felt about their portrayal, the collective commentary by the press helps explain why working women’s obvious success during the war years seems to have had so little impact on the future of women in the workforce. The popular press, both in Tampa and nationally, was trying to recruit more women to work in all types of jobs but was not ready to concede, even after four years of success, that it was normal or natural for women to work.

When the war ended, “no favors” for the women workers in Tampa were to be found. Despite the fact that the press continually reported they had been “doing unusually well,” taking on jobs that required “unusual physical strength for women,” and were “as efficient and effective as employees who enlisted or were called in the draft,”<sup>10</sup> they were the first to be let go at the War’s conclusion. In addition to that blatant discrimination, they were denied unemployment benefits if there was a “woman’s job” available to them, despite significant pay differentials, an interpretation of the law that would never have been accepted by men in the same position.<sup>11</sup>

Undeniably, the returning veterans deserved priority access to the jobs they had left behind. Mrs. Ruth Mathebat, national president of the American Legion Auxiliary, while addressing a delegation of women in Jacksonville, admonished the audience that although “women have obtained many fine jobs since the war began and the men went overseas, we must plan now to give them up and return to our homes when those boys come back. It may be hard to do, but we must face the fact that there are not enough jobs for them and us.”<sup>12</sup>

The preference for hiring men for high paying jobs, however, was not just granted to veterans. Driven by what was known as the family wage ideology, public policy makers assumed that men needed to support families and that women were only supplemental wage earners who did not need the same level of pay as men.<sup>13</sup> Where did this leave single or widowed women, or women whose husbands could not (or would not) find work? A woman trying to make her way under such rules had no option for economic independence; marriage was her only practical choice.

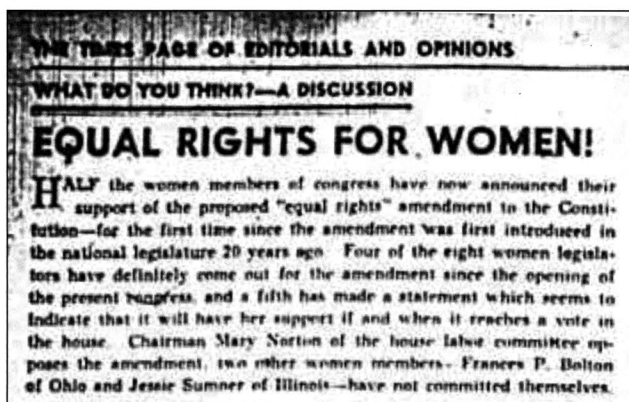
Few women fit the stereotype now immortalized as “Rosie the Riveter,” a married woman working in a traditionally man’s job only to help the war effort. In April 1943, *The Tampa Daily Times* reported that “contrary to general public belief that women have moved en masse from the kitchen sinks to the war production bench, only 3,200 of the 25,000 persons in essential war industries in Hillsborough County are of the feminine sex.” In the shipyards, only 85 women were doing highly skilled work, contrasted to 5200 men.<sup>14</sup> National statistics show that this picture changed as

the war progressed. In July 1944, nineteen million women were employed, an increase of 47 percent over the 1940 level. National statistics also showed more married women than single women in the workplace at the end of the war.<sup>15</sup> But, contrary to the press coverage in feature stories, women were concentrated in clerical positions.

Most women who worked during the war did so out of economic necessity, and many of them had worked before the war. For example, Mrs. Eva Fette, the woman "named head of Tampa's first plane work class" in 1942, had been a fabric worker for eight years and had done virtually all of the fabric work at Peter O. Knight airport for the two years prior to the class.<sup>16</sup> Miss Betty Bookis, who had been an assistant secretary at Hillsborough High, explained in her letter of resignation that she "did not feel that she should return to her \$72 per month school job when she could continue to make 'exactly double' that figure in a defense job."<sup>17</sup> Among her reasons for seeking war work, Mrs. Grace Warfield told reporters that she was "looking around for some way of steadying the family's finances."<sup>18</sup>

We also must not ignore the fact that some women worked during the war, as they do today, for the satisfaction not only of being financially independent, but of the work itself. Mrs. Warfield, who worked in the fabric department at Tampa's Drew Field, said of her work, "it's fascinating, something new all the time." Mrs. Vera Sylvester, who repaired airplane parts, told reporters, "Anything mechanical appeals to me, and this is just mechanical enough for me to love it."<sup>19</sup> And Mrs. Helen Wickahm, one of five women students in the first welding class ever offered for women at Brewster Vocational School, said she signed up for the course because she always "wanted a trade."<sup>20</sup> In an article titled "Hats Off to the Gals on the Job," the *Hooker's Point Log*, in July 1943, interviewed some of the women working at McCloskey's shipyard. Mrs. Mabel Tillman, a welder, admitted, "This work gives me a great feeling of accomplishment." Mrs. Dorothy Thompson, a junior draftsman said she "wouldn't trade my job here for anything else."<sup>21</sup>

Of the women war workers portrayed in their oral history, mother-daughter authors Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise conclude, "most . . . consider it one of the high-lights of their lives and retain the same



This editorial page of the *St. Petersburg Times* marked the start of a readers' discussion about working wartime women. (*St. Petersburg Times*, March 3, 1943.)

pride and sense of accomplishment they felt half a century ago." The women spoke of gaining self-confidence that allowed them to try new things, one welder becoming a sculptor. Their children, too, were often inspired and grew up feeling that women could do whatever they wished.<sup>22</sup>

Women who did not work before the war may have been unable to find jobs at that time. At the height of the Great Depression, twelve million Americans were unemployed.<sup>23</sup> The impact of the depression was compounded in Tampa by the decline of the cigar industry.<sup>24</sup> Women were included in Works Progress Administration programs, but mostly in low-wage traditionally female jobs. In Tampa, the WPA employed women as nurses, teachers, nursery school workers, secretaries, and clerks. Prior to the war, women comprised only twelve to eighteen percent of WPA workers, and most ended up in sewing rooms.<sup>25</sup> In her *History of Women in Tampa*, Doris Weatherford profiles Verna Brooks, who in 1941 at the age of 38 was supporting nine children on the \$46 per month she earned in one of Tampa's WPA sewing rooms. Although her two oldest children were working and contributing to the household, Mrs. Brooks was having difficulty making ends meet, since she needed to spend \$40 a month on groceries alone.<sup>26</sup>

It was these women who had the most to gain from the opportunities created during the war. As Mrs. Irene Grant, Tampa-based director of the women's division of the WPA expressed, "And are they pleased; they are absolutely delighted. They're proud of their new jobs, and of the jobs for which they are

qualifying. They want to be independent.”<sup>27</sup> In her interview for the *Tampa Morning Tribune*, Ms. Cox, (Tampa’s girl typewriter repairer), who had previously worked picking strawberries, said “Best of all, I am making my own way.”<sup>28</sup> Given their newly found economic independence and job satisfaction, relinquishing their jobs — whether they were high-paying men’s jobs

housekeeping, particularly those who’ve learned a trade.”<sup>30</sup>

In her advice column in the *Tampa Daily Times*, Dorothy Dix encouraged women to find work that they enjoyed because, she predicted, there would be a shortage of husbands after the war.<sup>31</sup> Ms. Dix obviously did not consider this a negative. She felt that due to the opportunities made available to them during the war, women could now “roll their own and pay for their own cakes and ale, and whether they get married or not, is just as much a matter of taste and inclination as whether they invest their money in a mink coat, or salt it down in a Government bond.”<sup>32</sup>

