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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our appreciation to the following people who have made special contributions to TAMPA BAY HISTORY.

PATRONS
Mrs. B. W. Council
Mark T. Orr

SUSTAINERS
Mary Wyatt Allen
Frank DeBenedictis
John C. Egan
Ferman Motor Car Company, Inc.
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Fred Forkel
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Maynard F. Swanson
R. J. Taylor
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FRIENDS
June Alder
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William Fuente
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Owen and Elvira Niles
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Lois Paradise
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Mr. & Mrs. Mark A. Prater
Harley E. Riedel, II
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Arsenio Sanchez
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Sandra Serrano
R. E. Shoemaker
Dick Stowers
Charlton W. Tebeau
Dr. Jamie Torner
Thomas Thouchton
Janna Tucker
Communities are the building blocks of any society. The United States emerged as a collection of isolated communities that only gradually became a unified country. As late as the 1870s, in the words of historian Robert Wiebe, "American institutions were still oriented toward a community life." Revolutions in industry and transportation changed all this, but even today appeals to community exert a powerful influence among Americans who identify-or seek to identify-with local groups of people sharing certain characteristics, including a particular history.

This issue of Tampa Bay History covers the history of several communities, portraying their distinctive character and giving some insight into how they changed over time. In the opening article, "Henry Plant, J. Lott Brown, and the South Florida State Fair," James W. Covington documents efforts in the early 1900s to develop Tampa as the site for a statewide fair. Barbara Stephenson's essay, "Palmetto, Florida, during the 1920s and 1930s," shows how one small community coped with the boom and bust of the interwar years. The photo essay by Janet M. Hall depicts "The Building of Temple Terrace in the 1920s." A quite different approach to city building is revealed in David McCally's study of "Sun City Center," the retirement community in southern Hillsborough County that dates from the 1960s. Finally, a memoir by William Harrison Snow records the history of Palm View, a small, rural community in northern Manatee County that has effectively disappeared with the passage of time.

With this issue Tampa Bay History begins its fourteenth year of publication. Its survival is a testament to the unflagging support of a community of devoted subscribers. Those listed in the acknowledgements (on page 3) have made special contributions to sustain this nonprofit journal. The editors hope all readers enjoy this issue.
COMMUNICATIONS

Dear Editors:

The farm on the cover of the last issue of Tampa Bay History (Fall/Winter 1991) is the old Sun City farm of C. L. Council and Sons, located on the south Hillsborough County line. It was section 28, west of U.S. 41 and bordering Cockroach Bay and Cockroach Creek. It is now owned by Tampa Electric Company.

In 1934 the Council family left Terra Ceia island in Manatee County because salty high tides ruined their acreage. They found land around Ruskin was cheap ($40 an acre) and plentiful, and they began the nucleus of their operation, which later included cattle, citrus, tomatoes and sod. C. L. Council and Sons included the father C. L. ("Whit") and his sons Emmett ("Bub"), Robert and Buford. Robert is shown in the cover photo [reproduced below] standing on the right, and Emmitt (bending over) to his right. When this picture was taken early in World War II, Buford was flying with the Air Transport Command in Africa. After the war their sister, Hilda Jorgenson, became the farm’s bookkeeper. The third generation, including Pat, Emmett Jr., and Mike, later joined the operation, which became Council Farms.

In the background the photograph also shows a John Deere cultivator and multi-purpose tractor which pulled four-wheel-wagon loads of cucumbers to trucks at the ends of the rows. Picking hampers were lined with burlap bags. The dikes in the background were used to keep salt water out of the low-lying fields which were bordered by mangroves. Flood gates were installed to release rain water and prevent salt water from coming back into the ditches. However, the system proved unsuccessful and cultivation so close to the bay was abandoned.

As a subscriber to Tampa Bay History, I was pleasantly surprised to find members of my family featured on your cover.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Buford W. Council
HENRY PLANT, J. LOTT BROWN, AND THE SOUTH FLORIDA STATE FAIR
by James W. Covington

On February 6, 1991, the Florida State Fair opened its gates for a twelve-day run which generated an eight-million-dollar business for the Tampa Bay area. The fair, which has been in existence on two different sites for eighty-seven years, owes its location in Tampa to the belief of Henry Plant and J. Lott Brown that fairs and expositions were conducive to the growth and prosperity of a city. As early as 1873, when an Industrial Association Fair was held in Savannah, Georgia, Henry Plant promoted his Southern Express Company by providing horses and a wagon to carry fair visitors to and from the fairgrounds and railroad station.1

After Plant had acquired many railroads in Georgia and Florida and extended a line to Tampa, he and his wife visited a foreign exposition to learn more about the operation of fairs and expositions. The State of Florida, possessing much land but little money, subsidized railroads with grants of land for completed tracks, but it provided no money for promoting such events as fairs. When ten states from the U.S. were invited by the Republic of France to send people and exhibits to the Paris Universal Exposition of 1889, the governor of Florida requested the legislature to provide adequate funds for a Florida exhibit, but the legislature took no action. Realizing that this invitation represented a great opportunity to display Florida products, the Plant Investment Company gave $15,000 to finance an exhibit of southern resources. Since the exposition was open during the summer when the citrus season had ended, only pictures of the fruit could be shown. Nevertheless, Plant returned to the United States with the medals that his exhibits had won. Mrs. Plant did not spend much time at the exposition for she was busy purchasing art treasures for her husband’s Tampa Bay Hotel, which was under construction on the banks of the Hillsborough River, opposite Tampa.2

On October 28, 1895, the Cotton States and International Exposition was held in Atlanta, Georgia, and Henry Plant and his railroad system played an important role in the event. Since it was also the day set aside for his seventy-sixth birthday celebration, two thousand employees travelled in three special trains to the Atlanta Exposition, where Plant shook hands with every employee in an afternoon reception. Prominent in the exposition’s attractions was a building designed in the form of a pyramid which contained articles and exhibits from all parts of the South that were served by Plant’s railroads.3

After the Cotton States and International Exposition had concluded its stay at the Atlanta Fairgrounds, Plant made plans to place his exhibits in an exhibition hall to be erected on the grounds of the Tampa Bay Hotel. By the fall of 1896 a frame colonial revival style building measuring 80 by 110 feet had been constructed on the western side of the hotel. Exhibits of southern products that had been available at the Atlanta Exposition were placed within the building and included such items as boulders of phosphate rock placed at the entrance, pyramids of hard rock, a miniature phosphate mine, pine trees, citrus fruits, corn, oats, sweet potatoes, cotton, industrial products, and a map of the Plant Railroad and Steamship Systems.4 Additional space for other projects was provided during the fall of 1897 when a crew of fifty workmen, under the direction of J.W. Williams, cleared away pine trees and other vegetation to the north
and west of the hotel. A half-mile race track for horses and an inner one-fourth-mile bicycle track with an adjacent stand for spectators was constructed and available for use in December 1897. Other projects completed on the site included a baseball field and eighteen-hole golf course. When all of these facilities were opened to hotel guests and the general public, the *Tampa Weekly Tribune* recommended as early as March 1897 that the community should plan for a South Florida Fair. Thus, when Plant enlarged the scope of activities available to hotel guests with his own funds, he also provided the basis for a fair.
Henry Plant playing golf on the grounds of his Tampa Bay Hotel.

Photograph from *Plant’s Palace* by James W. Covington.

The race track at the "Tampa Agricultural and Fair Association" as shown in a drawing from an 1899 brochure advertising the Tampa Bay Hotel, which can be seen in the right background.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
After Plant died in June 1899, activities at the race track and exhibition hall stalled, but four years later a new hotel manager, J. Lott Brown, arrived and began to make changes. A Spring Carnival was planned for May 1900 by a predecessor of Brown, but the sum of $5,000 needed for expenses could not be raised by local businessmen, and the plan was dropped. When Brown arrived in 1903 or early 1904, he found the hotel to be a losing proposition, but he was given a chance to make the venture profitable by two owners, Morton Plant (son of Henry) who owned 82 percent of the hotel stock and Margaret Plant (widow of Henry) who owned the remaining 18 percent, and T. J. Scott and Sons who held an option to purchase the property. Morton Plant and his mother furnished Brown with sufficient funds so that he could experiment with some fresh ideas.

When J. Lott Brown became manager of the Tampa Bay Hotel, he implemented several plans to improve business. He opened the hotel for the first time during the entire year, advertised a different full-course daily evening meal in the hotel’s dining room for one dollar, and scheduled a May Festival for the hotel grounds and race track on May 4, 1904. The May Festival sponsored a band concert on May 2 at the fountain in front of the hotel, speeches by Mayor James McKay Sr. and W. F. Fuller, president of the Board of Trade. The festival also included a parade held two days later, featuring the newly organized Krewe of Gasparilla, that moved from the hotel grounds to the Hillsborough County Courthouse Square. That afternoon horse and mule races were held on the race track, and the First Gasparilla Ball was held on May 6 in the hotel dining room.6

Next came a special July 4 celebration on the hotel grounds. This event included speeches by the governor and the mayor, a street parade with floats, a baseball game between teams from Tampa and Bradenton, swimming races for children in the casino pool, horse races at the hotel’s race track, a dinner and reception for the governor, and a fireworks display at night from the banks of
the Hillsborough River. Most of these events planned by Brown attracted a good following with seventy-five attending the reception and 4,000 watching the fireworks display.

Pleased with the success of the May Festival, J. Lott Brown began to survey the twenty-seven acres adjacent to the hotel and plan a state fair for the site. The natural vegetation had already been cleared to provide room for a nine-hole golf course and a race track. With the exception of the frame exhibition hall, there were no buildings near the planned site of the fair. However, the land was flat with few drainage problems and was bordered on the north by the tracks of the railroad which led to Port Tampa. Yet, due to the Hillsborough River bordering one side and railroad tracks and hotel grounds on the others, rapid entrances and exits would be hindered. This problem was compounded when the first city auditorium was constructed on the property adjacent to the fairgrounds.

As early as June 1904 Brown was making plans for a South Florida State Fair to be held on the grounds of the Tampa Bay Hotel in November. On June 23, in a talk before the Board of Trade, the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce, he discussed his negotiations with the Atlantic Coast Line and Seaboard Railroad for lower fares and excursions to the proposed event, and he described activities planned for the fair. Exhibits would include products, animals, and industries from all counties, horse races featuring the best horses available, Jai Alai players from Cuba displaying their skills, and other festivities that would rival Mardi Gras in New Orleans. Brown made such a stimulating presentation that when he left Tampa to visit the railroad executives in Portsmouth, Virginia, and New York, the Second Regimental Band gave a concert at the depot to mark his departure.

Brown’s next step in stirring interest in the proposed South Florida Fair was to contact officials of the various counties that could provide exhibits and possible funds and groups that would support the fair by attendance and presentation of shows. The first organization to offer support was the Confederate Veterans who proposed to present a drill and build two camps for resident veterans of the Civil War (in conjunction with the Grand Army of the Republic). Next, the real estate dealers of Tampa offered vocal support. The first county to offer an exhibit and endorse the fair was DeSoto County, whose commissioners voted their approval.

By July 1904, with the help of a committee that had met at the hotel, Brown was able to announce a list of exhibits for the fair. Included in agricultural products would be citrus fruits, truck gardens, cereals, preserves and tobacco, while other exhibits would feature honey, wines, a stock show, and kitchen products. C. Benedict Rodgers, who had arranged fairs in Florida and New York, joined the committee and offered valuable advice.

By this time Brown had written numerous letters but received limited support from the community. It became necessary to organize formally one steering committee to direct the event and another one to raise necessary funds to meet expenses. In a meeting held in the music room of the Tampa Bay Hotel on July 27, 1904, the group officially adopted the name of the South Florida Fair Association. Members elected J. Lott Brown president of the organization and Frank B. Bowyer and A. C. Clewis vice-presidents. Hugh Macfarlane, who had helped develop West Tampa, was selected chairman of the all-important finance committee which set a goal of $10,000. Interest in the fair was growing, with Brown receiving eighty-three letters of
Both the finance and exhibits committees began to move into the principal portions of their work.

According to one report, the finance committee had no problem in securing funds, and nearly $3,500 of the $10,000 goal had been received by August 3.

