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FROM THE EDITORS

Historians often ask themselves whether particular developments marked a significant change or reflected underlying continuity. In this issue of *Tampa Bay History*, which begins our seventh year of publishing, the articles focus on subjects that highlight changes in south Florida. The opening article about Fort Brooke details the establishment of the first permanent American settlement at Tampa Bay, and it reveals what life was like for the troops and civilians who staked out the area that became Tampa. The article on the desegregation of public schools in Manatee and Pinellas counties won second prize in the 1983 *TBH* Essay Contest, and it, too, chronicles a period of slow but dramatic change. A sharp contrast to recent crises in public education is offered in a document dating from the 1890s which describes the problems encountered by the principal of St. Petersburg’s first public school.

The other articles featured in this issue also relate to the theme of historical change. The photo essay, depicting the "Dawn of the Automobile Age," shows graphically the impact of technological innovation on life in Florida after the turn of the century. The memoir relates the life of Walter D. Bell who lived in several south Florida cities, including Fort Myers and Tampa, and who rose to a position of prominence in Arcadia. Spanning almost 150 years of Florida history, the articles in this issue focus on some turning points, but readers can decide for themselves how much change actually occurred and to what extent basic patterns of life continued unbroken.

We are proud to announce that the 1984 *Tampa Bay History* Essay Contest was won by two students at the St. Petersburg Campus of the University of South Florida, Ellen Babb and Milly St. Julien, for their article, "Public and Private Lives: Women in St. Petersburg at the Turn of the Century," which will appear in a forthcoming issue. Other upcoming articles will cover south Florida cowmen, Odet Phillippe, a yellow fever epidemic and the centennial of Ybor City. We invite readers to submit previously unpublished articles on any topic related to the history of southwest Florida. For details of this year’s Essay Contest, see page 4.
The great port and city of Tampa, Florida, originally owed its existence to a little known military post called Fort Brooke. Today there is only a small marker to designate its location, and few citizens of the area have even heard its name. But for over fifty years and at the cost of hundreds of soldiers’ lives, Fort Brooke protected settlers from Indians, pirates, and lawless whites. It played a vital role in the development of the Tampa Bay area and the entire west coast of Florida.

The United States acquired Florida from Spain in February, 1821. President James Monroe appointed General Andrew Jackson governor of the newly acquired territory. After Jackson’s resignation in late 1821, William P. Duval was appointed territorial governor of Florida. One of the most pressing problems facing Jackson and DuVal was the disposition of the Seminole Indians. It was a problem that became more and more complicated over the next two years, and it was directly responsible for the establishment of Fort Brooke.¹

By 1823, the federal government had decided to establish an Indian reservation somewhere in south Florida. Governor DuVal thought the Indians should not be allowed to remain on the valuable territory between the Suwannee River and the Alachua region. Thus, the policy which would push the Seminoles off their coveted lands was being formed. In April, 1823, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun appointed Colonel James Gadsden and Bernardo Segui to act as commissioners to conclude a treaty with the Seminoles. Their instructions were to place the Indians south of Charlotte Harbor, or if not enough suitable lands were available there, as far north toward Tampa Bay as they deemed necessary. It was wishful thinking to believe the Seminoles could sustain life on the land south of Charlotte Harbor. Gadsden and DuVal, after exploring parts of the territory, subsequently recommended that the reservation boundary be extended northward.²

In June, 1823, Gadsden consulted with several Seminole chiefs and fixed a conference for September 5. The conference was held at a small military post on Moultrie Creek, five miles south of St. Augustine, and the resulting Treaty of Moultrie Creek was signed September 18, 1823. The principal provisions of the treaty called for: creation of an Indian reservation extending about thirty miles north of Tampa Bay but no nearer than fifteen miles from the gulf coast nor twenty miles from the Atlantic coast; a subsidy of $6,000 plus $5,000 annually for twenty years; establishment of an Indian agency with a school; the furnishing of provisions for one year to the Indians while they moved their homes and became established on the reservation; allowing the northern boundary of the reservation to be extended if the commissioners became convinced that the reservation did not contain enough good tillable land; and six separate, small reservations in Florida for six Apalachicola chiefs and their followers who otherwise would not sign the treaty. The last provision affected only 214 Indians.³
The commissioners sent the treaty to Secretary of War Calhoun and urged that military posts be established at Tampa Bay, Charlotte Harbor, and near Cape Florida. They concluded that justice had been done the Indians, yet the Seminoles’ erratic disposition necessitated the establishment of forts. Gadsden also volunteered to run the boundary line of the reservation. He urged that it be done promptly without waiting for ratification because delay would cause postponement for a year, owing to the impossibility of operating in Florida during the so-called sickly season, which ran roughly from the end of March to October. On November 4, 1823, Calhoun advised Gadsden that President James Monroe had approved his proposal and had authorized establishment of a military post at Tampa Bay.4

On November 5, 1823, the commanding general of the U.S. Army ordered Brevet Colonel George Mercer Brooke to proceed from Pensacola, Florida, to Tampa Bay with four companies of the Fourth Infantry in order to establish a military post which would afford good health and proximity to Indians.5 Colonel Brooke was apparently an excellent choice for the undertaking. Although not a graduate of West Point, he had received rapid promotion because of his meritorious service in the War of 1812. One of his lieutenants, George A. McCall, later described his commanding officer in a private letter.

No one is more liberal or more amiable than he, Colonel Brooke; and though he may have his weak points or queer conceits, which are as undisguised as they are harmless, yet his many sterling qualities will always gain him the affection and warm regard of those around him. [H]is kindness and generosity on all occasions, has left a lasting impression upon my mind. . .Beloved of his men, the Colonel is the most indulgent of commanding officers, without ever losing sight of what is required of every man in the discharge of his appropriate duties.6

Colonel Brooke cooperated with Colonel Gadsden in finding a location for the new fort at Tampa Bay. Gadsden arrived in the area by overland route from St. Augustine on January 8, 1824. After a voyage from Pensacola, Brooke’s ship entered Tampa Bay on January 20, and the other two ships of his company arrived within the next few days. An arm of land juts down from the northern end of Tampa Bay and divides the upper bay into two lesser bays. The west bay is known as Tampa Bay, whereas the eastern bay is called Hillsborough Bay. It was on the southern tip of this arm of land that Brooke spotted a staff with a piece of muslin flying from it. Upon examination a note was found from Gadsden describing his whereabouts on the eastern bank of the Hillsborough River where the river flows into Hillsborough Bay. Gadsden asked Brooke to meet him at that point. Since Hillsborough Bay was too shallow for Brooke’s ship, he had to go overland across the arm. After a rendezvous on January 22, the two officers surveyed several locations before deciding upon the original meeting point as the best site for the post.7

When work on the encampment commenced, Gadsden insisted that the camp be named in honor of its founder, Colonel Brooke. The latter deferred until learning the pleasure of the War Department, but the name “Cantonment Brooke” was soon authorized by the adjutant general. Meanwhile, Colonel Brooke honored his fellow officer by choosing the name Gadsden’s Point for the tip of land where he had first landed.8
In reports to their superiors, both officers were enthusiastic about the site they had selected for the fort. Gadsden reported that the “location is judicious...There is a small body of good hammock land already cleared and well adapted for gardens.” Colonel Brooke explained that the choice of the site had been influenced by the quantity of cleared land. Neither man mentioned
why or by whom the land had been cleared. Indeed, they chose not to report that they had evicted a man who otherwise would have been Tampa Bay’s first permanent American settler.

The settler was Robert Hackley, son of Richard S. Hackley who had purchased approximately eleven million acres of Florida from the Spanish Duke of Alagon in 1819. The duke had received a land grant from Ferdinand VII, King of Spain, in February, 1818. The Adams-Onis Treaty, which transferred Florida to the United States, had nullified all Spanish grants made after January 24, 1818. Thus, the transaction with Hackley was voided. Nevertheless, Hackley later maintained his claim was valid, as it had been made in good faith, and furthermore, the Adams-Onis Treaty was not ratified until 1821. Hackley’s heirs subsequently brought suit to get back the land. In affidavits sworn in 1834, both Gadsden and Brooke admitted that they had taken over the clearing and a house built by Robert Hackley, the son. However, the courts ultimately ruled against Hackley’s heirs.10

Meanwhile, the army had proceeded to construct Fort Brooke. Colonel Brooke had come from Pensacola reasonably well stocked with building supplies, including several thousand bricks, and three months of provisions. Construction went quickly. In a letter of April 25, 1824, Colonel Brooke reported that a “very fine commissary and quartermaster’s storehouse, and an excellent bakehouse” had been completed.11 He described the structures as “the best log buildings I have ever seen. . .260 feet in length and 12 feet from floors to loft.”12 He expected the hospital and officers’ quarters to be finished about the first of June if additional supplies arrived in time. Some delay in construction had already been caused by the near loss of the brig Mary loaded with building materials. The Mary was thirty-five days in passage from Pensacola to Tampa Bay, and she was feared lost at sea or captured by pirates.13 Other delays in completing the fort may have been caused by various problems with the troops. Of the approximately 200 men present in April, 1824, twenty-three were under arrest or in confinement, eleven were sick and seven had deserted. The early privations of the men exacted a price. In April, Private John McKenney died of consumption—the first fatality of the Army at Tampa Bay. Despite the obstacles, Fort Brooke was a reality by June, 1824.14

Although many Indians lived near Tampa Bay, the early years at Fort Brooke were marked by a tranquility that was unusual for a military post on the frontier. Important Indian villages in the area included Hickapussa, which was located near or at present-day Plant City, and “Thlonotasassa,” the nearest to Fort Brooke, which was about twelve miles to the northeast and contained about 200 Indians in 1824. Colonel Brooke was able to establish friendly relations with the Indians in the vicinity of the fort. For some weeks after the troops’ arrival, the Indians stayed away, but then Colonel Brooke sent an officer and an interpreter to Thlonotasassa to assure the Indians that the Army came as a friend and to invite the chief to visit the fort. Within a few days, the village chief, Tustenuggee-thlockko, came to the fort with half a dozen braves, and a formal ceremony was held. The conference was a relief to Colonel Brooke, who earlier had feared an Indian attack.15

With nearby Indians posing no immediate threat, the officers and men stationed at Fort Brooke settled down to make the best of their remote situation. A view of the soldiers’ daily life was recorded by Lieutenant George A. McCall, whose letters to his father and brother provide some good insights into the leisurely duty of the officers, if not the enlisted men, at early Fort Brooke.
McCall was a West Point graduate, class of 1822, who served under Colonel Brooke when Fort Brooke was established. He served at Fort Brooke all or parts of the years 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1829. Later, during the Second Seminole War, he again came to Tampa Bay.  