Upon being let go from her shipyard welding job after 28 months, Miss Christine Connell said that she wanted “to keep on with my trade, but I can’t find employment in it here.” Mrs. Maxine Sloan, trained as a welder but only able to find work as a draftsman after the war, said that she “definitely wants to continue working.” Mrs. Angela Deslate, a streetcar conductor for Tampa Electric Company, said she wanted to continue working after her husband returned from overseas, so they could “buy all the things we want to for our post-war home.”<sup>33</sup> Mrs. Dorothy Thompson, the junior draftsman interviewed in 1943 for the *Hooker’s Point Log*, said she also “would like to continue my work after the war.”<sup>34</sup>

The enjoyment of work, of course, was not universal. Complaining that economics were driving wives and mothers to work, a woman industrial worker stated: “The number of women working for the sheer joy of working is at best infinitesimal.”<sup>35</sup> Sherna Gluck’s oral history interviews with aircraft workers in Los Angeles confirmed that the majority of former housewives planned to return to full time homemaking.<sup>36</sup> Seventy-six percent of returning homemakers responded to a poll conducted after the war by stating that they did not mind giving up their jobs.<sup>37</sup>

Many times during the war, Jane Hughey, in her “Tribune Talkies” man-on-the-street column in the Tampa morning paper, dealt with the issue of the working woman. On August 15, 1943, she asked, “Will the men be able to find a housewife when this war is over?” Miss Ruth Moore, a student from Plant City answered yes, but said “I don’t know whether the women who are working will want to give up their jobs

**JULY 30, 1943**

---

# Hats Off To The Gals On The Job

---

## Women Contribute To Shipbuilding

Now that the first ships have been floated and bouquets are being passed around, it is fitting that a toast be given—to the ladies!

Every man in the yard deserves credit for his part in the job, but special tribute should be paid to the women. Most of the men were carrying on work which they were accustomed to, but the women—they have stepped into jobs that were as strange to them as another language.

This positive jobsite review appeared in the *Hooker’s Point Log*, July 30, 1943.

or not — was, as so aptly put by Mrs. Mathemat, going to be hard to do. Nevertheless, over 40,000 women in Florida were asked to do it.<sup>29</sup>

In an interview with the *Tampa Morning Tribune* in July 1945, W.J Ray, business manager of the local boilermaker’s union, admitted that “the majority of women laid off from shipyard welding jobs don’t like their enforced inactivity.” Archibald Reagin, personnel manager of McCloskey Shipbuilding Company added that many of the women who chose to leave before being laid off “become restless and come back in a few weeks.” Reagin doubted the women would be “satisfied to return permanently to



# TRIBUNE TALKIES

By JANE HUGHEY

In this column The Tribune will print every day the opinion of Tampan young and old who will be interviewed by Miss Hughey on questions submitted by our readers. The Tribune will pay \$3 for each question submitted and used. Mail your questions to The Tribune Talkies, Tribune Building, Tampa 2

## TODAY'S QUESTION

Can a woman combine a career with marriage?

(Submitted by Miss Edna Eckles, 1928, 16th st., St. Petersburg.)

THE PLACE  
At random

## THE ANSWERS

Pvt. Jaquin Rodriguez, Infantry, New York: "It depends on the type of person the woman is. If she wants a real home and family she'll find she can't be very successful in holding down a job. I don't think it's at all right for a woman to leave her children in another person's care and go to work every day. Children need their mother, and a mother needs her children. If they grow up without seeing their mother at home all the time they'll never love her in the usual manner."



Mrs. Marie Clark, clerk, 3009 Harbor View ave.: "Well, I'm doing it, and I find that it can be done nicely, if you work at it. The important thing is the establishment of a routine, so that your time and energy will be evenly divided. When I first started working I found it was a little hard to get everything done, but after a few weeks things were going smoothly. Some people can only do one thing at a time, and that kind of woman couldn't combine marriage and a career."



Mrs. Robert Hardin, housewife, 2829 Central ave.: "No, I don't think a woman can handle both without one suffering. I tried it for a few weeks and found that I didn't have time to do everything that had to be done. When a woman has a job she should devote her best to it, and the same goes for marriage. She can't very well give her best to both. Perhaps a woman could work half a day and take care of a home but not many could work all day and run a house well."



Mrs. Kathryn Simmons, housewife.

Jane Hughey's "Tribune Talkies" column called for responses to the reader-submitted question "Can a woman combine a career with marriage?" (*Tampa Morning Tribune*, March 9, 1944.)

or not, now that they have had a taste of freedom. On the other hand, some of them may be glad to have a man look after them again. It will depend on the woman." Miss Gladys Isbell, an office assistant, also said yes and added that she felt "the majority of women who are working are doing it to relieve the men for fighting, and they'll be glad to don an apron and go back to the kitchen." The only married woman who answered, Mrs. Clyde Bergwin, said yes, but added "the women who are working and making big money may have a hard time finding a husband unless they are already waiting for a certain man to come home. Those who are already married will be happy to let the men take over the offices and factories." The two men who responded both stated emphatically that women would give up their jobs to marry the returning soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

On March 9, 1944, Hughey asked, "Can a woman combine a career with marriage?" Three of the five women asked said no. Miss Nina Romano, a clerk, added "I may not be up with the times, but I think a woman's place is in the home. When a girl marries

she should forget her career." Two women who said yes, both married and one working, gave examples of how it could be done. Mrs. Marie Clark, a clerk, said, "the important thing is the establishment of a routine." Mrs. Kathryn Simmons, a housewife, used her sister, a stenographer, as a successful example of a working woman who "had a good schedule and sticks to it," adding that "a man doesn't want his secretary ordering groceries at the office and a husband doesn't want to hear about his wife's job."<sup>39</sup>

Shortly before the end of the war, the "Tribune Talkies" asked, "After the war, what will happen to women working in war industries?" Three of the four women who responded felt that women would want to continue working, but that it would be "hard on the children." Mrs. Charlotte White, who identified herself as a housewife, went so far as to say "they're going to ruin part of the family life of the whole people." Surprisingly, the two men who answered, both in uniform, felt that the women would "want their independence" and keep working. They also cautioned

that “they may harm the kids” and admonished “the women with children” that they “owe it to them to be at home.”<sup>40</sup>