Brown devoted a great deal of time to fundraising, soliciting exhibitors, and generating interest in the fair. On a visit to Jacksonville, Brown made a deal in which Tampa would support the annual fair held in Jacksonville in exchange for including a "Jacksonville Day" at the South Florida Fair. The Levy County commissioners and those from Marion County offered support for the fair, and the railroads and Southern Express Company volunteered to transport all exhibits free of charge. A major breakthrough came when the Confederate Veterans offered to work on behalf of the fair, march in the opening parade, and hold a drill in uniform on a special day set aside for them. In addition, Company H of the 7th Cavalry agreed to present a drill at the fair and take part in the parade. Additional funds came from Hernando County which offered $500, Hillsborough County which pledged $500 for exhibits and $500 to the general fund, and the City of Tampa which promised $500 to the general fund. These commitments came as a result of visits by Brown to meetings of the county commissioners.
By late August the South Florida Fair Association had drawn plans for the erection of buildings on the west side of the race track. Initially only one building, a frame structure 600 feet long and 100 feet wide, was projected, but plans soon included stock stalls on the north side of the track, a stadium to hold 4,000 persons, and a coliseum to house the circus acts at the northern end of a midway lined by carnival rides such as ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds. Construction of these facilities was delayed due to the slow arrival of lumber. As a result, the fair opened with only part of the planned facilities available for exhibits.¹⁵

With a month to spare before the opening of the fair, Brown was busy arousing interest, obtaining exhibits and adjusting his earlier plans of a Mardi Gras festival to the reality of the situation in Tampa. To assist his work Brown had organized a fair committee which in turn hired professionals who had arranged previous successful fairs. Thomas Weir was in charge of the opening parade committee, Ira Toube handled carnival arrangements, George W. Hardee headed the amusement committee, and P. W. Corr was placed in charge of press relations. At the height of his work, Brown had one full-time writer to produce articles and three secretaries to transcribe letters sent by Brown to officials in various counties and to heads of business firms. In October Brown was assisted by Judge H. H. Peebles who soon found that he needed a secretary to answer correspondence. Colonel H. A. Bailey visited Volusia County, where the county commissioners

This display of a fruit exhibit at an early State Fair appeared on a postcard with a 1909 postmark.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
allotted $500 to $1,000 for the fair, and Osceola County, where $500 was voted to finance an exhibit.

By October 9 the list of firm exhibits was printed in the *Tampa Tribune*. The exhibits ranged from agriculture to industrial products to horticultural to children's work to exhibits by women. However, despite the hard work by Brown, only sixteen counties sent exhibits.

In addition to the exhibits in the fair, a racing card, including a total of eleven races with $2,400 in prizes, was scheduled at the track for the dates of November 16, 21, 23, and 24. The finest horses were available for exhibits and racing, including several carloads of horses sent by R. W. Thomson of Lebanon, Tennessee.

The schedule for the wooden stadium, under construction in the center of the race track, was nearly complete. Included in the acts to be presented there were drills by Company H of the 7th Cavalry, ladder performers, jugglers, bicycle acts, "Life in Bombay, India," Professor Carlyle's Wild West Show, Mount Pelee's Volcanic Eruption, the Myer diving children, and the horse Ben Hur who could tell people's ages. Fees to the show were twenty-five cents.

In order for a fair to be successful, transportation companies had to agree to reduced fares for those who would travel to the site. Round trip tickets by train from Ohio to Tampa were available for twenty dollars, and special fares were set for those who wished to travel by steamer from Savannah and New York ($34.45 round trip) to Tampa. Lower rates were established from other southern cities for visitors to the fair. In addition to the reduced rail rates and free transportation of exhibits by the railroads and Southern Express Company, there were no charges levied for electrical and telephone service at the fair.

Brown finalized his plans for the fair in a public meeting on October 27, which was held in the Hillsborough County Court House. Additions to Brown's original plans included thirteen events. in a track meet for men, an art show and special days at the fair to be sponsored by various clubs including the Elks, Pythians, Eagles, and Woodmen of America. In addition, stores along Franklin Street were to be decorated with the fair's colors of yellow and white. A list of visitors and their addresses in Tampa was available to those who wished to contact the fair patrons from outside Tampa.

The first sign that planners had overlooked some important details came when it was discovered that persons wanting to purchase reduced fare tickets in Atlanta and St. Louis could not obtain the tickets. Within a short time fair officials discovered that emphasis had been put on the Jacksonville Fair's reduced rate in ticket offices and no mention made of a reduced rate to Tampa. But as soon as that fair had concluded its run, the South Florida rate would be advertised and distributed to the local ticket offices.

November 15, 1904, opening day of the fair, brought good weather with somewhat overcast skies and a temperature of sixty-five degrees. After a luncheon at Garcia's Gran Oriente Restaurant, a parade which consisted of local and state dignitaries, the Tampa City Band clad in new green uniforms, the Tampa Light Infantry, twelve mounted patrolmen, a unit of the Tampa Fire Department with engines and horses, all proceeded to the Tampa Bay Hotel, where
Governor William S. Jennings and others delivered speeches. A large crowd followed the governor and his group to the fairgrounds where the gates were opened for the first time to receive the visitors who had been lured there by three months of incessant publicity.19

Once within the gates the crowd discovered that the fair was not ready for them. Only one-third of the midway, which should have contained ferris wheels, merry-go-rounds, swings, and games of chance, was finished, and the rest stood virtually empty. Many of the exhibits were still unfinished, and as late as two days later, many exhibits were still not ready for public display.20

Despite the uncompleted state of the midway and some displays, people seemed pleased with the shows and moved into the fairgrounds in large numbers. The patrons liked the horse races and crew races on the Hillsborough River performed by two crews from Rollins College, and some claimed that the fair was better than the one presented in Georgia. Five thousand persons had pushed their way into the stadium where the 7th Cavalry performed drills, and there was a recreation of the explosion of Mount Pelee which had destroyed a city in the French West Indies.21
Military Day, which attracted more than 7,000 people, started with a parade from Lafayette and Florida at 9:00 a.m. and proceeded to the Tampa Bay Casino. According to three visitors, the event was a rousing success. Colonel H. W. Long of Marion County called the fair the greatest success in Florida history. M. P. Porter, county commissioner from Osceola County, called it the most successful fair that he had ever seen, and C. H. Hoffer, commissioner of Orange County, claimed that everything at the fair was exemplary.

In retrospect, the fair was heavily subsidized by the owners of the Tampa Bay Hotel. J. Lott Brown spent virtually all of five months in promoting the fair, leaving little time for management of the hotel and hotel grounds. Public rooms in the hotel were used without remuneration by the fair officials. Brown probably used hotel funds for the three secretaries, postage, and trips to other cities. The significance of subsidies from the Tampa Bay Hotel became apparent two years later at the 1906 fair. When David Lauber leased the hotel from the new owner, the City of Tampa, the South Florida Fair was such a financial failure without funding from the hotel that no fairs were held for at least the next nine years. Yet the idea of a South Florida fair was revived during the summer of 1915, and a fair opened in February 1916, continuing as a feature of Florida's winter season during the subsequent years except during World War I and World War II. In 1976 the fair was moved from its location near Plant Park to the intersection of Highway 301 and Interstate 4, and the first fair held there one year later. The old coliseum site is now a soccer field, the race track is a running track, and exhibit stalls serve as classrooms and an art gallery at the University of Tampa, which occupies the grounds of the former Tampa Bay Hotel and fair grounds.

NOTES

1 Savannah Morning News, November 22, 1871.


3 G. Hutchinson Smythe, The Life of Henry Bradley Plant (New York, 1898), 157-73; Richard Prince, Atlanta Coast Line: Steam Locomotives, Ships and History (Salt Lake City, 1966), 22.

4 Tampa Tribune, December 29, 1896.

5 Ibid., March 3, 1898.

6 George W. Hardee, a federal employee, and Louise Frances Dodge, society editor of the Tampa Tribune, planned the Spring Festival with an emphasis upon Mardi Gras and Gasparilla. Edwin D. Lambright, The Life and Exploits of Gasparilla: Last of the Buccaneers With the History of Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla (Tampa, 1936), 43.

7 Tampa Tribune, June 28, 1904.

8 Ibid., July 5, 1904.

9 Ibid., July 21, 1904.

10 Ibid., July 28, 1904.
Frank C. Bowyer was elected mayor in June 1898 and served for two years. A. C. Clewis served as president of the Exchange National Bank from 1903 to 1922.

Hugh Macfarlane, a native of Scotland, had come to Tampa in 1883 to practice law and to organize the Macfarlane Investment Company, which developed West Tampa in 1892. West Tampa was only a few blocks from the Tampa Bay Hotel.

*Tampa Tribune*, August 3, 1904.

Ibid., September 8, 1904.

Ibid., September 13, 1904.

Ibid., October 9, 1904.

Ibid., October 16, 1904.

Ibid., October 30, 1904.

Ibid., November 16, 1904.

The Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla held its own parade on November 15 with assembly at the Tampa Bay Hotel and marched with floats, horsemen, and three horseless carriages to the fair grounds. Lambright, *Mystic Krewe*, 51-52.

*Tampa Tribune*, November 18, 1904.

Ibid., November 25, 1904.

Ibid., November 26, 1904.

From boom to bust, the 1920s and 1930s offered a unique chapter in Florida's history. Indeed, the story is too big to compress easily into a single chapter. By tracing the experiences of one community from the turn of the century through the thirties, this article highlights some social and economic themes of these decades and provides a perspective from one rural Florida community.

Palmetto was a well-established, bustling agricultural community by the 1920s. Situated on the north bank of the Manatee River opposite Bradenton, its location was idyllic. Red-bricked Main Street, which stretched north from the riverfront, was Palmetto's principal artery. At the north end of Main Street stood the public library which was established in 1914 with funds from the Carnegie Corporation. From the steps of the library, townfolk could point with pride to buildings which signaled the town's modernity: a dry goods store, two banks, a grocery store, a Western Union office, the Oaks Hotel, a bakery, a jewelry store, two drug stores, a theatre, a hardware store, a barber shop, and the Fruit Growers' Express office. Indeed, the weekly Palmetto News boasted in 1915 that Palmetto then had twenty-nine blocks paved with brick, making it "one of the best paved little cities in the state." The following year when Lloyd's Drug Store opened, the News announced that "neatness and sanitation were the main points." The store featured cool drinks from a fountain, and an orchestra furnished music for the opening. It was, the writer continued, "up to date in every respect ... the fixtures and equipment being of the very latest style and design." The city fathers took considerable pride in Palmetto's lack of provinciality.

Continuing south on Main Street to the riverfront, a visitor could take a left at Bay Street, which led to the Seaboard railroad depot. Here passengers waited for the train to Tampa or Jacksonville, and boxcars overflowed with fresh fruits and vegetables destined for northern markets.

Although few southern cities escaped some measure of regional boosterism, life in the 1920s in Palmetto still paced itself to the rural rhythms of the land, dating back to the nineteenth century. Because many settlers of this community had arrived in the mid-1800s, there had been ample time to establish local patterns and traditions. After the Second Seminole War in 1842, the area had opened for settlement by whites. Building a home on the south side of the Manatee River, Josiah Gates and his family arrived first. In 1855 the Village of Manatee was designated as the county seat of the new Manatee County, which had been carved out of Hillsborough County. Since that time, agriculture had played a significant role in the lives of its citizens.

Rich soil, a mild climate and the wide, navigable Manatee River which led to the Gulf of Mexico, all contributed to a lively, diverse economy. Initially, the cattle and sugar cane industries proliferated. However, in 1864, the sugar cane mills were destroyed by Union soldiers as they moved through Florida searching for Confederate officers.

Aided by man made drainage systems and Florida's abundant artesian水流, citrus and vegetable crops flourished after the Civil War. As faster ships and, eventually, the railroad
expanded commerce, settlers discovered that northerners were prepared to pay high prices for fresh vegetables. The rich soil lent itself to a wide variety: celery, cabbage, beans, beets, corn, eggplant, peppers, sweet potatoes, and, later, watermelon and strawberries. But it was the tomato which would eventually become the county’s number one cash crop. By the turn of the century, the county’s tomato and cabbage crops ranked second in earnings in Florida.4

Manatee County also developed a significant floral industry by the turn of the century. Fern, hibiscus, asters, and gladiolas were sold commercially. The agricultural and floral industries received a significant boost during this period with the construction of ice plants in the county, thus making possible cooled railroad cars and warehouse precoolers.