Deer hunting and fishing were popular pastimes among both officers and enlisted men. Occasionally, rather long hunting and fishing excursions were enjoyed. Lieutenant McCall told of one such trip with Colonel Brooke and several other soldiers which took them to Mullet Key at the mouth of Tampa Bay and from there northward along the coast to the Anclote River, near present-day Tarpon Springs. The trip, made in Colonel Brooke’s small schooner, was sheer delight for Lieutenant McCall. The men shot deer on Mullet Key, pulled redfish from the gulf, and even sampled Flamingo tongue. One activity which provided both sport and food was the catching of large sea turtles which came into the bays between the string of narrow keys and the mainland. The expert at catching turtles was one Maximo, a Spaniard who had worked at fisheries in the Charlotte Harbor area. Maximo was the pilot for Colonel Brooke’s schooner and had been in his employ for some time. Years later, when Maximo became a homesteader, his name was given to a point of land on the southern tip of Pinellas peninsula.  

Judging from McCall’s letters to his family, the officers had considerable leisure time at Fort Brooke. McCall told about spending many mornings perched in a large tree, which was used as a lookout post. There he would while away the hours “reading, gazing, and contemplating.”
Some time was also spent shooting alligators. The ’gators gave the garrison a tangible enemy to deal with when it was thought they were responsible for the loss of a cow belonging to Colonel Brooke and a horse belonging to another officer. Horses provided some amusement for the garrison. They were used in hunting and on at least one occasion for racing. In a letter to his brother, Lieutenant McCall was frank about his assignment being less than onerous.

We have little military duty, while various building, block houses, storehouses, powder magazines, stables, and a hundred others are occupying the attention of the quartermaster and the commanding officer, and demanding the labor of all the enlisted men. The officers, when not engaged in these duties, have abundant time to hunt and fish.¹⁸

As the fort’s commanding officer, Colonel Brooke had more to worry about than some of his officers. One of the colonel’s concerns was enforcing the law in the section of Florida which the fort controlled. In August, 1824, he protested the illegal seizure of timber near Hillsborough Bay. There was also the growing problem of adventurers who wished to trade with the Indians, using whiskey as an enticement. In 1825, Colonel Brooke was alarmed by certain Spanish fishermen settled to the south who were trading with the Indians, and he requested permission to break up those settlements. Another cause for concern was an Indian report of a brig loaded with 150 African slaves which had allegedly sailed into the lower bay. This report, along with Colonel Brooke’s own observations that the area was probably a pirate depot, must have had the colonel concluding that his potential problems were large.¹⁹

Steps were taken early to establish direct communication with other military stations by building roads. Fort King was about 105 miles to the north, near today’s Ocala. The nearest post office was at Wantons, just above present day Micanopy, about thirty-five miles north of Fort King. The assistant quartermaster, Captain Isaac Clark, was given the task of constructing a road from Fort Brooke to Wantons. After completing the Fort King Road early in 1826, Clark proposed creation of a regular military express, consisting of two mules, between Fort Brooke and Wantons so that mail could then be received from Washington, via St. Augustine and Wantons, in twenty days. This express was authorized by the quartermaster general in May, 1826.²⁰

General Edmund P Gaines, commanding officer of the Western Department of the Army, conducted an official inspection of Fort Brooke in January, 1827. General Gaines’ report was generally complimentary.

The interior police at Fort Brooke was very good, particularly so in everything regarding the health, comfort and efficiency of the troops. The instruction appeared to have been somewhat deficient in the company movements. It is, however, due the officers and men that I should remind the general-in-chief that most of them have been occupied for nearly a year past in opening the military road from Tampa Bay to Alachua. . .The airy position and judicious construction of the barracks, with the vigilant attention paid to every branch of police, upon which the health of the troops depend, contribute to render Fort Brooke one of the most healthful posts south of New York.²¹
Fort Brooke was in fact relatively free of disease. While Pensacola had a yellow fever epidemic in 1827 and Key West suffered a similar epidemic in 1829, Fort Brooke had no epidemic of any kind. A visitor to Fort Brooke in the early 1830s commented, “Not one death has occurred by fevers of any kind. Indeed there have been very few deaths of any cause.”

Although the military life at Fort Brooke dominated activity around Tampa Bay, white settlers also contributed to the growth of the area. In addition to Robert Hackley who left the Tampa area after the Army had confiscated his property in 1824, another white settler who had come to Tampa Bay before the Army was Levi Collar. The Collars had lived along the Suwannee River for ten years before Levi came to Tampa to select a new home site in 1823. While Collar returned to the Suwannee to gather his family, the site he had chosen was claimed, first by Hackley and then by the Army. Collar then staked out a spot on the opposite, or west, side of the Hillsborough River, and the Collar family became the first permanent civilian settlers in the Tampa Bay area. In 1828, a tradesman, William Saunders, arrived at Tampa Bay. Saunders received permission to build a log store at the northern edge of the clearing where the garrison was located, and his establishment was the first general store on the west coast of Florida.

Growth around Fort Brooke was soon hampered by the creation of a military reservation around the garrison. Recalling previous complaints about timber being cut illegally near the fort, the War Department finally decided to take some action toward preserving the area around Fort Brooke. In September, 1828, Colonel Brooke recommended that the boundary line for the military reservation “should commence from Gadsden point...along the eastern shore of Tampa Bay, to its head, from thence, a due north course, to the Indian boundary line, then east, along this line, to a spot opposite, the eastern side of the Thlonotasassa hammock, and (including said hammock) and from thence, a due south east course, til it strikes the Allaphia [Alafia] river.” These directions may have been a little unclear. At any rate, when the War Department established the reservation in December, 1830, it set aside a perfectly square area encompassing sixteen square miles. Apparently no immediate effort was made to remove civilians from the reservation although they could no longer make any legal claim to the land.

In the meantime, Fort Brooke had bade goodbye to the man who had founded and commanded the fort for five and one-half years. As early as June, 1828, Colonel Brooke had requested a transfer to the recruiting service in the New York City area where his wife was then living. However, Colonel Brooke remained at his post for more than a year after that. One of his last duties in Florida was to establish a military post at Key West. He received orders to that effect in January, 1829, and replied that he would leave for Key West immediately. Later in 1829, the colonel departed Florida for good, leaving behind a post which must have been the envy of other frontier commanders. John Williams, who visited Fort Brooke in the early 1830s, paid a tribute to its founder, calling Fort Brooke “a beautiful station, that does honor to the judgment and taste of the veteran General [sic] who formed it.”

In November, 1829, Brevet Brigadier General Duncan Lamont Clinch left Pensacola, where he had been a popular local figure, to take command not only of Fort Brooke but of all Florida forces. With him, the headquarters of the Fourth Infantry also moved to Tampa Bay. Accompanying General Clinch were his wife, Eliza, and their children.
General Clinch was plagued by the War Department’s stinginess in regard to expenses and troops for Florida. He was advised that a token show of force was all that was required to keep the Indians in line. Working with a limited number of troops, General Clinch was concerned about the lack of a garrison at Fort King, which had been evacuated. In January, 1830, he wrote the commanding general of the Army, Alexander Macomb, urging that troops be stationed at Fort King instead of having the area serviced out of Fort Brooke. Macomb replied that if Clinch used proper vigilance there would be no danger. However, the garrison at Fort Brooke was cut in half. The annual reports of the Secretary of War showed Fort Brooke had sixteen officers and 205 enlisted men in 1829, but only seven officers and eighty-four enlisted men in 1830. Many troops from Florida were sent to Louisiana in early 1830, possibly in connection with the removal of other eastern Indian tribes.

Accounts of life at Fort Brooke during Clinch’s command are rare. The Pensacola Gazette had no item concerning Fort Brooke except for the shipping notices indicating a regular passage of ships to and from Tampa Bay. Lieutenant McCall wrote of a tornado striking the garrison in July, 1830, though the date given in the letter may be wrong. It is more likely it occurred in 1829 when McCall was definitely at Fort Brooke. Commenting on the storm and its damage, McCall wrote that it carried away the north-east corner of the Hospital piazza and the southwest corner of the piazza around the Surgeon’s quarters. The latter is about 50 yards from the former in a diagonal line, but measuring perpendicularly across the path of the hurricane [sic], not more than thirty. Therefore, as the whole body of the storm passed between these two buildings, not moving a shingle or the bough of a tree on either side, the circle of the whirlwind could not have been more than five-and-thirty feet.