Despite union membership during the war and involvement in wartime strikes, women were essentially ignored by labor unions as they faced dismissal on the grounds of being female at the end of the war. In his discussion of labor and culture in the 1940s, *Rainbow at Midnight*, George Lipsitz recounted several examples of women who filed grievances and protested their dismissals. A female delegate to the 1946 UAW convention told the membership, “Certainly we are not going to work to organize the union and then go back to work for \$15 a week.”<sup>41</sup> Even during the war, few businesses or unions paid women equally for equal work.<sup>42</sup>

According to a survey of 13,000 women by the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor, three quarters of working women wanted to stay employed after the war, including over half of the working wives.<sup>43</sup> This contrasts with other studies that revealed a majority of middle-class women who could afford to wanted to quit.<sup>44</sup> For those who stayed in the workforce, the prospects dimmed. Women’s pay declined twenty-six percent after the war, compared to the national average decrease of four percent for all workers. As well, what limited childcare options that had been made available disappeared. Those who moved to the suburbs found that leaving the kids with Grandma was no longer an option. The for-profit childcare industry did not yet exist; middle-class children were to be cared for by non-working mothers.<sup>45</sup> In Tampa, Mrs. Elizabeth Ingram made a plea to the school board to continue at least those nursery schools that served “children of mothers who must work and will continue to hold jobs after all war industries have closed.”<sup>46</sup>

As age at marriage and first childbirth began to lower, an older female workforce, concentrated in low paying jobs, developed. The number of women employed actually continued to increase after the war, but now it was often for that second, supplementary income imagined by the family wage ideology. Between 1940 and 1960 the number of women working tripled, but fewer than half of them worked full time.<sup>47</sup>

Even Rosie the Riveter herself, Rose Will Monroe of Ypsilanti, Michigan, continued to work after the war. She drove a taxi, oper-

ated a beauty shop and started a construction firm in Indiana called Rose Builders.<sup>48</sup> For a Tampa-area example, Weatherford offers Mabel Claprod Simmons, who moved to Ruskin in 1949 to set up a branch of her family’s floral business. She “went on to win many state and national awards, with ‘only woman ever’ as an apt summation of her career.”<sup>49</sup>

Yet no organized women’s movement developed after the war and women seemed to accept their fate as housewives or members of a low-paid “pink collar” workforce. To understand why, we need to consider the mindset of Americans during the decades that *preceded* the war. The Roaring Twenties have been characterized as a time of great gains for women, gains that included not only suffrage but also more acceptance of female economic independence. The Great Depression, however, brought about a return to a more traditional family structure. Although many women worked out of necessity in the 1930s, and the actual number and percentage of working women rose (in part due to extremely low wages), government programs (like the WPA examples cited above) were focused on men. The New Deal sacrificed working women in its attempt to salvage American families. Section 213 of the U.S. Economy Act of 1932 is an example of the family wage ideology at its worst. It resulted in hundreds of women being dismissed from their federal jobs, since married women were now, by law, the first to be laid off. Similar “relief” programs in state and local governments followed.<sup>50</sup>

Although Hollywood glorified the independent career women of the 30s, studies of the children of the Great Depression (who became the female workforce of WWII), show that any role reversal that occurred in the era was viewed as abnormal, brought on by hardship, and not expected to continue with future prosperity. When confronted with the economic boom of the 1950s, many of those women, who recalled the hardships of the Depression, were “eager to establish secure families with traditional gender roles that had been so seriously threatened during their childhoods in the 1930s.”<sup>51</sup> Even Hollywood magic could not reconcile the working woman of the 30s with the image of the wife and mother. The media began to introduce the theme of divorce as acceptable instead. As Elaine Tyler May tells us in her analysis of the briefly in-



Despite wartime labor shortages, most jobsites remained male-dominated. Here, a civilian crew builds a reinforced concrete ship at the Mallory Docks in Tampa, 1943-44. (Photograph courtesy of the Tampa Historical Society.)

dependent precursors to the family women of the 1950s, “these tough and rugged career women were admired as *women* not as wives.”<sup>52</sup>

The divorce rate did indeed climb in the 1930s, but it was not because women were becoming self-fulfilled and self-reliant. It was more likely due to the emotional strain put on marriages by a persistently bleak financial situation. The economic reality for women (real women, not the ones in the movies) was such that they had “little trouble choosing between their ill-paying jobs and the prospect of marriage to a promising provider.” In 1939, women earned on average only 59 percent what men did. As May points out, “Viable long-term job prospects for women might have prompted new ways of structuring family roles. In the face of persistent obstacles, however, that potential withered.”<sup>53</sup>

When the war began, unemployment fell from 14 percent to zero and women were needed in the workforce.<sup>54</sup> But as the tone of Tampa newspapers of the time has shown us, this did not mean it would soon be considered normal for women to work. The longing for a stable family life created by the Depression did not end. After all, wasn’t this what the men were fighting for, “home

and hearth?”<sup>55</sup> And as the war ended, the focus turned, justifiably, to the needs of the returning veterans. In addition to their need to take back their jobs, the soldiers needed emotional support to ease their adjustment to civilian life. This, the message of the times suggested, could only be provided by the subservient wife.<sup>56</sup>

May provides examples of the propaganda that faced women during the war years. A wartime pamphlet said of the woman workers: “it is essential that women avoid arrogance and retain their femininity in the face of their own new status . . . in her new independence she must not lose her humanness as a woman.” In a wartime textbook, the authors state — with scientific authority — that “social freedom and employment for women would cause sexual laxity, moral decay and the destruction of the family.”<sup>57</sup>

A conference in Tampa in February 1945 was to be “between women leaders and industrial executives on postwar problems.” The actual speakers and topics, however, had very little to do with women. Only one woman addressed the conference, and she was the only speaker to discuss women’s postwar adjustment: “Clearly, in the minds of those who held the local economic power, victory meant that it was time for women to leave the shipyards and return to the kitchens.”<sup>58</sup> A column in an evening paper at the end of the war provided detailed beauty advice to women under the headline, “Girls Should be Attractive to Returning GIs.”<sup>59</sup>

The women of the “greatest generation” lived through a decade of economic depression and five years of war. Many were very happy to give up their paid work to live the American dream in the suburbs. Despite how that urge might look to feminists later, some scholars contend that, at the time, “housewifery gave women a peculiar opportunity for autonomy.”<sup>60</sup> Even so, their idea of the American dream in the suburbs was not one of subservience. As a survey by the *Ladies Home Journal* of that era showed, 60 percent objected to the word “obey” in the wedding vows and 75 percent believed in joint decision making.<sup>61</sup> (Whether these beliefs were reflected in the world they experienced is debatable.)

If giving up their economic independence was a sacrifice, these women no doubt considered it a trivial one compared

# TRIBUNE TALKIES By Cordelia Barclay

The Tribune will pay \$3 for each question submitted and used. Mail your question to The Tribune Talkies, Tribune Building, Tampa 2.

## TODAY'S QUESTION

After the war, what will happen to women working in war industries?  
(Submitted by Betty Nell Lea, 886 E. Chelsea st.)