Hoping to prosper in this southern climate, Talbot Sharp Pollard moved his family from Indiana to Palmetto in 1896. The town had about 400 residents at that time. In a letter dated May 19, 1899, Pollard described his plans to his son-in-law:

I want to put out a grove. I have the land well adapted to grove culture. I also want to set a pinery. I want to clear more land and drain better what is cleared. I have something like 15 acres fenced. The expense of clearing, draining, and fencing, and setting out in fruit, will be pretty heavy. I don’t know just what, but I do know in five years from planting it will be a fortune. In
the meantime, vegetables may be grown between the trees. This crop will yield a handsome profit. I was told by a man who owns 8 acres, no better than mine, that since last August when he began working his land, he had sold $1300 worth of vegetables off of the 8 acres and every acre was now in crop of tomatoes just coming in. A piece of land 40 acres, which was offered to me for $800 when I was first here; about 9 acres of this 40 sold last week for $3000. It is cleared and fenced and has an artesian well on it. I speak of these few cases that you may see that it is this that helps to influence my making this my home, besides health. An immense crop of vegetables is being marketed now at handsome prices. Oates [sic] and corn are very good. Oates just about as good as Ind. grows. Corn probably 40 or 50 bu. per acre not half cultivated. Rice promises from 40 to 60 bu. per acre. 

Although Palmetto had a population of only about 1,200 in 1910, it served as a nucleus for the surrounding rural communities of Manatee County. By this time the town could boast three churches, a school, a hotel, a variety of stores, a dressmaker, four packing houses, two blacksmiths, two livery stables, paved streets and sidewalks, electric lights, telephones, a public park, an ice factory, a lodge hall, "several secret organizations," and "an empty jail." Unimproved land in the city could be bought for about ten dollars an acre.

But changes were coming quickly to small southern towns by the turn of the century, as America's industrial revolution initiated a tidal wave of change that had rippling effects. As one Palmetto pastor lamented in 1916, "some members do not attend the services and others are worldly and others care more for the lodges and the picture shows than the House of God." More changes came with the extension of the railroad from Tampa to Palmetto in 1918. This line provided greater access to markets and eased transportation to and from the area. Improving access to towns south of the river, a wooden bridge connecting Palmetto to Bradenton was constructed in 1919 over the Manatee River.

Inevitably, though, heartache and disappointment did occasionally bring a reversal of fortunes. In the early 1900s Palmetto was hit by the scourges of scarlet fever, typhoid fever, and diphtheria. From 1901 to 1908 social events were kept to a minimum, and church activities were temporarily suspended in an effort to limit the spread of disease. In 1921, claims of the discovery of underground oil and gas reserves just west of town created great excitement. The local publisher was not alone when he predicted that "Palmetto's future is now assured" and that thousands would "flock to the city." The claims, unfortunately, proved false. Further misfortune visited that same year when a major hurricane came inland, destroying the bridge between Palmetto and Bradenton and wreaking other havoc in the area.

These crises, often short-lived, were soon forgotten. By 1920 tourists had discovered the state, and the little town of Palmetto reaped the benefits. According to one local historian, "it seemed that all the people of the midwest and farming regions of the North were coming to Florida to spend the winter in their trailers." Palmetto had no place for these "tin can tourists" to camp, so in November 1920 the city set aside an area for this purpose. The annual trek, fueling the twin industries of tourism and real estate, continued until the depression years.

Lured by the accounts of friends who had visited the area, intrigued by Florida sunshine and sand, and spurred in the 1920s by the mobility of Henry Ford's inexpensive cars, the numbers of
immigrants to the state steadily increased. The boom of the early twenties sent land values skyrocketing. In 1920 a 40-acre parcel of Florida land sold for about $45; four years later it sold for $40,000. During the "Florida Boom," it was estimated that in 1925 the state spent $400 million on building construction; $50 million on railway track and equipment; and $7.5 million on 286 miles of new state highway. Moreover, tourists spent $250 million in Florida during the 1924-25 winter season.12 This cycle of gambling, greed and glut continued until the Florida bust in 1926.

In an effort to cash in on the land boom, Palmetto used a Chamber of Commerce magazine published in 1924 to lure new residents. It boasted: "The homes of this city are surrounded by ample grounds. There is no crowding. Spacious yards and flowers and shrubbery and shading trees give the appearance of coolness and comfort to the houses.13 It also mentioned that "Palmetto has two schools for white children," churches and a library. While the state's population increased by fifty-one percent during the 1920s, almost 1,000 of those new residents moved to Palmetto, raising the city's total from 2,046 to 3,043, an increase of 48.7 percent.14

Construction was booming. The Palmetto News in 1925 rolled off the press with this warning from the Palmetto Building and Loan: "Nothing is needed worse by this city ... for the cry for more houses has been growing louder."15 A visitor to the city at that time could have heard the local folks debating a proposed ten-mile scenic driveway along the riverfront or a $50,000 bond for water works. He or she might have attended a local WCTU lecture or walked down to the docks and watched the boats of the Favorite Line ply the river, bringing passengers and freight from Tampa and St. Petersburg. He or she might have heard a rumor of a new hotel or watched Sheriff "Pistol Pete" Bowdoin drive into town with a dismantled still tied to his Model T Ford.

Eager for a chance to snatch the brass ring, Palmettoans were confidently riding the carousel of progress. Responding to demands for streets, sidewalks, sanitary sewer systems, and water mains, Palmetto, like most every other booming Florida city, issued serial bonds. The 1923 state legislature had authorized cities to construct these improvements, assess the property owners, issue liens on the property, then issue bonds against the liens. The Florida Supreme Court eventually declared this illegal, and cities were forced to issue long-term refunding bonds for which they would be totally responsible.16 Making payments on these bonds was not difficult during the heady days of Florida's land boom.

However, by the end of the 1920s the state of Florida was showing signs of a deepening recession. Nailhead rust had all but destroyed the tomato crops of 1925 and 1926. The land bust of 1926 had sent real estate speculators reeling. A hurricane on September 18, 1926, swept Florida's east coast leaving almost 18,000 people homeless and an $80 million path of destruction.17 Another hurricane in 1928 left 15,000 people homeless and caused $25 million in property losses.18 Then, in 1929, the Mediterranean fruit fly made its debut in Florida, bringing disaster to citrus crops.19 In Palmetto one pastor observed in April 1928 that the "financial depression has hindered the work of all departments" and that his church had lost quite a few members.20

Indeed, Palmetto City Council minutes for October 11, 1927, indicate that when the 1927 fiscal year ended, $20,000 of a total $78,000 tax levy was unpaid 44on account of the unusual financial
In turn, the city was unable to pay some of its notes. Later records show that the city was also unable to meet its obligation due March 1928 on a bond issued three years earlier for street and sewer improvements. The city council voted to seek a loan from the Manatee County State Bank.

Palmetto residents optimistically considered these events temporary setbacks. Few realized that Florida’s troubled economy or the Wall Street panic of October 29, 1929, were portents of the disastrous years ahead. In the winter of 1929-30, readers of the Palmetto News learned of the increasing popularity of miniature golf in Florida, while radio sports fans listened to the World Series. They were pleasantly distracted by Palmetto News accounts of tree sitters, flagpole sitters, and Marathon dancers.

Ambitious plans for city improvements were still being considered. Records of city council meetings reflect a business-as-usual attitude. Council members set new rates for the "tourist camp," declared open privies a nuisance, and, passed an ordinance providing for the inspection of meats sold in the city.
However, if then-Mayor Mann or any one of the other council members had been able to see the future, they might have been shocked by what lay ahead for Palmetto. A summary of city finances for the period 1927-37 shows a precipitous decline.23

The South, with its economy resting precariously on agriculture, was hit especially hard by the Great Depression. Southern agriculture had been hurt by a severe drought in 1930 and 1931, and the Depression drove cotton prices and production to record lows. Although Manatee County farmers were not tied to the unprofitable cotton crops, they were not spared the severe effects of a nation in economic turmoil.

Peter Harllee was a young man in Manatee County during those years. He attended the University of Florida from 1931 to 1932 but hard times necessitated his return to the family farm. As Harllee recalled, "You can imagine what the conditions were during the Depression. At the end of that one year [1932], I came back and started working on the farm, with my brother and my father…. People were starving to death around here ... no welfare, no anything. If your neighbor or church didn't take care of you ... you just went in need."24 He added that his father tried to see to it that "nobody [on the farm] would lose their job."25
Although many residents were idled by the Great Depression, the remainder held jobs and shared what they could. Traditional southern neighborliness proved more helpful than federal programs. Palmetto native Dorothy Scott Janes, granddaughter of Talbot and Vitula Pollard, recalled fond memories of Halloween street parties and huge and frequent family gatherings. Asked about the Depression, she remembered:

People that farmed gave vegetables and fruit to people. Anybody that wanted them, could go out and pick what was left in the fields. Also, a lot of people had small gardens in their yards, We may have fared better than a lot of communities because there were so many farms. The North was still buying and labor was cheap [here]. In those days ’ there were a lot of tramps. They would hop a freight and get off in Palmetto and go to people’s back doors. We lived close to the railroad, and they would end up at our house first. We gave out many a plate of food. Mother [Mary Pollard Scott] and Grandmother [Vitula Pollard] never turned anybody down.... We raised our own chickens, had our own eggs and there was a local cattle business. Between all that, the community didn’t suffer so much.26

In 1930, Dorothy Scott met a handsome man who had driven to Palmetto in his Model A for the tomato season. They were married in late 1931 at the Palmetto Methodist Church. Her husband, Milam Gillette Janes, had the rich Manatee County soil flowing through his veins. His grandfather, credited with raising the first tomatoes sold commercially in the county, had settled the farming community of Gillette, just east of Palmetto, in the late 1840s. And Milam James's father, who was a packing house supervisor, was, according to Janes, "quite active in all lines of fruits and vegetables which made me become a fruit picker."27

Milam James described those depression years when he was a fruit picker.

It was piece work.... I made pretty good just wrapping tomatoes and "fruit tramping," as it was called.... At the time [in 1931] I was working temporarily ... in a soda fountain shop ... on Flagler Street in Miami ... waiting for the tomato crop to come in [in the Everglades]. Then [after his marriage] we went on out to Mississippi. Just to show you how different things are, we got an apartment and told them I was there for the tomato season and it would be a week before we went to work. They said, "That’s all right." Then I stopped to get some gas at a filling station and the man said, "I see you’re from Florida." I said, "Yea, I'm here to put up some tomatoes." "Looks like you're 'bout ready for a new set of tires." I said, "Yea, as soon as I go to work I'll get a set." He said, "Well, don't wait 'til then. We'll put 'em on now." That's the difference than the way it is today. We didn't have electric refrigeration then either so he told me to go to the ice plant and "they'll give you a book of tickets and you can pay them after you go to work. And go to the grocery store and charge your groceries." After we got through in Mississippi, we'd go to Maryland and put up tomatoes there.... The second year we went back to Mississippi, we boarded out.... It was a lovely home and the family had a big garden in the back yard and they charged $5.00 a week for a great big room and three meals a day.... We enjoyed that very much.... We got along fine and ... everybody helped each other.28

His wife Dorothy recalled that at one point they went to Atlanta and her husband tried to find a job but "people were walking the streets." Eventually in the summer of 1936, the couple returned to Palmetto, where he went to work running a large farm operation.29
As the newlyweds were following the seasons elsewhere, Palmetto’s carousel was gearing down, slipping into slow motion. The city government, like most others across the country, spent the thirties struggling to maintain city services with a shrinking budget. Some city employees found themselves out of work, and salaries for others were reduced annually in the ensuing years.

A diminishing tax base inevitably led to cuts in city services. In 1931, the city offered taxpayers a forty percent discount to pay delinquent taxes so the "City [could] realize some ready fund[s] with which to carry on its government and meet its outstanding obligations." In April 1933 the city requested the Florida Employment Relief Council to provide labor for the grading of certain streets which had become "almost impassable." By 1933 the city had upped the ante, hoping to lure property owners into paying their delinquent taxes; the city raised the discount to fifty percent if bills were paid in cash.