Some evidence that life at Fort Brooke was not always dull is found in Karl Grismer’s historical account of the development of the civilian community which was growing near the garrison despite the lack of claimable land. According to Grismer, “Gamblers began drifting in, eager to help the soldiers and frontiersmen get rid of their hard earned money. A few women of easy morals set up business in huts along the waterfront.”

A post office was established at Tampa Bay in November, 1831. William G. Saunders, the storekeeper, was named the first postmaster, but he was replaced eight months later by Augustus.
Steele. A postal contract advertisement appearing in the *Florida Herald* at St. Augustine indicated that Fort Brooke received mail once every two weeks.33

Meanwhile, changes continued to reduce the garrison at Fort Brooke. General Clinch was soon transferred to Baton Rouge, Louisina. The general return of the Army for 1831 showed Fort Brooke under the command of Brevet Major James S. McIntosh. In that year, Fort Brooke still had two companies, comprising eighty-five enlisted men and three officers. By 1832, only a token force was left at Fort Brooke. The Army Register for 1832 revealed that Major McIntosh was still in command, but many of his troops had been sent elsewhere. In July, 1832, Lieutenant William Graham took Company D of the Fourth Infantry from Fort Brooke to Fort King.34

The departure of this company appears to have signaled the temporary abandonment of Fort Brooke. An order directing the abandonment of the fort had been received in June, 1832. In July, troops departed to help control Indian problems elsewhere, three companies leaving Florida and the one company to Fort King.35 There are no post returns for Fort Brooke from September, 1832, to November, 1834. It seems likely that the post was at least in the hands of a caretaker as there were buildings and other property to be guarded. For the time being, the civilians in the Tampa Bay area had to protect themselves. When the Army returned to Fort Brooke in 1834, the Indian menace in Florida had grown to alarming proportions.

As relations between white settlers and Indians worsened, pressures increased to end the abandonment of Fort Brooke. In November, 1834, the inhabitants of newly created Hillsborough County addressed a memorial to the War Department asking for:

> a sufficient number of troops. . .stationed at Tampa Cantonment Brooke in order to keep the Indians in check and to protect the lives and property of the now helpless settlers. Since the removal of the Troops from this place very serious losses have been sustained by the holders of stock and we have every reason to suppose much greater will be sustained unless we have some protection from the militiary [sic], our cattle are daily killed and scattered through the forest [sic] and in many instances driven entirely off.36

In response to these pleas, on November 24, 1834, the War Department directed three companies of artillery to occupy Fort Brooke and one additional company to reinforce Fort King. In late December, three companies of the Second Artillery arrived at Fort Brooke. They were under the command of Brevet Major Richard A. Zantzinger. Seven other officers and 153 enlisted men were reported present on the last day of 1834.37

From mid-1835 to the end of the year, events tumbled wildly toward a climax. On August 11 the Army’s mail express rider was murdered and scalped by Indians twenty miles out of Fort Brooke on his way to Fort King. Parties were sent out from Fort Brooke to apprehend the Indians, but they escaped in the direction of Fort King.38 There were no indications of further hostility, but alarm must have swept the community at Tampa Bay. Besides the growing military force at the garrison, there were “twenty or thirty families. . .a majority of them quite poor living nearby.”39 These people were totally reliant on the protective arm of the military, or the friendly disposition of the Indians.
Not all of the Indians created trouble. Eight friendly chiefs and their followers agreed to emigrate to Arkansas under the terms of treaties signed in 1832 and 1833. After much stalling, it was decided that they would assemble at Fort Brooke beginning January 1, 1836. Transports in Tampa Bay were preparing for their reception. The government was anxious to begin before hostilities broke out. On November 30, Indian Agent Wiley Thompson reported that four to five hundred Indians were camped near Tampa Bay, and he described their condition as deplorable due to the lack of provisions. A week later Thompson reported that Indians were disappearing into the interior. A number of friendly Indians were still encamped near Fort Brooke, but their pitiful condition and exposure to hostile Indians made it questionable whether they could be retained long enough to get them on transports. Captain Upton S. Fraser at Fort Brooke was requested to issue provisions to them. Fraser considered the Indians, in general, to be “decidedly in a state of hostility.”

On December 12, 1835, Captain Francis S. Belton arrived at Fort Brooke and assumed command of the post. He immediately wrote the War Department and described the situation at Fort Brooke.

The excited state of the Indians in this vicinity and the hostility demonstrated by the plunder and burning of property has induced extraordinary exertions by my predecessor in Command, Capt. Frazer [Fraser] 3 Art [Third Artillery] to place the position in a state of defence, which has been accomplished by great energy and perseverance. Three more companies from N. Orleans and Key West are daily expected. Two comp's of the garrison here, and two of those expected, are by existing orders to be detached to Fort King, leaving Dades, Zantzingers and my own for this defence, perhaps 90 effectives. The sick reports are large from fevers and inflamatory diseases. The garrison with about 100 citizens and families, are every night within the pickets, as well as the publick property. The supply of ammunition is scanty, for musquetry as well as for our 2 6-pdr's. A few hours since about 40 Indians, joined (with horses and families) our friendly party, across the river. Before this may leave ... I may be able to report whether they are driven in, or whether they are seceders from the hostile party, and indicate a dissolution of the mass. Our communications with Fort King are entirely broken up. . . Provisions may hold out—Indians will receive rations for work, but as prudently as possible.

Several settlers’ families took refuge in the fort, and Captain Belton added that about thirty citizens had formed a ranger patrol. A store thirty miles from the fort had been plundered, and the plantation of Daniel Simmons near Plant City had been burned.

While Fort Brooke bustled with activity in the final month of 1835, Fort King was also the scene of great apprehension and preparedness. On November 28, the commanding officer of Fort King predicted an imminent attack and appealed for reinforcements. In response, General Duncan L. Clinch, who had command of all Florida troops, ordered reinforcements from Fort Brooke. Two companies, commanded by Captain George W Gardiner and Captain Fraser, were to leave for Fort King on December 16. However, Captain Belton at Fort Brooke apparently decided to delay the march “on account of intelligence I had received of the force of the Mickasukies, a hostile bank of Indians and their strong position near the forks of the
Captain Belton also may have been waiting for Major Francis Dade’s Key West company, elements of which would be added to Gardiner’s and Fraser’s companies. Dade arrived at Fort Brooke on December 21.

The presence of a woman at Fort Brooke then caused a strange twist of fate. Captain Gardiner had been placed in command of the two companies ordered to Fort King. However, on the morning of December 23, Captain Gardiner’s wife was serious ill. As the expedition was due to leave the next day, Major Dade proposed that he take Gardiner’s place in command. This arrangement was made. Later, when a ship was found to be leaving immediately for Key West, where Gardiner’s children and grandparents were, Gardiner placed his wife on board the ship and joined the expedition to Fort King. Major Dade, however, remained the commanding officer and thus gave his name to a tragic episode in Florida history.

At six o’clock on the morning of December 24, 1835, Major Dade got his column underway. Besides Dade, there were six officers, ninety-nine enlisted men, the surgeon and the guide, Luis Pacheco. Women from the garrison made knapsacks and filled them with homecooked food, presenting one to each of the soldiers before the march. Major Dade remained in communication with Fort Brooke by messenger until the evening of December 25, then mutual contact was lost. It was presumed Major Dade would reach Fort King about the 29th of December.

During the afternoon of December 28, Indians suddenly attacked the Indian agency at Fort King. Led by Osceola, the raid was swift and vicious. Among the victims was Agent Wiley Thompson, who had labored earnestly in the attempted removal of the Florida Indians. Thompson and Lieutenant Constantine Smith were shot down as they strolled near the agency. The sutler’s house was then attacked, and the sutler and two of his clerks were killed. All of the dead except a boy clerk were scalped and mangled. At nearby Fort King, the slightly depleted company of regulars remained within the fort’s protection, because they feared an all-out Indian attack. Escapees from the raid on the sutler’s house reached the fort and gave details of the massacre. An official report was prepared by Lieutenant Joseph Harris, who added that the Fort King garrison was still looking for the two companies from Fort Brooke—“it is strange they have not arrived before.”

As Lieutenant Harris wrote his report at Fort King, Major Dade and 105 of his men lay dead in the barren pine woods some thirty-five miles to the south. The Indians had decided on war and had carried out their first attacks with astounding success. The ambush of Dade’s command was accomplished on December 28, 1835, the same morning as Osceola’s attack on the Indian Agency. News of Dade’s massacre reached Fort Brooke by one of the two survivors of the attack. On December 31, severely wounded Private Ransom Clark returned to Fort Brooke. The following day, Private Joseph Sprague, also wounded, completed the sixty-five-mile trek back to the astonished garrison at Tampa Bay. Except for the black interpreter, Luis Pacheco, they were the only survivors of the event which is considered to be the start of the Second Seminole War. Pacheco joined the Indian attackers. One other man, Private John Thomas, escaped death by the good fortune of being injured in the crossing of the Hillsborough River a day or so before the battle. He returned to Fort Brooke with no knowledge of the fate of his comrades.
Fort Brooke itself was rudely shaken out of its eleven-year slumber. The commanding officer, Captain Belton, wrote his report of the massacre and conditions at the fort just four days later, on January 1, 1836. His comments help to give a picture of the post after the massacre.