THE PLACE  
Along Franklin street  
THE ANSWERS

<p>Mrs. Charlotte White, housewife, 2502 Highland ave.: "If American women stay on working in industries, they're going to ruin part of the family life of the whole people. It'll be particularly bad for children. If there isn't any one person who can serve as the nucleus of the home, the kids run wild. The children deserve to have their mother's full attention. But a number of women probably will want to continue working."</p>	<p>Myra Martin, clerk, 331 Plant ave.: "We're facing that problem right now where I work, with the railroad. The young unmarried women have taken men's places in wartime. We have rules about seniority, and some of the women have more time than the men there. There's quite a bit of competition about it. But from what I've seen, I'd definitely say that married women with small children should be home all the time."</p>
--	--



The "Tribune Talkies" was still talking in 1945, and the topic then, as earlier, was working women. (*The Tampa Times*, September [ND] 1945.)

to the sacrifices they had made during the Depression and the war. As historian Doris Weatherford told the *Tampa Tribune* on the fiftieth anniversary of Pearl Harbor, the wartime women wanted to believe that their world had not really changed, they wanted to see the war as an aberration.<sup>62</sup>

Right after the war, fears of another depression were common and, in the 1950s, fear of social annihilation by nuclear war was widespread. This atmosphere caused many Americans to grasp at home life as their only source of security. As May put it "A home filled with children would create a feeling of warmth and security against the cold forces of disruption and alienation."<sup>63</sup>

The anti-Communist sentiments that began shortly after the war also portrayed the nuclear family living in the suburbs as the ideal product of a superior American capitalist system. To exemplify this politicization of home life, May offers us the 1959 example of then Vice-President Richard Nixon's visit to Moscow for The American National Exhibition, in what has come to be known as the "Kitchen Debate." Nixon's knockout punch, according to May, was: "I think that this attitude toward women is universal. What we want is to make easier the life of our housewives." Nixon did not

seem to even recognize that in the Soviet Union, as Premier Khrushchev tried to point out, they did not have that "capitalist attitude toward women."<sup>64</sup>

But the reporters on that visit noticed the difference and used it to bolster the propagandistic line of "our women are better than your women," suggesting that Soviet women had "desexualized themselves" and showed "few of the physical charms of women in the West," seeming "unconcerned about their looks."<sup>65</sup> In her description of the same visit, Rosalind Rosenberg credits Nixon with the belief that "America's washing machines, refrigerators, and television sets would stave off class warfare and thwart the appeal of Communism."<sup>66</sup> Certainly, it seemed that the women in America's suburbs were getting the message.

Interestingly, Rosenberg points out that the juxtaposition of America with the Soviet Union, while undermining women's rights, worked to empower the struggle for rights for African-Americans. "By celebrating the virtues of the 'free world,'" she tells us, "leaders in the United States all but invited civil rights leaders to ask how secure could that world be if a significant minority could legitimately claim not to have equal rights?"<sup>67</sup>

Fears of another depression quickly evaporated in the 1950s as continued military spending for the Cold War combined with growing consumerism, resulting in remarkable economic growth.<sup>68</sup> In October and November of 1945, the newspapers in Tampa continually reported on the reduction in the jobless rate.<sup>69</sup> Despite the growing sentiment that women should be in the home, they were still needed in a booming workplace. Low birthrates during World War I and the Depression had created a shortage of male workers. Two million clerical jobs and one million service-sector jobs were created nationally in the 1950s, and most of them went to women.<sup>70</sup> The concern over displacing the returning veterans was also overstated; a poll of servicemen returning to Florida showed that seventy percent were not interested in returning to the jobs that they left.<sup>71</sup> In keeping with the spirit of the times, in October 1945, the Tampa Business and Professional Women's Club adopted the theme "Jobs Enough to Go Around."<sup>72</sup>

More difficult to answer than why some



women left their jobs and some moved to lower-paid ones, is whether or not their successes during the war made a difference. Most scholars agree that individual lives were changed, but public policy did not change along with it. American culture started to change, but cultural change is a slow and complicated process. Anthropologist Tomoko Hamada expresses this well when he defines culture as “a process of creating meanings and practices in webs of agency and power, which are relational, historically situated, shifting, and incomplete.”<sup>73</sup> As individual perceptions change, this process evolves. This description corresponds with Susan M. Hartmann’s “seeds of change” thesis, which posits that while enormous changes occurred in the lives of individuals, the war did not bring revolution for women as a group.<sup>74</sup> Some social change may have surfaced later. Based on her study of Tampa Bay women during the war, Caitlin Crowell concluded, “Many of these women learned things about themselves that they carried with them for the rest of their lives and passed on to younger generations.”<sup>75</sup> Sherna Gluck also felt that “the housewives who went home may have transmitted ‘private changes,’ such as increased feeling of self-sufficiency, to their daughters,” who became part of feminism’s second wave in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>76</sup>

Nancy Gabin provides examples of the beginning of corresponding changes in public policy. In a landmark case brought by the United Electrical Workers in 1945, the National War Labor Board concluded that General Electric and Westinghouse were arbitrarily reducing wage rates by as much as one-third if the work was performed by women — despite having first systematically and neutrally evaluated the jobs. Gabin says that the union’s position in this case essentially advanced the same argument as our current concept of equal pay for work of comparable worth. Although the Board was dissolved at the end of the war and never implemented a remedy for this case, Gabin considers it support for her conclusion that “if WWII was not the time for permanent change in the status of women in the labor market and for gender equality in the workplace, it was important in establishing precedent for reconsideration of wage disparities.”<sup>77</sup> An article in *The Tampa Daily Times* in November 1945 reveals that the Labor Department had begun to advocate

that pay rates be set “regardless of sex,” in part to protect men’s wages which they concluded were “bound to slide downward if women’s wages are lowered.”<sup>78</sup> Setting pay on “job content” as they recommended, however, opened the door for a low-paid “pink collar” workforce. Public policy change, like social change, is also slow and complicated.

Much of the reason for lack of real progress toward labor equality, according to Gabin, was the fact that many of the women who worked during the war had never worked before and saw no benefit to an organized effort or protest. Also, those who had worked before were earning wages significantly higher than they had received in conventional women’s jobs. Protest was also viewed as potentially unpatriotic and, under the “no-strike pledge,” most strikes were prohibited by law. Women may also have felt that their prospects for retaining their jobs when the war was over were better if they did not cause trouble. Gabin still believes, however, that “the significance of the reconsideration of gender and the work process in industry during World War II ought not be underestimated.”<sup>79</sup>

Most scholars of World War II history have conceded that the reasons that women joined and left the workforce and specific jobs “were as diverse as the diversity among individual women.”<sup>80</sup> With regard to Tampa women, Caitlin Crowell expressed it well: “There is no single overarching story of women’s lives during the war. Women in Tampa were rich and poor; old and young; single, married, and widowed. They were urban and rural; gay and straight; black, white, Latino, Asian, and Native American. Women worked, they stayed at home, they volunteered, they enlisted.”<sup>81</sup>

Women today — as then — also choose to leave the paid workforce to raise children full-time or take a “mommy track” in their careers. However, there remain many women who either choose to work or have to work full time, just as men do. After World War II there were surely women who were happy to become suburban housewives, but there were also women who did not want to give up the independence or the income, and women who needed to work to support themselves and others. But there is a big difference between the women workers of the past and those of the present. Today there are both more protections provid-

ed by public policy and more acceptance within American culture.