Meanwhile, sentiment in this rural community continued to support Prohibition, although rumor had it that bootleg liquor provided some residents with a source of income. Local preachers inveighed against repeal and on February 15, 1933, Palmetto Methodists established a Temperance and Social Service Committee. It went on record as opposed to any "repeal or nullification." By then, too, Huey Long's message regarding "sharing the wealth" had reached down to this southernmost state. The January 8, 1932, issue of the News carried the following editorial: "The money power has the country by the throat and there is no way to shake it loose. Ours will never be a government for the people until this hoarding of wealth is forbidden - until a limit is placed on what a man can make and keep. When that limit is reached the balance should be taken for taxes."

Late in 1932, the situation looked grim. That year the Palmetto State Bank closed, and the Bank of Terra Ceia, which did not survive the Depression, was paying off its depositors. A public auction was advertised for the sale of land in Manatee County for delinquent taxes. A survey of building permits for Palmetto showed a drop to zero from 2,500 in 1931.

As Frank Freidel pointed out in F.D.R. and the South, the South figured largely and vitally in Franklin D. Roosevelt's political destiny. Manatee County would not disappoint him: In 1932, 2,900 local voters helped send Roosevelt to the White House.

As Roosevelt's New Deal took shape, Americans' prospects began to look promising. One of the most successful New Deal programs, especially in the South, was the National Recovery Act (NRA), which had the potential to eliminate wage differentials. Southern states had lured industry to the region with the promise of low wages. By establishing a minimum wage, the NRA code was a boon to workers like Sterling Hall. He had gone to work for Excelsior Ice Company in Palmetto in 1931 for $1.00 per day. After the NRA established a minimum wage, the company was required to raise his salary to $11.25 per week, and he was paid extra for "icing the cars."

New Deal programs to provide work relief came in the form of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Civil Works Administration (CWA), and the National Youth Administration (NYA). The Palmetto News reported on January 5, 1934, that the state CWA had approved over $2 million worth of work in Florida, about
$137,000 of which was targeted for Manatee County. Statewide about 100,000 men worked for the CWA.41

In January 1934, one of Palmetto’s first CWA projects began with the construction (from salvaged material) of a cafeteria for Palmetto’s high school.42 Other city and county projects included construction of a school house in Samoset (CWA), three road projects (WPA), and a new Palmetto high school gymnasium (WPA). During a CWA excavation conducted by the Smithsonian’s archaeology department, an Indian temple was unearthed at a nearby farm in Parrish.43 By the end of 1935, the Sixth District of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration was handling WPA projects from a local office and had established night classes in a rear room of the Palmetto City Hall. Federal relief programs had enrolled “529 whites and 120 Negro CCC workers” from Manatee County who were expected to go to Ocala to work.44

By the mid-thirties cities like Palmetto were stretched to the limit trying to meet payments on public debt with an ever-shrinking tax base. By the start of the 1934 tax year, Manatee County collections had dropped to the point where taxes on only 74,008 acres out of 474,287 acres had
been paid for 1933. In 1935, the city of Palmetto was forced to enter into a contract for a $1 million bond refund.

As the focus of the New Deal shifted from recovery to reform and as some programs floundered due to mismanagement, resistance began stirring in some quarters. The South, which had feverishly supported Roosevelt’s election and presidency, "developed, in time, an embarrassing ambivalence toward Roosevelt and the New Deal." The Palmetto News reflected the growing criticism in an editorial on December 19, 1935.

The delay in rebuilding the Bayshore Road, which is the shortest route from the Manatee River section to Tampa, is cause for much criticism here and is just another item checked up against the government handling of any worthwhile project with relief labor under one of the alphabet agencies. This road has been closed to the public for about six months and we understand that only 3/4 miles have been completed ... and such as this is gradually disgusting many and turning them against trying to do anything with relief labor that is allowed to take its own sweet time in completing.

At the close of 1935, the U.S. Census reported 3,095 people living in Palmetto - only fifty-two more than five years earlier. Growth had come to a near halt, but there were also signs of improvement. Through the final years of the decade, real estate values started to inch upward, property began to come off the delinquent tax rolls, and the sale of tomato crops rebounded. Indeed, a local news item declared in May 1935 that "the packing houses are beehives of activity, giving employment to hundreds of men and women."

According to issues of the Palmetto News in the mid-1930s, races were being held on the river on Sundays and the Apte Brothers canning plant was operating to capacity. Gus Sonnenberg, former heavyweight boxing champion of the world, was scheduled to fight Dick Lever at the Municipal Auditorium, and Will Rogers was starring in "In Old Kentucky" at the local theater.

No residents of Palmetto starved to death during the Great Depression. Having avoided the disastrous effects of single-crop specialization, Palmetto had always enjoyed a diverse agricultural economy which proved beneficial in the long run. People grew much of their own food and fished in the surrounding rivers and bays. They learned to save, survive, and make do.
Both farmers and local residents, who always had a stake in the welfare of the community and displayed southern neighborliness, became a hedge against privation.

However, the Depression was so severe that neither federal dollars nor countless "alphabet agencies" could revive the nation's economy. It would, in fact, take the massive demands of preparations for World War II to improve the national economy and, with it, Palmetto's local economy.

Despite national recovery, long-term changes spelled continued decline for Palmetto's economy. Mechanized farms reduced the need for labor; trucks instead of railroad cars carried produce to the North; citrus lost favor as a result of unpredictable winters; and refrigeration eliminated the need for ice plants. These factors virtually wiped out three of the four largest industries - and employers - in Palmetto: railroads, citrus groves, and ice plants.

With the decline of agriculture came a diminishing need for packing houses. This pattern was repeated with the many other small industries connected to agriculture. One by one, small businesses along Main Street closed their doors. Today, Palmetto, which had hitched its fate to the coattails of agriculture and had survived natural disasters, epidemics, and the Great Depression, awaits its turn on the carousel and another chance to grasp the elusive brass ring.
NOTES


2 Ibid., August 18, 1916: 1.


5 Talbot S. Pollard, Letter, May 19, 1899.

6 *Palmetto News*, April 22, 1910.


8 *Palmetto News*, November 11, 1921: 1.


12 *Almanac*, 1934, 541.

13 *Palmetto* (Bradenton: Evening Herald, 1924), 4.

14 *Almanac*, 1934, 249-71.


16 Fuller, *This Was Florida's Boom*, 63.

17 *Almanac*, 1933, 545.

18 *Almanac*, 1932, 493.

19 Ibid.


21 Palmetto City Council minutes, October 11, 1927, Palmetto City Archives.

22 Ibid., February 27, 1928.

23 Ibid., 1927-1938.


25 Ibid.

26 Dorothy S. Janes, personal interview by Barbara Stephenson, November 9, 1990.

28 Milam Janes interview.
29 Dorothy Janes interview.
30 Palmetto City Council minutes, May 19, 1931.
31 Ibid., April 18, 1933.
32 Ibid., November 7, 1933.
33 Alice Meyers, personal interview by Barbara Stephenson, November 9 1990.
36 Ibid., June 10, 1932: 1.
37 Ibid., July 22, 1932: 1.
39 *Almanac*, 1934, 869.
40 A. Sterling Hall, personal interview by Alice Meyers, 1985.
42 Ibid., December 26, 1935: 7.
44 Ibid., December 26, 1935: 1.
46 Palmetto City Council minutes, November 12, 1935.
Before 1940 Florida's population contained a smaller percentage of residents over sixty-five than the rest of the nation. During the Second World War, Florida served as the home for numerous military training bases, and large numbers of Americans were exposed to the state's charms for the first time. Some of these trainees returned to Florida after completing their stint in uniform, while others retained fond memories of the Sunshine State's relaxed pace of life. Many from this latter group sought retirement homes in the state they remembered as a semitropical paradise. These former G.I.'s and retirees formed the basis for a lifestyle never before seen in American society. For the first time, vast numbers of relatively young and affluent citizens could reasonably expect a protracted period of vigorous retirement.1

South Hillsborough County offers an example of a community envisioned by its creator as a location for this new mode of living. Sun City Center responded to the emergence of a generation transformed by the far-reaching social and political changes wrought by the New Deal and the Second World War. The G.I. Bill, social security, and modern systems of corporate retirement funding created a pool of citizens able to enjoy an affluent old age. Where fifty years ago half of all people over the age of sixty-five depended on their children for support, by 1987, only 1.5 percent of that group were in such circumstances. The invisible hand of capitalism provided a satisfying lifestyle for the "new wave" retirees, but the capitalistic solution proved successful only because it respected broader rules of social organization.2

The very success demonstrated by Sun City Center in the realm of social organization has generated debate. One side views Sun City Center as the home of gracious living, where friendly neighbors live in a world of generous cooperation. The other side sees the community as a gaggle of white, middle-class retirees determined to maintain an insular existence by excluding members of other races and socio-economic groups. An historical examination of Sun City Center illuminates the veracity of both descriptions.

Del Webb, the creator of Sun City Center, got his start as a contractor when his employer fell victim to the economic downturns of the Great Depression, and the young man completed the job his boss had, abandoned. By 1935 Webb presided over an Arizona-based company worth more than three million dollars. World War II provided the builder with an opportunity to become one of the nation's largest contractors. After the war, Webb prospered even further from the unslakable demand for new housing, and his business grew ever larger. But Webb did not fit the mold of the average land developer, and he decided to market a daring new concept. Webb believed older Americans desired an active retirement in a community of their peers, so he named Thomas E. Breen, a vice president of Del Webb Incorporated, to explore the possibility of launching such a community. In 1959 Webb's idea came to fruition with the establishment of Sun City near Phoenix, Arizona.3

The success of the venture far exceeded expectations and ran contrary to the conventional wisdom of contemporary gerontologists, who assured Webb that older people hated to be cut off from established communities.4 Webb began to explore the possibility of duplicating his success
in other locations, and he found an attractive site in Hillsborough County, near Florida’s gulf coast. The land had been a cattle ranch until 1956, when Max Cohen purchased the property and began preparing the land for development. In 1960 Cohen sold the parcel to Universal Marian, and that company built a motel on Highway 301. This structure represented the extent of development when Del Webb Incorporated purchased the property, later the same year, and began marketing the idea of an active retirement in the Florida sun.5

Del Webb first ran into difficulty with his new property when he attempted to name his development "Sun City." In 1925 H.C. Van Swearington had developed what he hoped would be "Florida’s moving picture city" on the banks of the Little Manatee River and dubbed his project Sun City.6 Although efforts to attract the motion picture industry failed, a tiny town remained on the site and refused to surrender its name to Webb. The community feared that its reputation as the chrysanthemum center of the nation would suffer from a name change, forcing Webb to adopt Sun City Center as the moniker for his development.7 But this did not end the developer’s problems with the small community. Before the construction of Interstate 75, potential buyers traveled along Highway 301 to reach Sun City Center, only to encounter the older community first. Unaware of the existence of two such similarly named sites in close proximity, many shoppers could find none of the advertised amenities and returned to Tampa in disgust.8 During the 1960s, Sun City Center grew too slowly to satisfy Del Webb, and he sold the project in 1972 to a Tampa real estate consortium which formed a management company named W-G Development to oversee the property.9
From this time, the story of Sun City Center’s corporate history reads like a chronicle of our times in microcosm. W-G Development sought to increase sluggish sales by allowing another development company to build inexpensive condominiums, open to all age groups, alongside the housing tract. But the recession of 1974-75 caused the condominium market to bottom out, and both companies reverted to the mortgage holders. In 1981, with the return of more favorable market conditions, a partnership supported by corporate pension funds bought both projects.10

The new managers, Victor Palmieri and Company, reversed W-G Development’s earlier decision to open the Sun City Center site to all age groups, and the new owners sold 6,500 acres of the 12,000 of the original purchase on the basis of an age-restricted community. In 1987 a group of Tampa developers, headed by Al Hoffman, bought the remaining 5,500 acres and continued the plan of developing an age-restricted community. The new company assumed the name Sun City Corporation, and the group currently has 2,000 acres left to develop.11

The Sun City Center concept represented something new under the sun. At the turn of the century, people sixty-five and older constituted only four percent of the population of the United States, but by 1980 that age group represented 11.3 percent of the nation’s citizenry. Not only had the numbers of older Americans grown, but the concept of old age also changed. A process similar to the development of "childhood" took place at the opposite end of the age spectrum. That is, people began to regard "the aged" as a special class with peculiar requirements, a process similar to the evolution in thinking about childhood that had occurred earlier in western society.12 Further, gerontologists argued that American society had become so stratified according to age that each generational group represented a distinct subculture.13

The popularity of age-segregated retirement communities in the United States sent gerontologists scrambling for an explanation. Many researchers studied the relationship between social activity and life satisfaction among the aged with various results. Among the conclusions of one study appears the statement: "The most specific suggestion from this data is that participation in an informal friendship group appears to be an important correlate of life satisfaction."14 Profound only in its manifest truth, this conclusion did little to explain why those friendship groups consisted of age peers.