The defences have been somewhat extended and strengthened; the old cantonment has been entirely abandoned; and we anxiously await ordnance and ordnance stores. The garrison is healthy, and I have caused to embark on board of the return transport to New Orleans several families, made widows and orphans by the fatal battle.

Another report on the same day was written by Brevet Major John Mountford.

The whole force at this place are now entrenched within the picket and blockhouses; our force consists of about 180 fighting men and officers, to which are [attached] a party of citizens rangers, about thirty strong, and also in the immediate neighborhood is a party of about 100 friendly Indians. . .We are hard at work day and night, in strengthening our fortifications in every possible manner, our men in fine spirits, and anxious to revenge their fallen comrades.

One other account came from an unidentified officer.

We expect every moment to be attacked, as the savages have sworn we should all be massacred before the 6th of January. . .Officers and men are like brothers, encouraging each other, and determined, with their last breath, to avenge their fallen comrades.49

The anticipated revenge was a long time in coming. Probably none of the soldiers at Fort Brooke in January, 1836, was in Florida seven years later when the Second Seminole War was declared at an end. The war became one of attrition, with few battles that rose above the stature of a skirmish. Fort Brooke was never attacked, but it did become the most important fort in Florida—often the headquarters of the Army in Florida and the focal point of Indian removal.50

In the weeks following the opening fireworks, the garrison at Fort Brooke remained apprehensive. On January 9, 1836, Captain Belton wrote the following report:

No attack has yet been made on this post, though we have constantly expected it, as the enemy is around us, and as we suppose, in force, and very audaciously stealing horses and cattle close to our picket. Six horses were carried off yesterday, and a negro, from whom they will doubtless get what information they want. . .We are without any information from headquarters.51

If Captain Belton had been in communication with General Clinch, he would have felt somewhat relieved. General Clinch with three companies of regulars and Richard Keith Call with a brigade of Florida volunteers had engaged the largest part of the hostile Indians as early as December 31. The action took place along the Withlacoochee River, some seventy-five miles north of Fort Brooke. Such military intelligence as existed correctly placed the Indians in the twenty-five mile long band of swamps and dense hammocks known as the Cove of the Withlacoochee. Thus, Fort Brooke was not in danger. After the first critical weeks it rapidly recovered
from its brief role as a cringing outpost threatened with extinction and became once again a true military camp.  

Fort Brooke soon became the largest and most important base of operations against the Indians. Token reinforcements arrived in the last few days of January. Approximately sixty-five marines came from Pensacola and Key West. The pressure on the fort was not substantially relieved until General Edmund R Gaines arrived on February 9. With headquarters in New Orleans, General Gaines was the commanding officer of the Western Department of the Army which had supervision over western Florida. When General Gaines learned of the outbreak of hostilities, he did not wait for orders, but immediately called into service a regiment of Louisiana volunteers. Along with several companies of regulars, they left quickly for Tampa Bay. Accompanying General Gaines to Fort Brooke was George McCall who had been stationed at Fort Brooke during its earliest years. A McCall letter reveals the situation at Fort Brooke when he arrived in February, 1836.

We found Major Mountfort. . .shut up in pickets, where he has been confined for some weeks. We have now encamped around him four hundred and fifty regulars and about six hundred volunteers. In addition to which force we have about one hundred friendly Indians. . .A small party of them had a brush with a detachment of the enemy yesterday, a few miles from the pickets.

General Gaines did not wait long to get into action. His command took the field four days after his arrival at Fort Brooke. General Gaines marched northward. His command was the first to see Dade’s battleground, reaching that site on February 20. His men buried the near-skeletons before pushing on to Fort King. Among those of Dade’s command who were buried that day was Captain Upton Fraser, a former commanding officer of Fort Brooke. The consequences of General Gaines initiative soon began to catch up with him. Operating without orders from the War Department, the general found that supplies in Florida were quite limited and designated for other commands. Gaines had left Fort Brooke with only ten days’ rations, and he was able to procure only an additional seven days’ rations from Fort Drane. Furthermore, a predictable conflict in command developed. Major General Winfield Scott, commanding officer of the Army's Eastern Department, had received orders on January 21 to take command of the Florida Army. When Scott learned of Gaines’ action, he resented the division of authority. The fact that he and Gaines were long time antagonists did not help.

General Scott arrived at Fort Drane on March 13 and took over field command of all Florida troops. He presented Gaines with a War Department order which politely ordered gaines out of Florida. Thus, the command situation was unsnarled, and General Scott had cleared the way for his plan to crush the Florida Indians. His plan called for a three-pronged attack on the Indian stronghold known as the Cove of the Withlacoochee. General Clinch, accompanied by General Scott, was to move south from Fort Drane. Brigadier General Abraham Eustis was to move from St. Augustine south along the St. Johns River to Volusia, just south of Lake George, and then sweep to the west. The third part of the plan called for Colonel William Lindsay to lead a northward thrust out of Fort Brooke. Colonel Lindsay had been instructed by Scott to raise a regiment of Alabama volunteers. He did so, arriving at Fort Brooke in early March, about three weeks after the departure of General Gaines’ force.
General Scott’s plan failed. The three forces made contact with the Indians in varying degrees, but where confrontation did occur the enemy avoided defeat by slipping away. Various obstacles prevented the three forces from making their planned rendezvous on the Withlocoochee. The brief campaign was the temporary undoing of General Scott. He returned to St. Augustine and was soon called to Washington to explain his failure before a court of inquiry. Despite its failure, the campaign did bring the importance of Fort Brooke into focus. All three forces made Tampa Bay the terminus of their thrust through Indian country. Many soldiers saw Tampa Bay for the first time, and their impressions often generated enthusiasm.\(^5^7\)

The accounts of some of the men who served in Florida breathe life into wartime Fort Brooke. One such person was Alexander Meek, an ensign in the Alabama volunteers. His journal sheds light on the life at Fort Brooke, and his description of the post itself is valuable.

It is a picket fort, with two block houses and is no doubt impregnable to any assault the Indians could make. It is surrounded, except at the entrance, by wide deep holes about eight feet deep and three feet wide with a long sharp stake in the center reaching to within two feet of the surface and all covered over with straw as to conceal it. . . .[Fort Brooke] is situated immediately on the water’s edge in a corner of one of the most beautiful and regular groves I ever saw. The grove is of live oak and orange trees and resembles more an ornamented college green then the encampment of a large army. We encamped throughout this grove which is about a mile square and perfectly level.

When Meek arrived at Fort Brooke, there were about 150 troops composed of the U. S. Marines and some Louisiana volunteers left behind by General Gaines. Across the river from the fort were about 300 Florida volunteers who had become “pretty much weatherworn.” The soldiers were principally occupied by routine drill and guard duty. Meek had a low, commissioned officer status which entitled him to more privileges than the ordinary soldier. For example, he was able to “eat dinner and supper at the houses.” This probably meant that he was welcome at several houses which accommodated the regular Army officers and the few civilians.\(^5^8\)

Meek had little to say about the civilians at Fort Brooke who included the Collar and Simmons families. However, he mentioned another civilian, Augustus Steele, the U. S. Customs House
officer. Steele was a native of Connecticut who had moved to northern Florida in 1825. In July, 1832, his influence had become such that he was awarded the customs collection job at Tampa Bay. The same month, he was appointed postmaster of the Tampa Bay post office. Steele had been very influential in the creation of Hillsborough County in 1834 and was a strong force in Tampa Bay politics for years.59

Though impressed with the beauty of Fort Brooke, Meek also had complaints. He found the water nauseating because of its high sulfate of iron content. He added wine or molasses to the water to make it more palatable. He found several luxury items, such as oranges, at the sutler’s store, but he thought the prices charged were exorbitant. Though Meek’s health remained good, he often referred to others troubled by diarrhea and various fevers. However, Meek’s most persistent complaint was directed against Colonel Lindsay. Meek frequently mentioned the soldiers' low opinion of Colonel Lindsay.

There was still a great deal of tension at Fort Brooke caused by the possibility of Indian attacks. Meek on several occasions wrote of the proximity to danger, but the incidents were usually false alarms. On one occasion a sentinel fired on a mass of shadowy figures only to discover, quickly, that they were a battalion of Florida volunteers. Except for the peril of jumpy sentinels, the soldiers usually were safe from attack as long as they stayed close to the fort. However, there were occasional casualties. One of the friendly Indians was killed when he and about fifty others attempted to lure a large band of hostile Indians close the fort. Meek described the funeral at Fort Brooke:

The wife of this warrior and several of his relatives made great lamentations over his corpse, chanting in slow and melancholy dirge over his remains. He was buried by the regular soldiers with military honors.60

By May, 1836, the great flurry of activity was temporarily over. Gone were the masses of volunteers who had erected large tent encampments near Fort Brooke. In May, the post returns from Fort Brooke showed eleven officers and 317 enlisted men present. This was in contrast to the approximately 4,800 men who had converged on Fort Brooke in early April at the conclusion of General Scott’s fruitless plan. Gone, too, was the high state of tension. Experience had demonstrated that the Indians liked to pick places of attack to their own great advantage. They were not likely to attack a post as large and defensible as Fort Brooke.61

The war progressed sporadically after Scott’s campaign. Isolated contact was made, but even victories were overshadowed by the futility of tracking down a highly mobile enemy. New troops poured into Florida. About 1,200 Tennessee volunteers arrived in September, and new Florida volunteers were brought into central Florida. About 750 friendly Creek Indians were signed as volunteers under the command of a regular Army officer. The combined force of Creeks, Tennessee and Florida volunteers, and regular Army participated in frequent fights during November on the eastern fringe of the Cove of the Withlacoochee. The action on November 18 was the largest of 1836, and the outcome was exceptional. Twenty-five Indians and blacks were left dead on the battleground. Since the Indians always tried to remove all of their dead after a battle, it may be assumed that they were beaten that day. However, after a month's hard fighting the hostile forces were still intact.62
By November, 1836, Fort Brooke had seen many troops come and go. It had played host to nearly every principal officer and to every commanding officer. Though details are lacking, it seems certain that docking and storage facilities were expanded. A map drawn in January, 1838, reveals that Fort Brooke had become a sprawling base of operations.63

Another report of life at Fort Brooke came from an altogether different personality, Bartholomew Lynch. A regular Army private who arrived at the fort in July, 1838, Lynch was exceptionally well educated for a private in those days. He was witty and cynical and indulged in the enlisted man’s most common pastime - ridiculing the officers. Lynch greatly admired the area.