In a 1949 article in *American Mercury Magazine*, Edith M. Stern proffered this to describe the predicament of women:

HELP WANTED: DOMESTIC: FEMALE. All cooking, cleaning, laundering, sewing, meal planning, shopping, week-day chauffeuring, social secretarial service, and complete care of three children. Salary at employer's option. Time off if possible.

No one in her right senses would apply for such a job. No one in his right senses, even a desperate widower, would place such an advertisement. Yet it correctly describes the average wife and mother's situation, in which most women remain for love, but many because they have no way out.<sup>82</sup>

It was not long before many voices echoed Stern's. In 1955, a female UAW member, at the union's annual convention, stated what is still the feeling of many women today: "Who is to say a woman should work or should not? Where is our democracy in this country if a woman cannot be a free individual and make up her own mind? I think that when you start telling women you can or cannot work, you are infringing upon their civil rights, which I, as a woman resent."<sup>83</sup>

We will never know what would have happened if there had been equal opportunity and equal pay for women during and after World War II. In perhaps her most notorious mis-prediction, anthropologist Margaret Mead said in the 1950s that "if American women are given the 'choice' of having careers, and if men are more involved in home affairs, women will more amiably choose to be housewives."<sup>84</sup> American women were not given such a choice after the war. It is clear, however, that they noted the absence of options.

#### ENDNOTES

1. *Tampa Morning Tribune* July 28, 1942.
2. Gary R. Mormino, *Hillsborough County Goes to War: The Home Front, 1940-1950* (Tampa, FL: Tampa Bay History Center, 2001).
3. Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*, ed. Barbara Haber, *American Women in the Twentieth Century* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982).

4. Mormino, *Hillsborough County Goes to War: The Home Front, 1940-1950*.
5. *Tampa Morning Tribune* October 18, 1942, *Tampa Morning Tribune* November 11, 1944, *Tampa Morning Tribune* August 7, 1942, *Tampa Morning Tribune* November 5, 1942, *St. Petersburg Times* March 7, 1943.
6. *Tampa Morning Tribune* August 7, 1942.
7. *Tampa Morning Tribune* November 15, 1944.
8. *Tallahassee Daily Democrat* June 3, 1943.
9. Caitlin Crowell, "Defining Wartime Womanhood: Tampa Bay Women During World War II," *The Sunland Tribune, Journal of the Tampa Historical Society* XXVII (2001).
10. *Tampa Daily Times* August 22, 1942.
11. *Tampa Morning Tribune* November 11, 1944.
12. *Jacksonville Journal* May 13, 1943.
13. Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).
14. *Tampa Daily Times* April 7, 1943.
15. Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II, Contributions in Women's Studies* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).
16. *Tampa Morning Tribune* April 11, 1942.
17. *Tampa Morning Tribune* September 10, 1943.
18. *Tampa Morning Tribune* August 7, 1942.
19. Ibid.
20. *Tampa Daily Times* August 22, 1942.
21. *Hooker's Point Log* July 30, 1943.
22. Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise, *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women at Work in World War II* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).
23. Catherine Reef, *Working in American: An Eyewitness History* (New York: Facts on File, 2000).
24. Gary R. Mormino, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1998).
25. James Francis Tidd Jr., "The Works Progress Administration in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, Florida, 1935-1943" (University of South Florida, 1989).
26. Doris Weatherford, *A History of Women in Tampa* (Tampa, FL: Commissioned by the Athena Society, 1991).
27. *Tampa Morning Tribune* November 4, 1942.
28. *Tampa Morning Tribune* November 15, 1944.
29. Ibid.
30. *Tampa Morning Tribune* July 15, 1945.
31. *Tampa Daily Times* November 2, 1945.
32. *Tampa Daily Times* November 15, 1945.
33. Ibid.
34. *Hooker's Point Log* July 30, 1943.
35. Nancy Gabin, "Women and the United Automobile Workers' Union in the 1950s," in *Women, Work and Protest*, ed. Ruth Milkman (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).
36. Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*.
37. Adams, Michael C. C., *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
38. *Tampa Morning Tribune* August 15, 1943.
39. *Tampa Morning Tribune* March 9, 1944.
40. *Tampa Morning Tribune* 1945.

41. George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).
42. Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990).
43. Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change*.
44. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II*.
45. Weatherford, *A History of Women in Tampa*.
46. *Tampa Daily Times* September 1945.
47. Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).
48. *The Tampa Tribune* June 2, 1997.
49. Weatherford, *A History of Women in Tampa*.
50. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid, Judith N. McArthur, "From Rosie the Riveter to the Feminine Mystique: An Historiographical Survey of American Women and World War II," *Bulletin of Bibliography* 44, no. 1 (1987).
56. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.
57. Ibid.
58. Weatherford, *A History of Women in Tampa*.
59. *Tampa Daily Times* November 2, 1945.
60. McArthur, "From Rosie the Riveter to the Feminine Mystique: An Historiographical Survey of American Women and World War II."
61. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.
62. *The Tampa Tribune* December 7, 1991.
63. May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1992).
67. Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the 20th Century*.
68. Ibid.
69. *Tampa Daily Times* October 5, 1945, *Tampa Daily Times* October 6, 1945, *Tampa Daily Times* October 29, 1945, *Tampa Daily Times* November 10, 1945.
70. Reef, *Working in American: An Eyewitness History*.
71. *Tampa Morning Tribune* September 28, 1945.
72. *Tampa Daily Times* October 1945.
73. Tomoko Hamada, "Culture Concepts in Business Anthropology of Quality Management," in *NAPA Bulletin 18, the Unity of Theory and Practice in Anthropology: Rebuilding a Fractured Synthesis*, ed. Carole E. Hill and Marietta L. Baba (Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association, 2000).
74. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s*.
75. Crowell, "Defining Wartime Womanhood: Tampa Bay Women During World War II."
76. McArthur, "From Rosie the Riveter to the Feminine Mystique: An Historiographical Survey of American Women and World War II."
77. Nancy Gabin, "Women, Unions, and Debates over Work During World War II in Indiana," in *Midwestern Women: Work, Community, and Leadership at the Crossroads*, ed. Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Wendy Hamand Venet, *Midwestern History and Culture* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997).
78. *Tampa Daily Times* November 30, 1945.
79. Gabin, "Women and the United Automobile Workers' Union in the 1950s."
80. Susan O'Brien Culp, "For the Duration: Women's Roles in St. Petersburg and Tampa During World War II," *Tampa Bay History* 17, no. 1 (1995).
81. Crowell, "Defining Wartime Womanhood: Tampa Bay Women During World War II."
82. Reef, *Working in American: An Eyewitness History*.
83. Gabin, "Women and the United Automobile Workers' Union in the 1950s."
84. Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity*, ed. Catharine R. Stimpson, *Women in Culture and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).