The disengagement theory attempts to address this question of social stratification along generational lines. According to proponents of this idea, disengagement begins during middle life, when the perception of death's inevitability becomes more urgent. People become aware of the scarcity of time and become more selective as to how they spend it, resulting in less achievement-focused activity. At the same time the individual disengages from society, the social order tends to disengage from the individual. The combination of these impulses, in contemporary culture, encourages the emergence of the age-segregated retirement community.15

This notion may partially explain the phenomenon, but a large impetus for the movement to retirement communities reflected a continuation of the suburbanization process and its emphasis on homogeneity. In Crabgrass Frontier, Kenneth T. Jackson argues that the baby-boom years represented an era when suburbanization defined the social norm for a large segment of society. These suburbs contained populations of remarkably similar families, and Jackson maintains that this similarity represented one of the attractions of suburban living. After World War II, white
middle-class Americans moved to the suburbs in droves. Modern middle-class American retirees, because they had internalized the values inherent to the suburbanization of society, simply felt more comfortable in a familiar suburban milieu and extended its parameters to encompass retirement.

Del Webb understood these urges when he launched his advertising campaign designed to sell Sun City Center. Webb appealed to the tastes, values, and prejudices of retirees in his advertisements. The similarity of housing types offered reflects the predilections of prospective buyers. An early ad boasted, "There are six floor plans and eighteen exterior designs," assuring brand-conscious buyers of the quality of construction by naming the manufacturers of the building materials. The names of the models - the Nottingham, the Monticello, the Kenworth, the Seaford, the Sherwood, and the Norfolk - seem designed to assure prospects that they had arrived in familiar territory.

Later developers of Sun City Center appeared equally aware of the narrow demographic and economic profile of their Prospective market. In 1980 W-G Development aimed its marketing at people between fifty-seven and sixty-three years of age, who earned $30,000 yearly at white-collar jobs, and who could expect a retirement income of at least $12,500 per year. Bud Durick, in 1980 W-G's senior vice president and general manager, stated, "We get the affluent retiree. We get the executive type who has maybe owned his own business. We get retired educators and retired military executives. We don't so much get the blue collar workers. People who live here usually haven't worked in a steel mill for thirty years." W-G Development budgeted $800,000 that year to sell "the Sun City lifestyle," but the similar social backgrounds of Sun City Center residents insured that an estimated thirty-five percent came by word-of-mouth referrals.

Social homogeneity has always characterized Sun City Center, and residents have stridently resisted change. Any possibility of upsetting the residents' notions of propriety aroused vocal opposition in a community known for political involvement. The single-family dwelling represented a sacrosanct ideal in this community, and any violation of the norm of the single-story ranch house amounted to sacrilege. In 1980, for example, when faced with the possibility of an apartment complex in their midst, residents expressed alarm. Apartments embodied the antithesis of the life most expected to find at Sun City Center. Richard Morgan, a past president of the Sun City Center Homeowners' Association, maintained that apartment residents would be outsiders and that such a complex would attract transients. He added, "This is a retirement community for people who want to buy their own homes and live among other retired people." When a prospective developer met with the Homeowners Association to discuss an apartment development in the community, the group told him "no way," even though he assured the association that the project would house only retirees.

Houses that differ too radically from those extant were likely to arouse as much opposition as did multi-family dwellings. Residents threatened an injunction in 1973 when Walter-Gould Construction attempted to build a house that neighbors regarded as pre-fabricated. The contractor tried to assure residents that the house represented only modern construction techniques, but the Homeowners' Association would hear none of it and warned the builder they would take legal action. Even the possibility of an unfavorable court decision did not daunt the residents.
Neighbor Joseph Buttacvoli insisted that if the house remained standing he would urge residents to contact "their friends up North and tell them not to come here to live." He went on to ask, "What will our friends say when we tell them there’s a pre-fab being built here?"20

The following year, the same construction company encountered the ire of Sun City Center’s citizenry in its attempt to develop a package store and lounge in the local shopping center. The developer noted that the shopping area did not intrude upon the residential neighborhood, asserting, 'These are not Sun City Center stores, they are commercial ventures that happen to be located there." However, the Homeowners’ Association’s opposition to the proposed bar remained implacable. Said Earl Taton, another president of the association, "If you have a bar, we'll have a lot of undesirable people coming in here all hours of the day and night. We don't want to open this community up to all this riff-raff. We're worried about our security here." He emphasized, "We have a way of life here to protect."21

Even the church bore censure when residents felt that it was infringing on their prerogatives. Plans for a columbarium, a repository for cremated bodies, drew strong opposition from local residents in 1978 after the United Community Church proposed construction of such a facility on
church grounds. Although the church assured neighbors that the repository would remain at
ground level, concealed from view by landscaping, the announcement did not placate Sun City
Center residents. Even the absence of funeral services and public interment of ashes failed to
mollify critics. Lloyd Williams spoke for eighty-one percent of the homeowners when he voiced
opposition at a hearing on zoning changes that would allow the construction of the facility. He
noted that the area was a retirement community and made the point, "There are those of us who
do not wish to be reminded of the nearness of death." Another homeowner said that no cemetery,
regardless of how discreet or dignified, would be acceptable in the area.22

Residents expressed strong opposition to a 1973 idea of connecting Sun City Center’s streets
with other county roads, maintaining that increased traffic would decrease their quality of life. At
the same meeting, the proposition to locate a high school about a mile from the limits of existing
housing came under fire. During the ensuing discussion, residents made the oft-repeated claim
that a school so close would be "destroying the integrity of the basic concept of Sun City
Center."23

The notion of an age-restricted community dominates Sun City Center, and this principle helps
account for much of the development’s homogeneity. The rules state that residents must be at
least be fifty years of age or older to occupy a home; or, in the case of a married couple, at least
one partner must meet this age requirement. Moreover, no child under the age of eighteen can
reside in the community with their parents. This rule allows no variance, and residents realize
that exceptions can lead the courts to overturn the age restrictions entirely. People under age
cannot live in homes previously owned by their parents, nor can they rent from heirs. Residents
remain aware that Youngstown, Arizona, lost its age restriction in court because that community allowed some exceptions, and residents have vowed not to repeat that experience in Sun City Center. It is interesting to note, however, that the sole exception to the "fifty rule" applies to grandchildren. Art Secord, a Homeowners’ Association president, joked, "Your grandchildren can stay with you as long as you can stand them."  

But Sun City Center represents more than a community that says "no." The development demonstrates a high degree of community cooperation and volunteerism. Involvement remains a hallmark of the Sun City Center way of life. Participation in community activities involves an unusually large number of residents, and the feeling of powerlessness that so pervades the modern urban environment does not appear widespread here. Although Sun City Center may seem exclusive and elitist to the outsider, there can be little doubt that the inhabitants find their community both enjoyable and rewarding. To the extent that social success can be gauged by involvement and satisfaction, Sun City Center should be judged a mighty achievement.

The Sun City Center emergency squad has served as the premier volunteer organization in the community. Volunteers compose the entire staff of the emergency team, and nearly all residents support the group with donations. A hundred and fifty volunteers attend a twenty-one-hour first-aid session and a driving course, providing them with training for being on call for twenty-four-hour periods. Although maintenance of buildings and rolling stock presents
considerable expense, the squad thrives without government subsidy. When the emergency group needed $125,000 for a new garage and training center in 1979, 128 resident volunteers collected the money in two days. Even if the request that those who had already contributed place pillowcases over their curbside lampposts seemed aimed at bringing public censure to noncompliers, the widespread community support for the organization cannot be doubted.26

The community sponsors other volunteer organizations that look after specialized needs, mostly medical, of Sun City Center residents. The Sun City Center Official Membership Directory for 1989-90 lists such groups as the Alzheimer’s Support Group, Blood Pressure Clinic, Samaritan Services, Security Patrol, Hi-Neighbor, and Meals on Wheels as organizations dependent upon volunteers to accomplish their ends, as well as 136 additional clubs and associations. These clubs reflect the wide range of recreational interests of their members that extends from the mundane Exercise Room to the more esoteric Lapidary Club.27

The high degree of political involvement demonstrated by residents is another measure of community involvement. The residents have consistently voted at a much higher rate than the national average. Turnout runs as high as 89.5 percent, and in the last two decades Republicans have received heavy support. In 1976, state Senator David McClain, a Republican, received an overwhelming 84 percent of Sun City Center’s precinct vote when he garnered 2,513 votes to his
Vic Lauridsen of Sun City Center lines up a lawn ball during a 1989 lawn bowling match. Bernie Weinland (holding ball in background) waits his turn.
Democratic opponent’s 458. McClain won by a total of 500 votes out of nearly 164,000 cast. In the same election, United States Senate candidate John Grady, running against popular Democrat Lawton Chiles, found the Sun City Center precinct his lone pocket of support in Hillsborough County. Grady received more than 60 percent of the retirees’ vote.28 During the 1980 presidential campaign, only about 120 Democrats in Sun City Center attended a covered dish dinner to listen to local candidates and cast their ballots in a straw poll. Of this group, only about sixty actually voted, and many nominal Democrats expressed a preference for Reagan.29

Voting in state and national elections is not the most important aspect of political life within the community. Residents follow issues of local importance with active interest, and they participate at public hearings in a diligent and often vociferous manner. Crime has aroused the most vocal demands from the citizens, although the community’s crime rate remains low by Florida’s standards. The rape of a sixty-eight-year-old woman in 1981, the first ever in the community, increased residents’ concern about their security.30 Even when personal violence spurs concern for safety, Sun City Center residents’ anxiety remains within the bounds of reason. Although residents have demonstrated a willingness to spend their time as volunteers with the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Auxiliary,31 cruising the neighborhood, they have voted down proposals to establish a special tax district to provide for increased police protection.32

Taxes have never been popular in Sun City Center, and many residents cited low tax rates as one inducement that drew them to the community. Increases in county assessments often met with stiff opposition, and individual residents regularly took an active interest in any tax proposal. In 1979 county efforts to raise taxes for the third straight year brought a wave of protest. Ed Wilkerson of the Homeowners' Association hand-delivered about 600 appeal documents, representing about one-fourth of the community's property owners, to tax officials in Tampa. Wilkerson assured them that more appeals could be expected when residents vacationing in the North returned to Florida. But county officials insisted that the increased assessments reflected increases in market value, and, as such, the raise complied with new state laws requiring assessment at one hundred percent of the property's face value. In this instance, the new rate went into effect.33

Although an occasional rebel appears, the remarkable degree of social cohesion in Sun City Center is not forced. Rather, it reflects the shared goals and ideas of a homogenous population. Statistics from the 1980 census support this assertion and provide a clear profile of the community's inhabitants. Census takers counted a total population for Sun City Center at 5,605 for that year, of whom 423 claimed foreign birth. But of the group claiming alien birth, only 141 professed speaking a language other than English within the home. The census reveals strict enforcement of the "fifty rule," and the community contained only thirty-three married women below the age of forty-four. No household reported having children younger than eighteen within the home. The community had 2,302 families, of which 2,239 contained a married couple, while fifty-one families were headed by a single woman.34

Statistics portray Sun City Center as a relatively prosperous community, but not only a home for the wealthy. In 1980 only sixty-two families fell below the poverty line. Of 3,119 households, 2,700 reported incomes between $10,000 and $35,000, with a mean income of $20,500 and a median of $16,099. At the higher end of the income scale, only ninety-two households listed
earnings of more than $50,000. These figures indicate at least a modest degree of prosperity, and the fact that seventy-two percent of residents paid cash for their homes upon purchase makes these incomes more substantial.