Tampa Bay is too romantic and lovely a place for one to attempt describing it. I wish some perfumed, cigar smoking, novel writer, city man monkey was here, he could not describe it, he would die of a fit of reality. Tampa is a perfect Arcadia. It is impossible to form any idea of the climate of Fla. it must be seen and felt. Florida could be made a heaven on earth. . .The more I see of T. Bay the more I like it, it is a romantic and truly picturesque place. . .Tampa, Tampa what a beautiful heavenly and luscious [sic] spot thou are.

Lynch was at Fort Brooke from July, 1838, to June, 1839. In that time, his experiences were probably typical of the enlisted man in Florida. He claimed to have traveled at least 1,500 miles on various missions, often accompanying supply wagons. As late as March, 1839, Lynch said he had never seen a hostile Indian. In the first few months that he was at Fort Brooke, Lynch had few duties.

Nothing to do except to parade or retreat and take care to have our carbine bayonets as bright as a new born dollar, no matter about anything else. No scouting, except little parties now and again who accompany the capt. a fishing and hunting, mount guard once in 3 weeks or so. . .Times are too good to last for long. Never were soldiers happier than we Florida warriors. Who would think it, books to read, newspapers, periodicals, fresh beef to eat, fish in abundance, whiskey at 50¢ a gill, plenty women in the market absolutile [sic] at the disposal of the highest bidder. Nor church or meeting house parson or any thoughts or Religion to mar the liberty so universally enjoyed here.64
Lynch praised the cool and comfortable quarters, the hospital, the library, and the theatre. Not described in detail, the theatre was a building at least partially constructed of brick, probably located in the civilian community north of the actual grounds of Fort Brooke. On one evening, Lynch saw a program of comic songs, recitations and an animated Egyptian mummy. In attendance the same night were about twenty Indians, including squaws and papooses. There were also “a good many Negroes. . .and the beautiful, virtuous ladies of Tampa.” To Lynch life in Florida was very good.

When love sick misses, and affectioned mothers think that their sweethearts and darlings are fighting Indians by the bushel; here we are enjoying ourselves at the theatre. God send me no greater calamity than a war in Fla., a fortune making war truely [sic], although a good many lives are lost in it, some unnecessarily. Verily, verily, society did not lose anything by the fall of some of the Fla. Warriors. They were not angels. . .If all the wars all over the world were carried on as this Fla. War it could not be considered a curse by the people. Any man, unless an enlisted soldier, no matter wheather [sic] mechanic or laborers or loafer or dandy can make a fortune in Fla. Long live the Fla. War, so says the sutlers.

Another night at the theatre drew a pointed comment from Lynch—“crowded house, the aristocracy of Tampa present, dgs [dragoons], whores, Indians, darkies, soldiers, sailors, marines, hurrah hurrah for the War in Fla.”

In May, 1840, Brigadier General William Armistead took command of Florida forces. Fort Brooke by then had only four officers and seventy-two enlisted men, reflecting the drop in the level of hostilities. However, Armistead built up his force, and in October there were thirty officers and 933 enlisted men present.

The increase in troop strength served chiefly as a show of force. The Indians avoided major conflict. In fact, for the balance of the war, no large scale fighting took place. The Indians had dissolved into roving bands, each with one or two leaders of prominence. Perhaps only a half dozen important bands were intact. Yet as long as they remained intact, no soldier or settler could feel secure. The strategy of the Florida generals was to apply constant pressure and harassment, while trying to get Indian leaders to surrender peacefully. They offered food, whiskey, gunpowder, clothing and money as inducements. Each Florida commanding officer had a varying degree of success. General Armistead was fortunate in persuading the obstreperous leader Coacoochee, also known as Wildcat, to come to Fort Brooke for talks in March 1841. He agreed to collect and surrender his band within a short time at Fort Pierce on the east coast. Coacoochee repeatedly stalled, appearing long enough to receive supplies and then begging to return to the interior to collect members of his band. Suspicious of his intentions and impatient with his behavior, the Army ordered him siezed, bound, and sent to New Orleans in mid-June, 1841. By that time General Armistead had departed from Florida. His successor was his next-in-command, Colonel William J. Worth.

Operating mostly out of Fort Brooke, Colonel Worth began a series of moves in 1841 which brought the war to a conclusion a year later. An important contribution was his policy of giving a free hand to unit commanders stationed at the approximately thirty active posts in Florida. His
orders were simply, “Find the enemy, capture, or exterminate.” The policy led to greater pressure on the Indians, and surrenders became more frequent. Yet the usual difficulties of confronting the enemy still plagued the Army.

Colonel Worth knew his greatest weapon was the use of intermediaries to persuade the Indians to come in peacefully. Consequently, he dispatched a party to New Orleans to bring back Coacoochee. On the fourth of July, 1841, Colonel Worth visited Coacoochee on board a ship in the harbor near Fort Brooke. Coacoochee and several of his warrior friends were in chains. In one of the most dramatic episodes of the war, Colonel Worth spoke softly but firmly to the Indian leader, praising his strength and courage and impressing on him the need to end the long struggle. Finally, the colonel delivered an ultimatum. Coacoochee was to send several trusted warriors into the interior to induce his former band to surrender. If they failed to return by a prescribed deadline, Coacoochee and the rest of his friends on board the ship would be hanged from the yardarms of the vessel. Before the deadline, on the last of July, seventy-eight warriors, sixty-four women and forty-seven children surrendered at Fort Brooke. Shortly thereafter, Coacoochee was freed to contact another hostile leader, Hospetarke. He returned with Hospetarke and eighteen warriors to confer with Colonel Worth. When they refused to surrender, they were arrested and prepared for emigration.

Coacoochee was detained in Florida a while longer in order to take advantage of his influence with key Indian leaders. The salesmanship of such leaders and Colonel Worth’s acuity were the techniques which finally ended the war. By October, 1841, over 200 Indians were assembled at Fort Brooke in preparation for emigration. Fearing the possibility of another mass escape by the capricious Indians, the Army had 200 soldiers on guard duty around the clock. An eerie spectacle resulted when beacon lights were used to illuminate the two-mile-square camp. On October 12, 1841, Coacoochee and 210 others were shipped to New Orleans.

Hot pursuit and continuing solicitations of Indian leaders slowly brought the war to a halt. In February, 1842, another band of 230 Indians was shipped from Fort Brooke. That month, Colonel Worth estimated that only 300 Indians, of which perhaps 100 were warriors, remained on the peninsula. Colonel Worth was convinced that the government would be wasting men and
money if it continued a full scale effort to eradicate the Indians. He dismissed some troops and asked for permission to institute a nonpursuit policy. Fort Brooke’s troop strength fell from 1,103 officers and enlisted men in October, 1841, to only sixty-eight in April, 1842.

The government did not immediately approve Colonel Worth’s plan of nonpursuit. Pressure on the Indians continued to be applied. In April, 1842, 100 recent Indian captives emigrated from Fort Brooke. In May, President John Tyler finally authorized Colonel Worth to terminate the war at his discretion. In August, Colonel Worth went into the interior to meet with three of the remaining chieftains: Billy Bowlegs, Tiger Tail and Octiarche. An arrangement was made giving those Indians and their followers a reservation in the southern portion of Florida. In return, they would cease hostilities. On August 14, 1842, Colonel Worth officially proclaimed an end to the Florida War.

The war was a tragedy for most of the parties involved. Perhaps, as Private Lynch suggested, the sutlers, contractors, and various profiteers benefited, but for those officially engaged, and for the private frontier settlers, the price was heavy. The Army alone suffered 1,446 deaths; the Marines sixty-six and the Navy twenty-three. Those figures did not include soldiers who subsequently died from illnesses or wounds incident to the war. They did not include non-military deaths of frontier settlers and civilians employed by the military. In addition, there was a significant, but difficult to enumerate, loss of life among the thousands of volunteers who participated throughout most of the war. For that cost in lives, 3,824 Indians had been removed from Florida. The financial cost of the war was estimated at between thirty and forty million dollars.67

Thus ended a colorful era in the history of Florida. A visitor to Fort Brooke in early 1841 captured the drama of the war years.