Voted  
Tampa Bay's  
Favorite  
Spanish  
Restaurant

CIGAR CAFE  
Live Jazz  
Thursday - Saturday

Nightly  
Flamenco  
Dance Shows  
EXCEPT SUNDAY

Ybor City, Tampa  
21st Street & 7th Ave.  
813-248-4961

SERVING LUNCH  
AND DINNER  
DAILY

Visit one of our other locations:  
Sarasota • St. Augustine  
St. Petersburg • Clearwater Beach  
Celebration





# About the Authors

**Pamela Gibson** is the librarian at the main branch of the Manatee County Public Library, Eaton Room of Florida History. She holds a B.A. from Berry University in Miami and a Masters in Library Science from Florida State University. She has authored numerous articles in *The Sunland Tribune* and elsewhere. Ms. Gibson is the President of the Manatee County Historical Society.

**Daleah Goodwin** is a doctoral student in History at the University of Georgia. Her area of scholarly interest is twentieth century black women. Ms. Goodwin wishes to acknowledge the kindness of those who helped with the execution of her article: Dr. Canter Brown, Jr., Mr. Ronald Goodwin, Ms. LaToya Floyd, and the author's family and friends.

**Rebekah Heppner** is a Ph.D. candidate in Applied Anthropology at the University of South Florida. Her research interests include cultural issues related to racism and gender. Ms. Heppner holds undergraduate and advanced degrees in Business and is adjunct faculty in the Department of Government and International Affairs at USF. She serves on the Boards of the Centre for Women and the Tampa Bay Business Committee for the Arts.

**Meeghan Kane** is a resident of St. Petersburg, Florida. She graduated with a B.A. in English from the University of South Florida before entering its Florida Studies Program, where her research interests include a range of social issues and their effects on Florida life and history.

**Joe Knetsch** has authored over 170 articles on Florida history and surveying. His degrees include a B.S. from Western Michigan University, an M.A. from Florida Atlantic University, and a Ph.D. from Florida State University. Dr. Knetsch's published works include *Florida's Seminole Wars: 1817-1858* and *Faces on the Frontier: Surveyors and Developers in 19th Century Florida*. His current literary project is *Florida, Cuba, and the Spanish-American War*, to be published by the Florida Historical Press later

this year. The author of a regular history column in *Professional Surveyor Magazine*, Dr. Knetsch also serves as the historian for the Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

**Maureen Patrick** is a native Tampan. She holds an M.A. in Humanities from the University of South Florida. Her research interests embrace various aspects of American and European nineteenth century cultural history. Ms. Patrick is a frequent contributor to academic journals and symposiums, and has done singular research on nineteenth century Florida rural cemeteries. The former Curator/Education Curator at the Ybor City Museum, Ms. Patrick has worked with the Henry B. Plant Museum as a living history/museum theater specialist for 18 years. Ms. Patrick is the current President of the Tampa Historical Society.

**Jared Toney** is completing a Master's Degree in History at the University of South Florida. His research focuses on transnational identity, migration, and working class radicalism in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mr. Toney wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the following persons in the completion of his article: Fraser Ottanelli, Robert Ingalls, Mark Greenberg, Andrew Huse (all of University of South Florida); Chuck Smith (Hillsborough County Elections Office.)

## **William A. Knight**

Attorney at Law  
Board Certified Criminal Trial Lawyer

■  
633 North Franklin Street  
Suite 725  
Tampa, Florida 33602

■  
Telephone (813) 221-6663  
Fax (813) 221-6494

*The power of experience®*



**FOWLER WHITE  
BOGGS BANKER**

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

*As we celebrate more than 60 years as  
a full service law firm, we salute the*

# Tampa Historical Society

and its outstanding contributions  
to the Tampa Bay Community

BONITA SPRINGS • FORT MYERS • NAPLES • ORLANDO  
ST. PETERSBURG • TALLAHASSEE • TAMPA • WEST PALM BEACH

501 E. Kennedy Blvd., Suite 1700  
Tampa, Florida 33602

(813) 228-7411 phone • (813) 229-8313 fax

*www.fowlerwhite.com*

# The Sunland Tribune 2005 Patrons

*Tampa Historical Society acknowledges with gratitude the support of the following individuals and organizations.*

Clark & Glenda Barlow  
William and Lela Barlow  
Rose Beiro Barus  
Andrew & Shelby Bender  
Daniel Boone, Jr.  
Walter C. Caldwell  
Claire Cardina  
Cynthia & Patrick Cimino  
Karen Clarke  
J. F. and Elizabeth Cloen  
George & Frances Curtis  
Mrs. Lula Dovi  
Elizabeth Laramie Dunham  
Ellwanger, Tom & Sabine  
Environmental Engineering Consultants, Inc.  
Veronica Everett  
Ferman, Martha S.  
Gabriel Fernandez  
Sol and Sandra Fleischman  
Lawrence E. Fuentes  
Garrett, Howard L. & Marie G.  
Sam M. Gibbons  
Helen Eckart Gonzalez  
Bob & Marion Gray  
Heidi Hanlon Guerra  
Lon & Lou Hatton  
Leland M. Hawes, Jr.  
William and Ann Hayes  
James B. Hayward  
Mrs. Willard T. Hicks  
Terry Butchko Hoft  
Mr. and Mrs. George B. Howell, III  
Sally and John Arthur Jones  
James & Bonnie Judy  
Robert Kerstein  
Ann Scott Anderson Knight  
Frank T. Lastra  
Ralph Lavandera, Jr.  
Harriet Bize Lenfestey  
H. T. Lykes, II  
Mr. & Mrs. William C. McLean, Jr.  
John McQuigg  
Fernando R. Mesa  
Harris Mullen  
Mr. & Mrs. Charles G. Mullen, Jr.