Most residents of Sun City Center migrated to Florida from other areas. Only eighteen residents acknowledged the "Sunshine State" as their place of birth. The Sun City Center membership directory for 1989-90 listed residents by their state of origin, and this source indicated 553 households from Illinois and 540 from Michigan, to lead the midwestern states. Additionally, some 777 respondents listed New York as their point of origin, the most for any state. Very few residents came from the West, and California led that group with only fifty migrants. Of all residents, only fourteen claimed Hispanic origin, and no African-Americans lived in the community.

As indicated by the figures, the residents of Sun City Center shared a remarkable degree of similarity. A composite sketch would reveal households consisting of married couples, with both partners over fifty-five, living a middleclass lifestyle. Most of these people migrated to Florida after retirement from white-collar jobs in the Midwest. Politically, they adhere to the version of middleclass values expressed by the Republican party, as evidenced by their overwhelming electoral support of Republican candidates. Thus Sun City Center has faithfully reproduced an age-restricted equivalent of the homogenous community expressed in the suburban ideal. Sun City Center represents a conscious attempt by its founder to foster a new way of life in the Florida sun, a lifestyle that fulfilled retirees' needs for individual sovereignty and social solidarity. This has produced a homogenous community that has afforded its freeholders a degree of social power not exercised by citizens in the larger society. Ultimately, Sun City Center embodies a certain social ideal rooted in middle-class suburban America.

NOTES


4 Ibid., 47.

5 The Cultural Resources of the Unincorporated Portions of Hillsborough County (Tampa: Historic Tampa/Hillsborough County Preservation Board), 40.

6 Ibid., 50.


8 Interview with Lou Ellen Wilson, Senior Vice President, Sun City Center Corporation, July 15, 1989.

9 Fitzgerald, "Reporter at Large," 71.
Ibid.

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Sy Holzman, "Sun City Voted Republican All the Way," *Tampa Times*, 1976.


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36 "Sun City Center is Home of 1,600," *Tampa Times*, February 7, 1966.

37 *Census, Florida*, 1:573.

38 *Sun City Center 1989-90 Membership Directory*, 1-23.

THE BIRTH OF TEMPLE TERRACE IN THE 1920S: A PHOTOGRAPHIC ESSAY
by Janet M. Hall

The 1920s brought unprecedented growth to Florida and its cities. Facilitated by the transportation revolution, tourists and new residents flocked to the state. Tampa’s population soared as additional roads and the Model T made travel accessible to the middle class. And as the newcomers arrived, flamboyant and innovative speculators scrambled to accommodate them. The city of Temple Terrace represents just one of the many communities created during the Florida boom of the 1920s. Located to the northeast of Tampa, Temple Terrace was developed by promoters who placed their hopes in a two-fold plan. While they attempted to lure tourists with a luxurious golf resort, they also tried to attract permanent residents interested in profiting from the citrus industry. Before the boom’s demise in the last half of the decade, they managed to lay the foundations for a stable and now flourishing municipality.

The land which the Temple Terrace speculators developed had once been farmed by homesteaders or leased by the government to railroads and turpentine companies. In 1914, the Palmer family of Chicago purchased much of the area. The Palmers used the land as a hunting preserve but then sold it in 1920-21 to William E. Hamner. Hamner turned around and sold the property to an association led by his brother, Burts Hamner, and his partners, D. Collins Gillett and Vance Helm. This syndicate then formed two corporations. The first, Temple Terraces, Inc., was to develop approximately 4,000 acres north of Druid Hills Road for citrus production. Gillett’s father owned the Buckeye Nurseries in Winter Park and had created the Temple, a new variety of orange the group was anxious to market. The second company, Temple Terraces Estates, was to build a residential community centered around a fabulous golf resort. The Estates included about 700 acres bordered by Druid Hills Road on the north, the Hillsborough River on the east, Riverhills Drive on the south, and 56th Street on the west. Actually, the developers hoped that these two ventures could be combined by selling both homes and grove plots to wealthy retirees. The citrus would provide an income while the couples enjoyed the activities at the country club. By 1925 enough homes had been constructed for the builders to initiate municipal incorporation proceedings, which received the approval of the state legislature in May 1925.

Speculators considered the golf resort the key to the success of Temple Terraces Estates. Tom Bendelow designed the course, and "Long John" Barnes, a famous golfer, served as its first professional. Tournaments and exhibitions featured many of the country’s top players. The original clubhouse, which was completed in the winter of 1922-23, included a hotel, a huge dining room, and a ballroom. The club also offered tennis courts, a swimming pool, bridle paths, and canoeing on the Hillsborough River. Evening entertainments centered around the Morocco Club. Once billed as the most luxurious night club on the west coast of Florida, the Morocco Club provided dining and dancing nightly. A small room on the second floor also served as a gambling casino. Babe Ruth and Al Jolson were rumored among the patrons.
Building in Temple Terrace and similar communities throughout Florida peaked in 1925. Most of the homes constructed in Temple Terrace, as well as the structures associated with the country club, reflected the Mediterranean Revival style. Developers wished to promote a sun-filled, carefree atmosphere and believed that this design reflected that mood. However, by 1926 property sales were decreasing. That year New York bankers refused to lend developers money for city bonds and building ground to a halt. In 1932, just seventy families lived within the city limits. It would be twenty to twenty-five years before large-scale construction resumed. Nevertheless, the foundations laid by the early residents saw the town through the lean years. Today Temple Terrace is a thriving municipality of 17,000 people, who can take pride in their community's origins.
This advertisement for Temple Terrace Estates appeared in Suniland in April 1925. Developers hailed the area as "an exclusive, restrictive, community" and emphasized all of the sports activities available.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
This group photograph includes many of the early developers. The woman in the center is Maude C. Fowler, the first vice-mayor-commissioner. Standing directly behind her is Robert D. Hoyt, the original city manager. D. Collins Gillett, president of Temple Terraces, Inc., and the first mayor-commissioner, is the second man to Mrs. Fowler’s left.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.

The development office, at the corner of Belle Terre and Inverness avenues, was one of the first buildings completed. It is now a part of the Temple Terrace Community Church.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
The area that became Temple Terrace, shown prior to clearing.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Initial clearing for a street.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
Tractors clear the land in preparation of planting.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Convict laborers grade Temple Terrace Highway.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
A newly planted grove in the early 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

A new variety of orange, the Temple, gave the area its name. The father of D. C. Gillett, developer of the fruit, owned a large citrus nursery in Winter Park.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
This photograph clearly illustrates the two diverse developments in early Temple Terrace. In the foreground, the golf course dominates the residential area. Orange groves then radiate to the north and west.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

The clubhouse, which also served as a hotel, was completed in the winter of 1922-23. The building is now used as a dormitory by Florida College.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.
The dining room of the clubhouse seated 150. Many of the original homes had small kitchens since residents usually ate at the country club. The room is still used by Florida College for special events, such as the annual craft show.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

The chauffeur house and garage was located on Belle Terre Avenue. Florida College now utilizes the main building for its Home Economics Department. The garage was remodeled and once housed Florida College Academy. Florida College still uses the structure for classrooms.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
Many of the country’s leading golfers flocked to the new course to play in tournaments and exhibitions.

Photographs courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.

The golfers and their black caddies at a tournament.

Photograph courtesy of Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.
Developers named each of the golf holes in order to create interest in the new course. "Elbow" (No. 5), "Swing 'N Hope" (No. 7), and "Devil's Delight" (No. 16) are examples of some of the names.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Although this picture was taken many years later when the building served as the city’s Municipal Center, the structure once housed the notorious Morocco Club. Today Florida College utilizes it as its Student Center. The tile in the foyer and an indoor fountain act as reminders of the building’s original function.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.
Located directly behind the Morocco Club, the pool was available for hotel guests and residents. Made entirely of ceramic tile, the facility was used by Florida College until 1991.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.

Guests and residents also enjoyed tennis at the club’s courts.

Photographs courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.
This home on the corner of Bullard Parkway and Ridgedale Avenue belonged to C. C. Dixon, one of the original developers.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.

In 1925 builders added the concrete towers and walls in front of the Dixon house (shown above), and the gate served as the entrance to Temple Terraces Estates. The entrance way has been destroyed, but the building remains in fine condition and now houses Associated Psychological Services.

Photographs courtesy of USF Special Collections.
House construction peaked in 1925. This view from Bonnie Brae Boulevard shows homes being built on Glen Ridge Avenue.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.

A son of developer Maude C. Fowler and prominent Tampa attorney, Cody Fowler, built this home in 1925 at 313 Sleepy Hollow Avenue.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
In an attempt to reduce the mosquito population, a bat tower was erected on the east bank of the Hillsborough River. The builders hoped that the resident bats would eat the annoying insects. The experiment failed, and the tower was abandoned and ultimately burned down.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Developers also built apartment houses for long-term visitors. These buildings on St. Andrews (now Sunnyside Road) were destroyed by fire in 1930. The owners were prosecuted for arson since the buildings had just been heavily insured.

Photograph courtesy of the Friends of the Temple Terrace Public Library.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


In 1991, William Harrison (Harry) Snow decided to record his memories of life in the Palm View area. Born in 1901 and a descendant of some of that section's earliest settlers, Harry Snow feared that the history of this small community in the northwest corner of Manatee County would be lost. Today, with only a few churches, a cemetery and one elementary school to mark Palm View's location, the once thriving settlement is no longer distinguishable from neighboring communities and is usually referred to as North Palmetto. In an attempt to preserve Palm View's history, Snow began painstakingly to write his recollections of ninety years of life in Palm View. When he showed his work to family members and friends, they offered to type his handwritten notes and urged him to continue writing. As a result of his efforts, interest has been generated among other Palm View residents to save their community's history. The memoir published here is the first in a series produced by Harry Snow. He continues to record his memoirs and hopes that his work will preserve Palm View's past for future generations.
I am Harry Snow. I was born in 1901 and raised in the part of Manatee County known as the Palm View area and have lived here ninety years.

The Palm View area is bordered on the west by Terra Ceia Bay and on the east where Interstate Highway 75 comes through on the north by Frog Creek and on the south by the Mendoza Road. The southwest corner is about three miles north of Palmetto and is about three-and-a-half or four miles square. I don't know who gave it its name or why, but it has been Palm View for a long, long time.

My grandfather Jackson [William Decatur Jackson, Jr.] moved his family here from Mississippi in 1885 and bought twenty-two acres of land and built a house on it. There were a few widely scattered families living in this area at that time. There was a little Palm View school house about two hundred yards southwest of where the Palm View School is today. There were eight to ten kids going to school. When he moved here, he added three more there for a little while. There was an old-time family named Newman living on a small family farm near the mouth of McMullen Creek. They had the Palm View post office in their house. The mail was delivered and picked up once a week. There was a man named Harllee. I think he was from South Carolina. He had bought a small piece of land on the south side of McMullen Creek and built a house on it, but had moved to Palmetto.¹ There was the Berryhill family from Georgia and the Gibbs family from Tennessee.

¹ The photograph shows the William Decatur Jackson Family, c. 1890. Jennie Bell Jackson is the woman (fourth from the right) holding the shotgun.
My father [William Hardee Snow] was born and raised in Fort Meade and come to this area in 1897 and went to work for a man named Bankston that had a small farm and needed some help. My father met and married my mother [Jennie Bell Jackson] and they made arrangements with Mr. Harllee to live in his house and farm his land. In the meantime my grandfather gave my mother forty acres of hammock land and all the spare time that my father could get he was over on our place digging ditches to drain some ponds so that he could get some farming land of his own as soon as possible. He lived on Mr. Harllee’s place about two years, and then they moved on our place in a house that he had built.