The temperature climate of the coast, and the commanding neighbourhood of the fortress, made it a pleasant and safe residence from the miasma and disorders of the interior country. It was also the depot for military stores, the arsenal for ammunition, and the harbour for the gun-boats. Civilized and savage warfare here displayed their pomp and colouring in close relief. The painted savage allies with their wives camped daily by the walls or traded with the sutler; the Indian runners, who alone could thread the inner wilderness, came and went to distant outposts...Here came the young recruit, emulous of fame, with armour newly dight, and hither returned from the cypress

William Jenkins Worth, from History of the Second Seminole War by John K. Mahon.
swamp or pathless everglade the soldier whose brief campaign sent him home wounded, wasted, broken, with his weapons un tarnished, save by the rust, and his glory un made, except by his sufferings.68

The fort had undergone changes during the war. Captain Nathaniel W Hunter, who was at Fort Brooke in the final years of the war, described the change in appearance.

There is scarcely a vestige of the old fort left. Major Belton in 1836 caused nearly all the buildings to be pulled down and many improvements destroyed in anticipation of an attack from the Indians. How he has been cursed for it. The Alabama Volunteers picketed their horses to the orange trees and cut down the live oaks for firewood. What sacrilege. Tampa is still a pretty place.69

The orange and oak trees were not all destroyed. Their number may have diminished, but few visitors who later came to Fort Brooke failed to comment on the beauty which they lent to the picturesque fort.

The Second Seminole War proved the wisdom of Fort Brooke's founders, Colonels Gadsden and Brooke. Designed to provide a safe location and healthy environment for U.S. troops, the
fort clearly afforded both for the thousands of soldiers who passed through Tampa Bay during the costly war. Fort Brooke also had become the nucleus for the small civilian community of Tampa that grew up next to it. The frontier outpost had attracted the first permanent white settlers who came in search of economic opportunity under the protective arm of the military.


5. Jacob P. Brown to George M. Brooke, November 5, 1823, ibid., 784.


12. Brooke to Jacob P. Brown, April 6, 1824, ibid., 918.


17 McCall to brother, March 30, 1828, McCall, *Letters from the Frontier*, 200.

18 McCall to brother, March 30, 1830, ibid., 207.

19 Callhoun to Brooke, August 12, 1824, *Territorial Papers*, XXII, 37; Gad Humphreys to DuVal, January 20, 1825, ibid., 163-64; Brooke to Winfield Scott, August 29, 1825, ibid., 314; Brooke to Jessup, November 30, 1825, ibid., 365-66.

20 Clark to Jessup, September 29, 1825, ibid., 328; Clark to Jessup, March 26, 1826, ibid., 492-93; Jessup to Clark, May 2, 1826, ibid., 526-27; William M. Goza, “The Fort King Road-19631” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, 43 (July 1964): 52-70.


23 Grismer, *Tampa*, 61. Grismer spells the name Levi Coller. A pamphlet written by a descendant, Cynthia Farr, has it spelled Collar. In two Historical Records Survey, Works Progress Administration, replicas of old Hillsborough County records, one has the spelling Collar, and the other, Collier or Coller.

24 Ibid., 65.


26 Brooke to Roger Jones, June 6, 1828, ibid., 23-24; Alexander Macomb to Brooke, January 10, 1829, ibid., 133-34.


31 McCall to Archibald McCall, July, 1830, McCall, *Letters from the Frontier*, 216.


33 Trueman Cross to Arthur W Thornton, January 11, 1832, *Territorial Papers*, 628; *Florida Herald*, October 25, 1832.


35 Post Returns, July, 1832.


37 Lewis Cass to Zantzinger, November 24, 1834, *American State Papers, Military Affairs*, VI, 56; Post Returns, December, 1834.
38 American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 80.
39 Ibid. 545.
40 American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 80; ibid., 560.
41 Francis S. Belton to Roger Jones, December 12, 1835, Territorial Papers, XXV, 210-11.
42 Ibid.
44 Niles Weekly Register, January 30, 1836.
47 Niles Weekly Register, January 30, 1836.
48 Laumer, Massacre!, 158-59.
49 Niles Weekly Register, January 30, 1836.
51 F. S. Belton to Roger Jones, January 9, 1836, American State Papers, Military Affairs, VI, 563.
52 Niles Weekly Register, January 30, 1836.
53 Grismer, Tampa, 78.
54 McCall to Archibald McCall, February 9, 1836, McCall, Letters from the Frontier, 294.
55 Meyer M. Cohen, Notices of Florida and the Campaigns (New York: B.B. Hussey, 1836), 97; Sprague, Florida War, 113.
56 John Bemrose, Reminiscenses of the Seminole Indian War (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1964), 78-81; Sprague, Florida War, 117.
57 Patrick, Aristocrat, 130; Bemrose, Reminiscenses, 88-90.
59 Grismer, Tampa, 66-67.
60 Meek Journal, March 8, 10, and 12, 1836.
61 Post Returns, May, 1836; Sprague, Florida War, 146.
62 Sprague, Florida War, 66.

65 Ibid., 132, 158, 161, 166.

66 Post Returns, May, 1840 and October, 1840.


DESEGREGATING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN MANATEE AND PINELLAS COUNTIES, 1954-71

by Darryl Paulson and Milly St. Julien

Until 1954, Florida, like seventeen other states and the District of Columbia, operated segregated or dual school systems. However, Florida had not always adhered to this policy of segregation. In fact, Florida’s Reconstruction Constitution of 1868 and state legislation passed in 1873 called for nondiscrimination in various programs administered by the state. The 1873 law stated that “no citizen of this state shall, by reason of race, color or previous condition of servitude be excepted or excluded from the full and equal enjoyment of any accommodation, facility or privilege furnished by. . .trustees, commissioners, superintendents, teachers and other officers of common schools and public institutions of learning, the same being supported by moneys derived from general taxation or authorized by law.”1 The end of Reconstruction in Florida signalled an end to the policy of nondiscrimination in Florida's schools. A motion at the 1885 Florida Constitutional Convention, demanding that “white children and colored children shall not be taught in the same school, but equal provision shall be made for both,” passed by a 55 to 38 vote.²

The Sunshine State’s policy of “separate but equal” schools remained in force until the United States Supreme Court handed down its landmark ruling in Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka. In its 1954 decision, a unanimous Supreme Court concluded that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”³ Response to the Brown decision from Tampa Bay area newspapers and public officials was mixed. The St. Petersburg Times supported the ruling and praised the court for the flexibility of the decision. The Times was disappointed that no deadline was set for the completion of desegregation, “even if it were years away.” Across Tampa Bay, the Tampa Tribune vehemently opposed the court’s opinion, but cautioned its readers, “There is no need for the people of Florida to be disturbed about what will happen to their schools next term. Nothing will happen.” Finally, in Manatee County, J. Hartley Blackburn, the superintendent of schools, also foresaw little impact coming from the Brown decision. According to Blackburn, “The School board has built new schools in the Negro districts and the Negro children will continue to attend these schools even with the end of segregation.”⁴

Because of the importance and complexity of the Brown decision, the Supreme Court asked the Attorney General of the United States and the attorney generals of all the affected states to submit briefs on how to desegregate the schools. Florida Attorney General Richard Ervin called for very gradual desegregation, noting that sufficient time would be needed in order for community attitudes to adjust. Rapid desegregation, Ervin argued, might cause “a tornado which would devastate the entire school system.”⁵ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) argued for immediate desegregation. In the view of the NAACP, if “separate but equal” schools were unconstitutional, as the court had already declared, then blacks
should not have to postpone the enjoyment of their right to attend integrated schools. In 1955, the Supreme Court issued its implementation decision, known as *Brown II*, and took a position comforting to Florida and the other states with segregated schools. Instead of imposing a deadline for the integration of public schools, the court called upon the affected states to make a “prompt and reasonable start toward compliance.” Francisco Rodriguez, a Tampa attorney working with the NAACP, promised that his organization would monitor school board policies to ensure that the court’s ruling “will not be sacrificed upon the altar of expediency and calculated delay.” The *Tampa Tribune* praised the court’s gradual implementation policy, claiming that it would “dissipate the thunderhead of turmoil and violence which had been gathering in Southern skies since the court held school segregation unconstitutional a year ago.”

In most cases, the states maintaining segregated schools made no changes or only minor changes in policy. This was true in Florida and all of its county school systems. For example, less than a month after the first *Brown* decision, a group of white residents of Manatee County filed suit with the Florida Supreme Court asking that a $3 million school bond issue be invalidated because the money was earmarked for segregated schools. Tampa attorney Reese Smith, who would later be elected president of the American Bar Association, represented the plaintiffs who argued that the expenditures would violate the Supreme Court's opinion in *Brown*. In a six-to-one decision, Florida’s highest court rejected the suit, claiming, “The United States Supreme Court ruling against segregation does not involve the validity of school bonds issued to finance segregated schools.” Pinellas County officials also ignored the *Brown* decision by building seven new schools for black students between 1954 and 1962. Included among the seven schools was Lincoln Heights Elementary in Safety Harbor, build in 1959 after several black families started a petition asking for a school for their children. Prior to the construction of Lincoln Heights, 124 black students had to be bused to Clearwater. Since Safety Harbor already had an elementary school, the $61,047 spent to construct the Negro school was a high price to pay in order to maintain segregated schools.

From 1954 through 1961, the Pinellas and Manatee school systems remained totally segregated. This was really not unusual for Florida counties, since only five of Florida’s sixty-seven counties had begun token desegregation. The Dade County school system was the first in Florida to break the color line when it integrated one school in September, 1959. By the end of the 1961-62 school year, Broward, Hillsborough, Palm Beach and Volusia counties also had begun token desegregation. In these five counties, only 648 blacks were attending schools with whites, or less than two-tenths of one percent of Florida’s school-age population of blacks. In fact, the pace of desegregation in the Southern states between 1954 and 1961 was so slow that two political scientists estimated that at the existing rate of desegregation it would take 3180 years to integrate Southern schools.