Ruth Benton Mullholnd  
Burt and Bettie Patten Nelson  
Mr. & Mrs. Stanford J. Newman  
Solon & Sherrill O'Neal, Jr.  
Vernon Peeples  
Dr. J. Wayne & Bridget Phillips  
Dr. Anthony & Pizzo Family  
Sharon & Paul Pizzo  
Jan & Bill Platt  
Eugene K. & Barbara D. Pool and family  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard W. Reeves  
DiDi & Sandy Rief  
Bill and Irene Roach  
Gloria Runton  
Marsha & Thomas Rydberg  
L. Gray Sanders  
Jeanne C. Saunders  
Rebekah Scott and Meredith S. Field  
Margaret Vance Smith  
Gloria & Lamar Sparkman  
Randy & Sara Charles Stevens  
Beth & Jack Tanner  
Mr. & Mrs. William J. Terry  
Tom and Lee Touchton  
Charles & June Wade  
Mary G. Wade  
William R. & Nancy Wofford

---

## 2005 Tampa Historical Society Membership

### \*LIFETIME MEMBERS

Mr. Charles J. Adler  
Ms. Patricia Alchediak  
Mr. Girard Anderson  
Mr. & Mrs. David Anton  
Mr. W. DeHart Ayala  
David Barclay, Ph.D.  
Marvin and Trudy Barkin  
Clark and Glenda Barlow  
Mr. William E. Barlow  
Ms. Rose B. Barus  
Dr. & Mrs. J. A. Battle  
Paul and Mary Bearss  
Andrew H. and Shelby Bender  
Mrs. Marie Jane Bentschner  
Mrs. Colleen Bevis  
Mr. John C. Bierley  
Mr. & Mrs. Buddy Blain  
Rola and Judy Blanco

Mr. & Mrs. George T. Blanford  
Mr. Roger Blethen  
Ms. Pat Boody  
Mr. Daniel Boone, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. John H. Boyet  
Julie Brown  
Ms. Kimberly Brown  
David and Ellen Brown  
Mary & Henry Brown  
Dr. Canter Brown, Jr.  
Ms. Anna Ruth Burnside  
Ms. Helen N. Byrd  
Walter C. and Dorothea Caldwell  
Mr. & Mrs. Paul E. Camp, Sr.  
Ms. Claire A. Cardina  
Mrs. Annie-Kate B. Carpenter  
Mr. & Mrs. Warren Cason  
The Chambers Group  
Patrick and Cynthia Cimino  
Ms. Karen Clarke  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard S. Clarke  
Col. & Mrs James D. Cline  
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Cloen  
Mrs. June Tison Coe  
Ms. Marie B. Corcoran  
Mr. Christopher H. Corral  
Ms. Molly Corum  
Mr. H. L. "Punky" Crowder  
Mr. Harry Cunningham  
Ms. Sue Ann Curd  
Mr. & Mrs. George D. Curtis, Jr.  
Mr. Paul Danahy  
Mr. J. Allison Defoor, II  
Mrs. Lula J. Dovi  
Mrs. Elizabeth Dunham  
Mrs. Charlotte Dunn  
Ms. Kathleen Durdin  
Mr. & Mrs. Fletcher Dyches  
East Hillsborough Historical Society  
Ross and Vicki Elsberry  
Veronica and Jim Everett, Jr.  
\*Mrs. Martha Ferman  
Mr. & Mrs. J.L. Ferman, Jr.  
Ms. Yolanda Fernandez  
Gabriel and Anita Fernandez  
Dr. Eustasio Fernandez  
Mr. & Mrs. Sol Fleischman, Jr.  
Jerry E. and Nancy Fogarty  
Ms. Iris T. Frank  
Mr. Ian Freig  
Lawrence & Sandra Fuentes  
Mrs. Lynne T. G. Gadsden, III  
Ms. Dulce Maria V. Garcia  
Dr. & Mrs. Michael Garcia  
Mr. Howard L. Garrett

Mrs. Joan Garrison  
Ms. Sandra O. Gartner  
Michele & William Gerrell, IV  
Hon. Sam M. Gibbons  
Leonard H. and Jean Gilbert  
Mr. Harley C. Gilmore  
Mrs. Grace Giunta  
Ms. Helen E. Gonzalez  
Mary E. and John S. Goodson, Jr.  
Robert and Marion Gray  
\*Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce  
\*Mayor Dick Greco  
\*Mr. Terry L. Greenhalgh  
Mr. Ian Greig  
Ms. Heidi Hanlon Guerra  
Mr. J. A. Guyton, Jr.  
Mr. Charles Hach  
Mrs. Leah M. Hackney  
David and Judy Hall  
Mr. & Mrs. John Hampton  
Mr. E. Chris Harp, Executive Director  
Mr. Alan D. Harvill  
Lon and Lou P. Hatton  
Mr. Leland M. Hawes, Jr.  
Mr. William N. Hayes  
James B. & Rosa N. Hayward  
Mr. Otto Lee Henderson  
Mrs. Cindy Henderson  
Mr. Edward J. Henley, Jr.  
Mrs. William E. Henson  
Dr. & Mrs. Thomas S. Herman  
Mr. Dennis Hernandez  
Mr. & Mrs. J.R. Herron  
Mr. & Mrs. Galen Hibbard  
Mrs. Willard T. Hicks  
Fraser and Maria Hines  
Terry Butchko Hoft  
Mr. & Mrs. George B. Howell, III  
Mr. G. Blaine Howell, Jr.  
Thomas and Christine Hyde  
Ms. Linda Jennings  
Mr. E Calvin Johnson  
Ms. Elaine Johnson  
Mr. Robin R. Jones  
Dr. & Mrs. Galen B. Jones  
Sally and John Arthur Jones  
Mr. Charles Jordan  
Mr. & Mrs. James C. Judy  
Mr. & Mrs. James Kaul  
Dr. Robert J. Kerstein  
Rodney H. Kite-Powell, II  
Mr. William A Knight  
Mrs. Ann Scott Anderson Knight  
J.A. and Irene Lamb  
Mr. & Mrs. Logan Lane