At the turn of the century there were only about ten families living in the area. Our place is located about the center of the Palm View area, and at the turn of the century there, were only four families living in a radius of a mile away. Everyone that lived in the area were farmers on very small family farms - just what the family could take care of. Everybody wanted hammock land. They didn’t think that the prairie land was good for anything but to help hold the world together. I can remember when you could buy all the prairie land that you would want for one dollar to a dollar twenty-five per acre, but hammock land was five dollars and six dollars per acre. When a settler would move into the area and acquire a piece of land, most of them would get ten, fifteen, or twenty acres. That would be all that they needed.
The next thing would be to build a house. The only lumber in that day and time was from a little coffee-pot saw mill, out in the piney woods east of the Gillette area, owned by a good old man, named Dan Robertson. If anyone went to him for some lumber, if you had the money to buy it or not, he would let anyone have it, for he knew that they would pay him for it, for everybody was honest back then. He cut green pine trees that hadn’t ever been turpentined and sawed them up in 4x6s for sills on pine blocks and 2x6s for floor joints and pine boards from three to sixteen inches wide for walls. These were one inch thick, and weighed like lead. A person couldn’t haul many on a one-horse wagon. They would cut the boards the length that they would want the walls to be, and nail one end of the board to the sill and the other end to the rafter plate. Wherever they wanted a window or door, they would box in a place for them. They would floor the houses with the same kind of lumber and build a partition in the house. Some would have two. They would build window shutters and doors out of the same kind of lumber.

All the houses were pretty much the same. Only a little different design sometimes. They would close the shutters when it was cold or raining. There was no such thing as screen wire in them days. People had to sleep under mosquito bars and they were terrible in the summer time. The heating system was to sit by the old wood burning stove when it was cold and the water system was a four-foot-square hole dug out in the back yard about fourteen or fifteen feet deep, so that there would be water in it in the daytime of the year. They would have a curb around them about four-feet high and a person would draw the water up with a bucket tied on the end of a rope.
Times have changed, as much with the weather as it has with the way of life back in the old days. We had what they called the rainy season. About the first week in June it would start and about the middle of the afternoon, most everywhere would get a flood, and when the ground would get full of water, with very little drainage, one of those downpours would come and water would be standing all over the place an inch or more deep and the water in the well would be the same height. That is what we drank and cooked with. It was about like dipping it up out of the yard and drinking it. Until pitcher pumps became available, the people all had chills and fever a lot. The medicine that we had was quinine and castor oil.

The area was a farming area. That was all everybody did. Just trying to scratch a living out of the ground. The crops that the people raised were tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers, beans and squash. The winter crops were cauliflower and cabbage. People raised tomatoes in the spring, because the fall season wasn’t long enough. We would have summer rains until about the middle of September, and there would be the danger of a hurricane or an early freeze. Pepper and eggplants are more hardy, but tomatoes couldn’t take very rough weather. Tomatoes were then, and are now, Manatee County’s main money crop. Although pepper and eggplants were good money crops, they did not compare with tomatoes, but they were easier to grow.

The plow tools that we used were modern at that time. But the people that farm up to 1,000 acres or more now, and do it all with machinery, would laugh at what we farmed with. We had a
turning plow, to turn the ground upside down and a cutaway harrow, to cut the ground up after it was turned, a Planet Jr. Harrow, a cultivator and a scooter stock, which was like a turning plow, but much smaller. They were made somewhere in Georgia. Some people called them Georgia stocks. Some called them grasshopper stocks. We always knew them as scooter stocks. They had an adjustable foot on them that they would bolt a scooter plow points on. The plow points came in two-inch widths, which was called a bull tongue scooter then three, four, five, and six-inch plow points. Everything that people planted was in rows of four feet apart. They used a ton of fertilizer per acre on the money crops at three applications of 600 to 700 pounds each time.

The variety of tomatoes that people planted at that time was Livingston’s Globe and Duke of York and World Beater pepper, and High Bush eggplants. People would plant their seed beds about Christmas time and the plants would be ready to transplant in the field about the first of February. Most of the danger of cold weather would be over by then. People would plow four furrows together, then plow a deep furrow between those beds and set the tomato plants deep. We would plow the soil to them as they grew until they were on a bed. We grew them on the ground. No one thought about tying them to stakes until the early 1920s. But the pepper and eggplants they would set them more on the level of the land. A man and his wife couldn’t take care of over two acres of tomatoes, and would have to have help at picking time. After the money crops were planted people would plant an acre or less in corn. They would plow a furrow with a scooter on level ground and plant two corn seeds about two feet apart and four or five blackeye pea seeds between the corn seeds and about every fifteen or twenty feet they would plant four or five watermelon seeds and a few hills of pumpkins. They could be fixed several ways to eat and were feed for the livestock.

The corn, peas, and a few rows of beans were for canning, but there were no cans at that time. People put their stuff in glass fruit jars. Everybody would can blackberries, which grew on ditch banks and in old abandoned fields, where a family would get disgusted and leave. The population stayed about the same, for when a family would leave, another one would move in. The people would try to can as many huckleberries as they could. They would work the tomatoes until the bushes would get top heavy and begin to fall over, then they would lay them by for ten days to two weeks, until the tomatoes matured enough to pick. They would can corn as long as it was tender and all the peas and beans that they could. When they were through picking the
tomatoes they would leave the ones on the vines until they got ripe and canned every one that they could, for they could use them in so many different ways.

A good garden was a must. Everyone had a big sweet potato patch. They would keep a long time. They would plant some Irish potatoes, but they wouldn’t keep very long. Through the fall, winter, and spring, with turnips, mustard, collards, rutabagors, beets, carrots, onions, beans and okra, after the spring crop was off, they would gather what corn was left when it matured. They had to use it up pretty quick or the weevils would ruin it. They would put it in the corn bin to feed the horses and cows.

Everybody had a milk cow, and from one to a half dozen cows in the woods, they called it free range. People had to fence their farms to keep them out. Everyone had a few hogs and a world of chickens and eggs. Everybody had to have one or two dogs to keep the wild cat and coons and opossums scared off.

Most every family had a guava thicket in their backyard. They canned guavas and made guava jelly, and also made wild grape jelly. The people of this area used to make preserves out of watermelon rinds and several other things, and made pickles out of cucumbers, beets and swamp cabbage. Most of the families had a few short rows of sugar cane just enough to grind out a sixty-gallon barrel of juice, which would make about eight gallons of syrup, which would be
more than enough for most families for a year. There was plenty to eat. No one went hungry in those days.

People could have lived off the land at that time for there was plenty of wild game. Rabbits were so plentiful that people would often go around their fields just before dark and kill what they could and leave most of them where they shot them to try to thin them out. There was covey after covey of quails. People trapped them to eat. When a man’s seed bed was ready to come up they would set several traps around them and bait them with chicken feed to catch any quails that might come around. A covey of quails would get on a seed bed at the time the seed was coming up and they would ruin you in fifteen minutes. There was lots of ponds in the area that held water all the year around and a lot of big fresh-water ducks. That would be all that you would want. People didn’t kill game just to be killing, except rabbits, that were a pest in the fields. The hammocks were full of squirrels. There was no hunting season, nor permits back in those days. There was thousands of mullet fish, plenty of clams and oysters in the winter months and swamp cabbage everywhere.

There was a man named Frank Armstrong, that owned a general store on Terra Ceia Island. He sold everything that was available at that time. Around the shore line at places there was a drop off about four or five feet from the land level to the bay. His store was built on pilings over the water and he had a warehouse larger than his store beside his store and a wharf (between them) that was wide enough for wagons to meet. The wharf went out to his dock which was far enough that steamboats could dock on low tide. He carried cloth, men and women’s clothes, shoes, household goods and groceries in his store. And in his warehouse he had fertilizer, grubbing hoes, crosscut saws, axes and plow tools of all kinds. He had wagons, harnesses, crate material knocked down. A person would have to nail them together at home. He lived across the road from his store and had a pasture in the back of his house and always three or four horses and mules to sell. At that time there was no railroad south of Tampa, and everything that came in or out had to be by steamboat. If a new settler came into the area and needed help, Mr. Armstrong would outfit him with everything he wanted on credit, even to a horse and wagon. For he knew that everything that was raised had to go out over his dock. And they would ship it in a way that the check would come to him until his debt was paid. He would credit anybody. People had a lot of food items at home, but there were things that they would have to get at the store, such as white bacon, lard, flour, sugar, rice, meal, grits, lima beans, peas, salt, and coffee. All those items came by bulk and had to be weighed out.
Everybody had a packing shed in their fields, made out of what they could find to make it out of just frame covered with Palmetto fans, and a packing bin with four compartments in it, one for each size of graded tomatoes. There was 120, 144, 162, and 180 - whatever bin they would be packing out of. There would be that many tomatoes in the crate when it was full; 144’s were the most popular and more than any other were sold and they brought the best price. When the tomatoes got ready to pick a man and his wife would pick until they filled two or three crates. They would drag them to the packing shed with a horse and sled, and grade them out according to size. The man would go back to picking and his wife would start packing. They packed them crates called six basket carriers, and wrapped each tomato in a sheet of wrapping paper.

A little before night the man would nail the crate and stamp them to who they were to go and who they were from, and load them on the wagon and head for Mr. Armstrong’s dock, which was four or five miles away. Then the woman would go to the house and feed the livestock, milk the cow, gather the eggs, and cook supper. It would be late when the man would get home for there were about the same number in both the Gillette and Terra Ceia areas and all of them doing the same thing. There would be about thirty-five or forty wagons there to unload.

They would get up about 4:00 in the morning. The man would do the chores, while his wife cooked breakfast of grits, bacon, eggs, biscuits and coffee. Then they would go back at it again. They would eat a snack from what was left over at supper. That went on everyday except Sunday. All through the month of May.
The steamboat company owned four boats. The *Favorite*, the *Manatee*, the *Pokonoket* and the *Jennette Scott*. In normal times they used only two of the boats. One would spend the night in Bradenton and the other one in Tampa and each one would make a round trip each day; in the peak of the crop season they would run all four of them. They would carry the produce to Tampa and transfer it to the railroad and they would carry it to the northern markets.

As soon as the people found out that the Seaboard Airline was going to build a railroad down to this part of the country, everybody wanted a little orange or grapefruit grove as fast as they could get one. A family that owned only ten acres could set out a five-acre grove and still have five acres to farm. When those little home groves started to bearing, they were little gold mines. The railroad got to Palmetto in 1905 and that was the end of the line for a year, until they could build a railroad bridge across the mile-wide Manatee River to Bradenton, and in 1907 they built a spurline from the main line across the Palm View area to Terra Ceia. They built a depot in Palm View. I don't know why they didn't name it Palm View, like they named the depot in all other communities but they named it Rubonia. When the railroad came here a few more families began to move in. The railroad was a big help. We would not have to haul our produce nearly so far. We would ship it by express and it would get to market a day or two earlier and we wouldn't have the boat fare to pay. I have seen the passenger train pulling four or five express cars at a time during the pack season.
Then someone got the idea to build a packing house. Then the people didn’t have to pack their tomatoes at home. Pick them and haul them to the packing house and there was always a tomato buyer or two there that would look at your tomatoes and offer you a price for them. And if you wanted to sell them to him, you would set them on the platform and he would pay you for them, but if you didn’t think that he offered enough and decided to let them go through the packing house you would have several things to consider. There would be the crate to pay for, and your share of the expense of packing, and ten percent to the man that owned the packing house and then the freight. So, if the buyer offered anywhere near the right price, it was most always the best to take his offer. Some people wouldn’t patronize the packing house, but still shipped them by express. There got to be more and more packing houses scattered along the railroad. And somebody made a law that all tomatoes had to be inspected before they could be shipped. Then everybody had to carry them to the packing house. They shipped them in refrigerator car-load lots. The farmers began to make more and more money, so they could buy more things that they needed and wanted.

As soon as those little home groves came into production, people really made money. They put up several citrus packing houses around and an orange buyer would come around about two months before they were ready to pick and offer you a price for them on the tree. He would have them picked and hauled and pay you at the gate. He would give you anywhere from one dollar to
Artesian well at Hendrix Grove, Palmetto, early 1900s.

Photograph courtesy of the Manatee County Historical Society.
two dollars per box. People soon got able to have an artesian well dug. With those wells people could water their crops and make more yield and that meant more money.

When the railroad came, a man named Weatherall put a lumber yard in Palmetto, selling finished lumber and when anyone got able, he built a decent house. Most new houses were built from 1911 or 1912, a few years before the First World War, and after people really made good. Cars came into this part of the country about 1914 and most everybody bought one. Soon everybody was living in a new house and had a car and truck and tractor and tools.