During 1962, Pinellas County took the first steps toward integrating schools. On August 30, 1962, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported that three blacks were attending St. Petersburg Junior College and Tomlinson Adult Education Center. This first step in desegregation received little media coverage. Until 1958, blacks in Pinellas and Manatee counties had no local place to receive a higher education. Gibbs Junior College opened that year with an anticipated enrollment of 100, but actual enrollment was over 500 students. The year 1962 also marked the first desegregation of Pinellas County public schools. On August 27, 1962, parents of seven black
students from Tarpon Springs met with Superintendent Floyd Christian and asked that their children be transferred to “white” schools. Leonard Shiver of the Tarpon Springs NAACP contended that the Negro school, Union Academy, was “grossly in adequate.” In all, eleven black students requested transfer to “white” schools. Out of the eleven requests, only one seventh and two twelfth graders were accepted. Christian said the other eight requests were denied because the students lived closer to black schools. The school board found the charge that the black school was “grossly inadequate” to be unsubstantiated.\(^{13}\)

By September, 1963, nine Pinellas schools were desegregated, although this represented only seventy-three black students out of a school population of 62,131.\(^{14}\) The peaceful desegregation led the *Clearwater Sun* to praise the county’s officials and residents for their calm acceptance of integration. According to the *Sun*, “while the Wallaces, Barnetts and Faubuses rattle the swords of racial hatred and discord, it’s comforting to know that we live in a section of the country where students are welcomed and educated in our public schools, not turned away from them by armed troops.”\(^{15}\)

The 1964-65 school year started with Manatee County still maintaining a segregated system and Pinellas County engaging in only token desegregation. Throughout Florida, forty-seven of the state's sixty-seven counties were still operating segregated schools. Only 2.65 percent of the Negro students in the “Sunshine State” were attending “mixed classes” compared to a 10.8 percent average in seventeen Southern and border states.\(^{16}\) Although 754 blacks in Pinellas County were attending “mixed schools,” 338 of these were from Glenoak Elementary which had been transformed from an all-white school to a predominantly black school in only two years due to “white flight.” According to John H. Niemeyer, special consultant to the United States Commission of Education, what happened to Glenoak was not unusual. According to Niemeyer, By and large, Negro schools have been separate and unequal. When pupils from these schools are added to schools which already have a discouragingly high percentage of youngsters who are not being successfully taught, the desegregated school seems to go down hill overnight. The teachers’ moral plunges to a new low, and white, middle-class parents flee to all-white neighborhoods or send their children to private schools.\(^{17}\)

The 1964-65 school year was a turning point for the Manatee and Pinellas school systems as a result the 1964 Civil Rights Act which mandated that federal funds be eliminated for school districts which discriminated. For the first time since the *Brown* decision ten years earlier, blacks
in both counties filed suit in federal district court claiming that the counties were still operating segregated schools. The Manatee suit emerged when Caroline Harvest and five other blacks sought and were denied admission to a “white” school. On January 21, 1965, the six black students filed suit in federal district court in Tampa seeking an injunction to prevent Manatee County from operating a “compulsory biracial school system, from continued dual school schemes or patterns of school zone lines based on race, from as signing pupils on the basis of race, from assigning teachers on the basis of race, and from approving contracts, school budgets, policies and curricula and programs designed to perpetuate a racial school system.”

Several days later the Bradenton Herald described the plaintiffs as “militant elements who thrive on the race question.”

In Pinellas County, five black parents from Clearwater and one from St. Petersburg filed suit in May, 1964. The parents objected to the school board policy which allowed white students to transfer to all-white schools, even when a black school was closer. Blacks, on the other hand, could not attend a white school unless it was the closest to their home. Leon Bradley, Sr., a black police officer from Clearwater and vice president of that city’s NAACP branch, had petitioned the school board to allow his son to attend John F Kennedy Junior High School in Clearwater. Bradley did not want his son to attend the all-black school in Clearwater, since it was a combined junior and senior high. The petition was rejected, and Bradley was forced to enroll his son at Clearwater Catholic. “If they had transferred my kid to JFK,” announced Bradley, “that would have been the end of it.”

Representing the black plaintiffs was James Sanderlin, a black attorney who was associated with the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. The following month, the Pinellas school board filed a motion for dismissal but, on October 6, 1964, District Court Judge Joseph Lieb denied the school board’s motion. Judge Lieb gave the board three weeks to respond to the complaint.

In their response to the suit, Pinellas officials denied operating a racially segregated school system. They maintained that their practice of sending black students to black schools rather than predominantly white schools was based on the fact that those students lived closer to black schools. The school board’s reply also stated that students were admitted to the county’s special education classes without regard to race. This seemed to be in sharp contrast to a special report by the St. Petersburg Times which claimed that only one black student had been admitted to the Nina Harris Exceptional Student Center.

Judge Lieb was apparently unconvinced by Pinellas school officials and ordered them to submit a desegregation plan by March 15, 1965. According to the St. Petersburg Times, the board’s resulting plan called for “an immediate start in September [1965] on complete desegregation of zones, employment practices and other items with a total fulfillment date indicated as 1967-68.” The plan also called for the phasing out of Gibbs Junior College and an end to racial assignment of students and teachers. The phasing out of Gibbs Junior College was of particular significance to Tampa Bay’s black population. Of the school’s 787 students, only 235 were from Pinellas County. Most of Gibbs’ students were bused from Hillsborough and Manatee counties, but the school board voted to discontinue bus service to these counties on March 11, 1965.

Judge Lieb accepted the plan, describing it as “a realistic and fair one, considering the circumstances and conditions in the community, personnel and administrative problems. . .and, at the same time, the constitutional requirements of deliberate speed.”
plan was accepted by the federal government on May 5, 1965, allowing the continued use of federal funds by the Pinellas County school system.26

To resolve their federal suit, the Manatee County school board adopted a “freedom of choice” desegregation plan. Under this proposal, black students could attend the school of their choice. Realistically, however, very few black students could transfer under the plan. In order to transfer, a black student would have to pass a series of barriers. The student would need the written recommendation of the two school principals affected. Also, the transfer would be granted only if space was available and only if the student could provide his or her own transportation. If the student managed to pass all of these obstacles, the transfer would still have to be approved by a student assignment committee and the school board.27 Manatee County Superintendent Blackburn told the *Tampa Tribune*:

> I do not consider the plan wide open integration. The school board is complying with the [1964] Civil Rights Law and is saying in effect that no school in the county has the right to be segregated, but the board is not going all out to integrate them.28

Even this modest desegregation plan was condemned by the Manatee County Citizens Council, a white supremacist organization. The Citizens Council brought segregationist celebrity Lester Maddox of Georgia to speak before an audience of 300 in Bradenton.29

On June 5, 1965, Federal District Judge Joseph Lieb, who had also presided over the Pinellas case, upheld Manatee’s “freedom of choice” plan as long as the county provided free bus transportation for blacks assigned to white schools. When schools opened in September, 1965, only 170 of Manatee County's 3,900 black students were attending “mixed” schools. In Pinellas County, thirty-two schools were mixed, sixty remained all-white, and fifteen were all-black.30

Throughout 1966 and 1967, NAACP attorneys reappeared in Judge Lieb’s chamber complaining about the slow progress of desegregation in Manatee and Pinellas counties. In November, 1965, and June, 1966, James Sanderlin, the attorney representing the black students in Pinellas County, filed suits charging that the school system was not making sufficient progress in integrating the schools. Sanderlin argued that almost 60 percent of the schools in Pinellas were still segregated and that the “integrated” schools were either predominantly black or predominantly white.31 Acting Superintendent of Schools James F Gollattscheck did not deny that racial imbalance existed, but he maintained that the problem was due to residential segregation. “I would not be in favor of busing Negro pupils outside their home school zones to accomplish desegregation,” commented Gollattscheck. “I guess we will always have the problem of the neighborhood school being segregated.”32 Judge Lieb denied Sanderlin’s motion on the grounds of insufficient evidence, and the attorney then appealed to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans where the NAACP was victorious. The circuit court instructed the district court to reconsider Sanderlin’s motion in light of newly approved federal guidelines.

At approximately the same time, attorneys for the Manatee County school board were appearing before Judge Lieb to report on the progress of integration in their county. The NAACP argued that Manatee officials had reneged on a promise to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to close all-black Rubonia Elementary School. On May 15, 1967, Judge Lieb
reaffirmed Manatee’s “freedom of choice” plan, but he warned school officials to “take affirmative action to disestablish all school segregation and . . . to eliminate the effects of past racial discrimination in the operation of the school system.”

Two important events affected the progress of desegregation in Manatee and Pinellas counties in 1968. The first was Florida’s statewide teachers strike which put the issue of desegregation on the back burner. The second was a United States Supreme Court decision, Green v County School Board, which declared “freedom of choice” plans were insufficient tools to desegregate the nation’s schools. The Supreme Court charged that school boards had an “affirmative duty to take whatever steps might be necessary to convert to a unitary system in which racial discrimination would be eliminated root and branch.” The “affirmative duty” meant the school board had to “come forward with a plan that promises realistically to work, and promises realistically to work now.”