Mr. Logan Lane, Jr.  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank T. Lastra, PE  
 Mrs. Samuel I. Latimer  
 Mr. Ralph Lavandera, Jr.  
 Mrs. Syd Lenfestey  
 Mr. Marston C. Leonard  
 Mr. & Mrs. John T. Lesley, Jr.  
 Mr. & Mrs. J. Leonard Levy  
 Mrs. Claude Logan, Jr.  
 Mr. H. T. Lykes, II  
 Mr. & Mrs. E. P. Macbryde  
 Mr. Steve R. Marsicano  
 Mrs. Linda Martin  
 SGM & Mrs Bruce H. Matthews, Ret.  
 Mr. John McEwen  
 Mr. & Mrs. Howell A. McKay  
 Ms. Gilda McKinnon  
 Mr. & Mrs. William C. McLean, Jr.  
 Mr. John McQuigg  
 John & Camille McWhirter, Jr.  
 Mrs. Edith Skidmore Meeker  
 Mr. Fernando Rodriguez Mesa  
 Susanne Morris and Tom Meyer  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ashby M. Moody  
 Dr. & Mrs. Gary Mormino  
 Ms. Peggy L. Morris  
 \*Mrs. Sandra Mulder  
 Ms. Ruth Benton Mulholland  
 Harris H. and Katherin Mullen  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles G. Mullen, Jr.  
 \*Ann and David R. Murphey, III  
 Burt and Bettie Nelson  
 Paul and Mabelle Nestor  
 Eric and Lyris Newman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Stanford J. Newman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank North  
 Lester and Yotive Olson  
 Ms. Candy Olson  
 Mr. & Mrs. Solon F. O'Neal, Jr.  
 Barbara Parker  
 Ms. Maureen Patrick  
 John and Gail Paulk  
 Mr. Scott Peeler, Jr.  
 Rep. Vernon Peoples  
 Dr. & Mrs. Wayne Phillips  
 Dr. Anthony J. Pizzo  
 Mr. & Mrs. Paul R. Pizzo  
 Mrs. Anthony Pizzo  
 Mr. & Mrs. Paul Pizzo, Jr.  
 Jan and Bill Platt  
 Eugene & Barbara Pool  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard W. Reeves  
 Ms. Velna Williams Reniak  
 Mr. & Mrs. Steve Reynolds  
 Mr. & Mrs. W.H. Reynolds  
 Sandy and Didi Rief, III  
 Mrs. Patrick Riordan  
 Bill and Irene Roach  
 Susan & Roland Rodriguez  
 Mr. & Mrs. Frank L. Rosenblatt  
 Ms. Barbara Jackson Rossman  
 Ms. Gloria C. Runton  
 Ms. Marsha Griffin Rydberg  
 E.J. and Elsa Salcines  
 Mrs. Arsenio Sanchez  
 Mr. & Mrs. L. Gray Sanders  
 Ms. Jeanne C. Sanders  
 Steve Saunders  
 Mrs. Robert W. Saunders  
 Rebekah Scott & Meredith Scott Field  
 Russell and Mary Jo Shenk  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter M. Skemp  
 Ms. Rhoda S. Smith  
 Mr. A. Frank Smith  
 Mrs. Margaret Vance Smith  
 Ms. Cynthia Fara Smith  
 Lamar and Gloria Sparkman  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Spicola  
 \*State Library of Florida  
 \*Mr. & Mrs. Randolph Stevens  
 \*Dick and Raymetta Stowers  
 Ms. Patricia Potter Strickland  
 Barbara Reeves and Fletcher Stuart  
 Joseph A. Sultenfuss  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Sultenfuss  
 Mr. Stephen Tamargo  
 Tampa Bay History Center  
 \*Tampa Preservation, Inc.  
 \*Tampa-Hillsborough Public Library,  
     Serials/H&G Dept.  
 Mr. & Mrs. J. H. Tanner  
 Mr. Mark Tate  
 Mr. & Mrs. William J. Terry  
 Ms. Stella F. Thayer  
 Mr. Wayne Thomas  
 Dr. G. Phillips Thomas  
 Mr. Albert Tillson, Jr.  
 Mr. & Mrs. J. Thomas Touchton  
 Mr. & Mrs. W. J. Turbeville, Jr.  
 Mr. Doug Underwood  
 Mrs. Dorothy Van Balen  
 Mrs. Norma Varas  
 Mrs. Mattie Vega  
 Providence Velasco  
 Charles and June B. Wade  
 Mrs. Mary Wade  
 Mr. J. Edgar Wall, III  
 Mr. Rob Wallace, Environmental, Inc.  
 Mr. Ken Walters  
 Mrs. H.J. Watrous

Mr. & Mrs. Robert C. Weaver  
 \*Dr. Glenn Westfall  
 Dr. & Mrs. O D Wetherell  
 Mr. Larry Wiggins  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard H. Wilson  
 Mr. J. Lange Winckler, Historian  
 Mr. & Mrs. William R. Wofford

Mrs. Mary Shackleford Wolfe  
 Mrs. Dorothy B. Womble  
 Mr. George Wood  
 Hon. Pam Iorio and Mark Woodard  
 \*Mr. Nick Wynn, Historic Roesch House  
 Mr. & Mrs. Rafael M. Ybor  
 Joe & Vilma Zalupski

## Past Presidents of the Tampa Historical Society

Anthony 'Tony' Pizzo*	1971
Nonita Henson	1972
Hampton Dunn	1973, 1974
Dr. James W. Covington	1975
Mrs. Bettie Nelson	1976, 1977
Dr. L. Glenn Westfall	1978
Mrs. Leslie McClain	1979
Kenneth W. Mulder*	1980, 1981
R. Randolph Stevens	1982, 1983
Richard S. Clarke	1984, 1985
Nancy N. Skemp	1986, 1987
Samuel L. Latimer*	1988
Terry L. Greenhalgh	1989
James Judy	1990
George B. Howell III	1991, 1992
Charles C. Jordan	1993
Mrs. Barbara G. Reeves	1993
Charles A. Brown	1994, 1995
Kyle S. VanLandingham	1996, 1997
Ralph N. Beaver	1997
Frank R. North, Sr.	1998, 1999, 2000
Paul R. Pizzo	2001, 2002
William A. Knight	2003

\*Deceased

## Annual Meeting and D.B. McKay Award Dinner



On Thursday evening, the twelfth of January, 2006, the Board and Members of Tampa Historical Society convened for the annual Meeting and presentation of the D.B. McKay Award. The location was the Tampa Yacht and Country Club, and an appreciative crowd was on hand to approve the

new Board of Directors and to hear remarks by retiring President William A. Knight and incoming President Maureen J. Patrick.

Following dinner, the highlight Award presentation took place. This year's recipient was Doris Weatherford. Weatherford is an acknowledged expert and author in the field of women's history. Her books include: *American Women in World War II*, *Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840-1920*, and *Milestones: A Chronology of American Women's History*. Of special interest locally is Weatherford's chronicle of local women's history: *Real Women of Tampa and Hillsborough County from Prehistory to the Millennium*.

In 1995, Weatherford received an award from the Florida Commission on Human Relations for her contributions to the field of women's studies. She is listed in *Who's Who of American Women* and *Who's Who in America*.

# Past Recipients of the D.B. McKay Award

1972	Frank Laumer	1989	U.S. Rep. Charles E. Bennett*
1973	State Senator David McClain	1990	Joan W. Jennewein
1974	Circuit Court Judge Lames R. Knott	1991	Dr. Gary R. Mormino
1975	Gloria Jahoda	1992	Julius J. Gordon
1976	Harris H. Mullen	1993	Jack Moore* and Robert Snyder
1977	Dr. James Covington	1994	Dr. Ferdie Pacheco
1978	Hampton Dunn	1995	Stephanie E. Ferrell
1979	William M. Goza	1996	Michael Gannon
1980	Anthony 'Tony' Pizzo*	1997	Rowena Ferrell Brady*
1981	Allen and Joan Morris	1998	Dr. Canter Brown, Jr.
1982	Mel Fisher	1999	J. Thomas Touchton
1983	Marjory Stoneman Douglas*	2000	Dr. Larry Eugene Rivers
1984	Frank Garcia	2001	Arsenio M. Sanchez
1985	Former Governor Leroy Collins*	2002	Honorable Dick Greco
1086	Dr. Samuel Proctor	2003	Frank R. North, Sr.
1987	Doyle E. Carlton, Jr.*		
1988	Leland M. Hawes, Jr.		

*\*Deceased*



# Tampa... Views from the Past