Things got better and better until the depression came in the early 1930s. Then the banks went broke and most everyone was penniless; the produce houses in the north closed, because the people there was without money the same as down here. There was no buyers to buy our produce and the packing houses all went out of business and were torn down. If people could have raised anything, they couldn’t sell it and citrus went the same way. The last year that we sold our fruit, we got fifteen cents a box for it. And the next year we couldn’t sell it. Everybody took the best of care of their groves. They fertilized them twice a year with a ton of fertilizer each time. Kept them pruned, hoed and the middle plowed. You take a grove that has been taken care of and drop it in two or three years, you have a dead grove. And that is what happened to everyone of those little home groves and the little family farmers could never come back. Some of the larger
farmers around Palmetto and Ellenton got together after the depression and built some packing houses for their own use, but they wouldn't buy or pack a small farmer's tomatoes. They would say you don't have enough.

There are only two groves in the Palm View area. They have been set out in recent years. There has been no farming activity in the area since the depression, except two or three small strawberry fields. After the depression the railroad company tore the Terra Ceia depot down and took the track up. There was three tomato packing houses and two citrus houses on Terra Ceia. They tore all of them down. There were six tomato houses in the Palm View area. There is no trace where any of them were. It is all grown up with bushes and trees except where people live. There is one man over there that has a garden and home groves are all grown up and gone back to nature except the ones that there is buildings on. The family farms and home groves are all gone. And so is the wild game and fish. I don't know how long it has been since I saw a wild rabbit.

Back at the turn of the century there were about fifteen families living in the Palm View area. When the depression came, there were sixty or seventy families. But now they are here by the hundreds. There is six big trailer parks in the area and I think that every one of them are over where there was family farms and home groves. There is part of an eighteen-hole golf course over our place. I still live on a very small part of our old homestead.

The first church in the Palm View area was the Seventh Day Adventist Church, built a little before 1900, or soon after, down by the Palm View Cemetery. About half of the people of this area were of that faith at that time.

We people who were Baptists and Methodists went to church at the Gillette Baptist Church. We didn’t go often for it was a long way with a horse and wagon. The Advent Church burned down in the late 1920s, and the area was without a church again. About the mid-1930s some of the people built a little church across the road from the cemetery and called it the Palm View Bible Church. In the early 1950s, they built the Palm View Baptist Church on the Experimental Farm road, a little west of Highway 41, and in the last four or five years, they built a Methodist Church, on the corner of Canal Road and Highway 41. The community now has three churches.

There were two Indian burial grounds in this area. One was across the road from the cemetery, and the other one was two or three hundred yards east of Ellenton-Gillette Road, and about
half-way between Erie Road and Frog Creek. They have been leveled down for a long, long time. I think that there are houses over both of them. Back in the days before 1900, and a good while after the people made most of their furniture; I have seen people buried in home-made coffins.

There were three bears killed in this area in the period of a year or a little more. I was too little to remember about them. There was just a few panthers around. Once in a while you would see someone that would say that he had seen one or two a few days earlier; that went on until I was grown. The only ones that I ever saw was in the Everglades, back in the early days. The old wagon roads went out through the woods in every direction to get to where you was going the nearest way. When people began to get a few cars the county began to make some roads on land lines but they weren’t much better.

We used old fashion kerosene lamps for light and when we were out of kerosene, we used candles. And on wash day the women would boil the clothes in a big cast iron wash pot and rub them out by hand on a rub board. We took baths in a wash tub. That went on until the power company put an electric line out our way in the 1930s. I have seen the trains put the boats out of business. I think that they stopped running in 1927. And the semi-trailer trucks haul all the produce and most all other freight.

You may think that those olden days were pretty primitive. It might have been but everybody was happy. Everybody knew one another, everybody was the best of friends and neighbors and loved each other, never no hard feelings and everyone would help anyone that they could anyway. I thank God that I was born then instead of now.

Harry Snow
June 20, 1991

NOTES

1 Peter S. Harllee came to Manatee County from Haygood, South Carolina at the urging of his brother, John W. Harllee, who had settled in the Village of Manatee in 1868. Peter S. Harllee married Alice N. Bullock on January 22, 1879. In 1892, after the birth of their son, Pope, the Peter S. Harllee family moved to the Palm View area but only remained there for three years before moving to Palmetto.

2 On May 18, 1899, William D. Jackson, Jr., deeded land in the Palm View area to his daughter, Jennie Bell Jackson. The 1899 deed records that this was only five acres. A later quick claim deed for the property dated October 21, 1901, states that Jennie Bell Jackson purchased forty acres in the same area from Daniel McLaurin for $250.00. In 1917, Harry Snow would purchase an additional forty acres adjacent to this property. Jennie Bell Jackson and William H. Snow, Harry Snow’s parents, were married on April 15, 1900.

3 Planet Jr. was the brand name of a harrow, a piece of farm equipment used to cultivate the soil. The Planet Jr. was patented in 1919.
Frank Armstrong owned the largest mercantile establishment in the north end of Manatee County. The dock on which his store was located extended over some of the deepest water of Terra Ceia Bay. Armstrong was a director of the Independent Line of Steamships which operated out of Tampa. Steamboats and paddlewheelers used to stop at his store and dock when traveling between Tampa and the Manatee River. Armstrong charged a drayage fee for everything loaded from his dock to the boats. He also minted his own coins which were redeemable only in his mercantile. His field and grove hands were paid in this coinage. Armstrong also owned the first packing house on Terra Ceia and served as a director of the Seaboard Airline Railroad.

**BOOK REVIEWS**


Hunting and fishing have been an integral part of Florida's culture since people first inhabited the land. As these activities became less of a necessity they grew increasingly popular as sporting and recreational pursuits. In the nineteenth century, Florida was discovered as a sportsman's paradise. Charles E. Whitehead's book captures the flavor of hunting, fishing, and story-telling in Florida between 1850 and 1890. Those who love the outdoors will undoubtedly love the book.

A reader should never try to make a book more than the author intended. *The Camp-Fires of the Everglades* was not written for the historian. The most obvious flaw is that the adventures narrated do not take place in the Everglades, but rather in central Florida between the Georgia border and Tampa, as well as a few other sections of the state.

This volume, reproduced by the University of Florida Press, is actually a reissue of the 1891 edition. The original work was published in 1860. Additional chapters were added to the later
volume and it is left to the reader to discern new chapters from old. While this does not spoil the story, it does leave the historian somewhat frustrated. For example, the account of tarpon fishing near Gasparilla Island (p. 198) would have been far more significant if it had been included in the original issue. All evidence indicates that the sport began in the 1880s in the Charlotte Harbor area. Whitehead’s story is clearly from this later era and, of course, could not have been included in the first edition.

The book has other weaknesses, such as sketches not reflecting accurately the accompanying narrative. However, in defense of the author, he did not intend his book to be anything other than a collection of tales, both real and fictional, about outdoor adventures in the Florida peninsula. Whitehead certainly accomplished this goal. The tales are told in the dialect of the people he encountered, the descriptions of wildlife and natural scenes are vivid, the hunting and fishing stories bring smiles to the outdoorsman, and you can almost hear the campfires crackle.

Vernon Peeples


"Why celebrate the Columbian Quincentenary?" Michael V. Gannon asks in the closing essay of this rich collection of Florida history. Developed in celebration of the Columbus encounter, *Spanish Pathways in Florida* contains articles by seventeen authors, most of whom are historians and museum curators from Florida universities. All offer well-researched insights on the Spanish history and heritage of Florida.

Organized chronologically, the book includes essays on the "famous" Spanish, Cuban, and Cuban-American men in Florida history: Hernando de Soto, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, José Martí, and Maurice Ferré. There are proportionally more articles on women and men who are not so famous, those who contributed their labor and skills to the social, economic, and religious culture of St. Augustine, the Panhandle, the Gulf Coast, Miami, Key West, and the interior. Other articles focus on the impact of the "Columbian Exchange" on the Old and New World and on political and strategic issues in the Florida colony. This balanced incorporation of social, economic, and political history makes a valuable contribution to the discipline and will also be of interest to the general reader.

An important editorial decision recognized the Spanish legacy of Florida. The volume is written entirely in both English and Spanish, with translation page by page. Accessible to English, Spanish, or bilingual readers, the dual language approach notes the diversity which still characterizes Florida culture, while reminding the reader that the first European language to dominate Florida was Spanish.

Readers will find all essays both readable and enlightening, as each author minimized "academic" writing style and form. Each essay is followed by information on the author and suggestions for further reading, but no footnotes. Biographical and topical essays skillfully
Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (1519-1574) established a military post near Tampa Bay that was destroyed by Native Americans in 1568.
incorporate the historical context in which the studies are set, providing chronological consistency without requiring extensive prior knowledge of Spanish or Florida history.

The first essay by Bailey Thomson, "In Search of Spanish Pathways," and Jerald Milanich’s "Hernando de Soto’s Entrada into La Florida" review the cultures and activities of twenty native cultures in Florida before the Europeans. In these essays, as well as in Henry Dobyn’s "The Invasion of Florida; Disease and the Indians of Florida," the severe effects of conquest and contact are analyzed, a process that destroyed an estimated 924,000 indigenous people by 1710. Amy Turner Bushnell’s "Tomas Menéndez Márques: Criollo, Cattleman, and Contador," John Hann's "Father Juan de Paiva: Spanish Friar of Colonial Florida," Jane Landers' "Francisco Xavier Sánchez," and Kathleen A. Deagan's "Fort Mose, America's First Free Black Community" also refer to the indigenous people's efforts to either resist or accommodate themselves to changing economic and political power. Significantly, analysis of the conflicts and survival issues that persist for these groups is missing from the remainder of the volume, perhaps reflecting the role and responsibility of the dominant Anglo political economy in subsequent Indian-European relations. Illustrations of native people are taken almost exclusively from the popular drawings of Jacques le Moyne, which are of questionable authenticity, and no depictions by indigenous people of their conquerors -in art or in writing - are included in the text, although some are available through the suggested reading lists.

Other studies of Spanish "pathways" explore the economic, political, and strategic value of the Spanish colony. Four of the final essays analyze the period following Florida's incorporation into the United States and the vital connection with Cuba and its people: Louis Pérez Jr. on José Martí, Nancy Hewitt on African-Cuban Paulina Pedroso and las patriotas of Tampa, Diane Lesko's study of folk artist Mario Sánchez, and Raymond A. Mohl's analysis of Miami politics. Taken together, all reveal the extent to which Cuban internal affairs, United States and Florida
government responses to Cuba, and working-class and elite Cuban exiles and their descendants have shaped business, politics, and culture in Florida. An additional essay exploring Florida’s current vital Latin American trade relations and employment of documented and undocumented workers from other former Spanish colonies might have tied together this continuing historic linkage.

By ending the volume with the question, "Why celebrate?" Gannon justifies the occasion as an important opportunity for us to examine and re-evaluate both our history and our values. By financing new and continuing research projects, preservations, restoration, and cultural programs that celebrate our diversity and similarities, Gannon argues, perhaps more people will develop a greater interest in the mixed heritage of the Americas, better understand the present, and ultimately affect the future. If this provocative volume accomplishes even a few of these tasks for some of its readers, it has made a significant contribution.

Susan J. Fernández
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TAMPA BAY HISTORY

Published Semi-annually by
The Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida

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Correspondence concerning subscriptions, contributions, books for review, and all other editorial matters should be sent to the Managing Editor, Tampa Bay History, Department of History, University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida 33620. (Telephone: 813-974-2807). ISSN:0272-1406.

Manuscripts from potential contributors should be typed and double spaced, with footnotes, also double-spaced, placed at the end and prepared in conformity with the style used by the journal.

The subscription rate is $15 for one year. Single issues and back files are available. Printed semi-annually, in the spring/summer and fall/winter.

Tampa Bay History disclaims responsibility for statements made by y contributors.

Tampa Bay History is indexed in Historical Abstracts, and America: History and Life.

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The New Woman

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Women make the home. They have made the very word sacred in our language. Prove to us that the New Woman is competent to discharge her home and political functions in harmony....

*Tampa Morning Tribune*
May 4, 1895