Manatee County clung to its “freedom of choice” plan until NAACP attorneys filed a new motion before Judge Lieb. The NAACP attorneys asked for the end to the “freedom of choice” plan and the adoption of pairing, consolidation or geographical attendance zones. Although school board attorney Kenneth Cleary argued that “steady and healthy progress” was being made, Judge Lieb ordered Manatee officials to submit a new desegregation plan by February 20, 1969. The new plan, submitted on February 2, left eleven schools totally segregated, a situation unacceptable to the NAACP and Judge Lieb, who required another plan by May 21.

Undaunted by its setbacks, the Manatee school board voted to instruct its attorneys to seek a new trial. Attorney Cleary alleged that Judge Lieb had failed to consider “the effect on the students” of massive desegregation. On June 27, 1969, Judge Lieb denied the request for a new trial, as did the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. In the face of what appeared to be the imminent desegregation of Manatee County schools, a “Save Our School Children Committee” was formed to prevent the “forced integration of our schools.” The constitution of the new organization stated that “learning traits of Negro and whites are different, that differences between Caucasians and Negroes can't be resolved, that separate classes are economically sound and superior and can be best adapted to the differences between the races.”

The entire desegregation issue in Manatee and Pinellas counties, as well as all the Southern states, was altered by two United States Supreme Court decisions in late 1969 and early 1970. In the 1969 case, the Supreme Court refused to allow another delay in desegregating Mississippi schools. The Court held that “every school district is to terminate dual school systems at once.” The Brown standard of desegregation with “all deliberate speed” was now replaced by a new standard-desegregation “at once.” On remand, the Fifth Circuit judges ordered desegregation of faculty, staff, transportation, athletics, and other school activities by February 1, 1970. Because the circuit court believed it would be chaotic to move hundreds of thousands of school children in the middle of the school year, they called for complete student integration by September 1, 1970. However, the United States Supreme Court reversed the decision, ordering complete dismantling of dual schools by February 1, 1970.

Manatee and Pinellas officials remained optimistic that they could avoid the Supreme Court’s edict. School officials were given encouragement when Florida’s flamboyant and controversial
Republican Governor, Claude Kirk, stated that Florida was “financially and physically unable” to meet the February 1 deadline. According to Kirk, complete integration of Florida’s schools would require the use of “massive busing.” Kirk ordered school officials to stick with their current school calendars, and he threatened to remove any school official complying with the February 1 deadline.\textsuperscript{40}

On January 28, 1970, Governor Kirk filed a motion to intervene in the Manatee case. The motion was denied by Federal District Judge Ben Krentzman who had taken over the case from Judge Lieb. Judge Krentzman also rejected several modest desegregation plans offered by Manatee school officials, and accepted one requiring extensive busing.\textsuperscript{41} The day after Krentzman’s order, Governor Kirk issued an executive order interposing the “sovereignty of the state between the School Board and the Federal District Court.” Kirk reaffirmed his threat to remove school officials complying with Judge Krentzman’s order, calling the order “physically and fiscally impossible. . .patently immoral, contrary to the 1964 Civil Rights Act,. . .and educationally unsound.”\textsuperscript{42}

On February 9, the Manatee school board filed a motion for a new trial and a rehearing on the desegregation plan adopted by Judge Krentzman. This motion was denied along with a motion to stay Krentzman’s desegregation order until the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals could hear the case. Krentzman also warned Manatee officials to ignore Kirk’s executive order because “when federal court orders conflict with state law, the federal law prevails.”\textsuperscript{43}

On March 24, 1970, President Richard Nixon gave a speech which provided encouragement to anti-busing forces. President Nixon said that although “de facto” segregation was “undesirable,” it did not violate the Constitution. Nixon indicated his opposition to busing and his support for neighborhood schools.\textsuperscript{44} Perhaps sensing national support for his anti-busing posture, Governor Claude Kirk suspended the Manatee County school board and its superintendent on April 5.\textsuperscript{45} In doing so, Kirk joined the ranks of Governors Faubus, Barnett and Wallace in defying federal court school desegregation orders.

Judge Krentzman issued an order for Kirk to appear on April 7 and “show cause why he should not be held for contempt of court.” Kirk failed to appear, choosing instead to address the legislature. Krentzman set a new hearing for April 10 and also returned control of Manatee County schools to the school board and superintendent. Not to be outdone, for the second time in three days, Kirk again suspended the superintendent and school board. The governor announced
he would not appear in Judge Krentzman’s courtroom on April 10 because “no federal judge... can order a sovereign head of a sovereign state to appear personally.”

Tiring of Kirk’s theatrics, Judge Krentzman found Governor Kirk guilty of contempt of court on April 11 and levied a $10,000 a day fine for each day Kirk was in defiance. The fine would be suspended if Kirk returned control of Manatee County schools to the school board and superintendent by Monday, April 13. Kirk quickly ended his defiance in the face of the large fines and announced he would obey Judge Krentzman’s order. State Representative Jerome Platt, a Palmetto Democrat, told supporters that Kirk’s abandonment of Manatee County would “go down in the annals of American history as the cruelest hoax ever perpetrated.”

With gubernatorial defiance ended, it was evident that complete desegregation was imminent for both Manatee and Pinellas schools. This became even more apparent in April, 1971, when the United States Supreme Court approved the use of cross-district busing to desegregate the nation’s schools. Two months later, the Pinellas County school board, in a meeting boycotted by Chairman Ron Fisher, became the first school district in Florida to approve voluntarily a massive cross-district busing plan. That plan called for the busing of approximately 11,000 students solely for the purpose of desegregating the county’s schools. To purchase the sixty additional buses needed under the desegregation plan, the school board asked county voters to approve a .3 millage increase. For the first time in the county’s history, a school millage proposal was rejected. The board then authorized the school superintendent to borrow against future revenue so that the needed buses could be bought through the state purchasing pool.

The reaction to busing for desegregation took varied forms in Pinellas and Manatee counties. Both counties experienced scattered incidents of racial violence. In Pinellas County, St. Petersburg, Lakewood, and Boca Ciega high schools all experienced racial unrest. School board chairman Ron Fisher attributed the violence to the fact that “whites aren’t going to take any more of what they’ve been taking.” Another similar reaction in each county was the flight of white students to private schools. Five private schools emerged in Manatee County at the time of desegregation, and an even larger number in Pinellas County. When complete desegregation took effect in Pinellas in 1971, only one out of every ten students was attending private school, and 80 percent of these students were in Catholic schools. Ten years later, one out of seven Pinellas students was in private school, and 60 percent of these were now in “Christian” schools.

A final reaction to desegregation was the emergence of white protest organizations in each county. The Manatee group called itself the “Freedom of Choice Committee,” while the Pinellas organization took the name of “Parents Against Forced Busing” (PAFB). According to St. Petersburg Times reporter Robert Hooker, the Pinellas group had the support of Ron Fisher, Congressman C.W. “Bill” Young, at least one-half of the Pinellas County legislative delegation, and former governor Claude Kirk, who became honorary chairman of PAFB. Although very vocal, neither group was successful in delaying implementation of desegregation.

School desegregation became a reality in Manatee and Pinellas counties, but many problems still continue. Black parents complain that their children have to bear a major share of the busing burden in order to achieve integrated schools. In Pinellas County, for example, 70.1 percent of the students bused for desegregation purposes are black. Black parents also complain that the
vestiges of discrimination still exist in the Manatee and Pinellas school systems. Table I indicates that black students in both Manatee and Pinellas counties are disproportionately likely to be among the non-promoted, suspended, expelled, and victims of corporal punishment. Finally, many blacks lament the loss of their own schools. One former graduate of St. Petersburg’s Gibbs High School called the integration of Gibbs “the worst thing that happened to the black community.” According to this black resident, Gibbs was “the one single thing besides the black church that blacks could rally around. When you remove something that important from a culture—how can you expect it to remain the same?”

TABLE I:
Discipline in Manatee and Pinellas Public Schools, by Race: 1981-1982

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Population</th>
<th>Non-Promoted Manatee</th>
<th>Non-Promoted Pinellas</th>
<th>Suspended Manatee</th>
<th>Suspended Pinellas</th>
<th>Corporal Punishment Manatee</th>
<th>Corporal Punishment Pinellas</th>
<th>Expulsion Manatee</th>
<th>Expulsion Pinellas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>68.6</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/other</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.0</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Things do not remain the same. Desegregation has affected black and white parents and students throughout Manatee and Pinellas counties and throughout the nation. What is most lamentable about the Pinellas and Manatee situation is that public officials did not exert the leadership that was needed to effect a quicker transition to the unitary school system. Certainly, Pinellas County moved more quickly than Manatee by agreeing to a voluntary desegregation plan in June, 1971, but this action did not occur until it was quite obvious that the federal courts would not tolerate any more delay. Instead of leading the public to accept school desegregation, the superintendents, school board members and even the governor of Florida were planning and supporting defiance of federal court orders. One wonders how much more quickly the schools could have gotten down to the business of educating students if the public officials had provided the leadership they were elected to provide.

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4 *St. Petersburg Times, Tampa Tribune, and Bradenton Herald*, May 18, 1954.


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Bradenton Herald, January 22, 1965. The case was designated as Caroline Harvest, et al. v. the Board of Public Instruction of Manatee County, et al. Hereafter cited as Harvest.

Bradenton Herald, January 24, 1965.

St. Petersburg Times, August 30, 1981.

Tampa Tribune, June 11, 1964; St. Petersburg Times, October 7, 1964; St. Petersburg Evening Independent, January 14, 1981. The case was designated Leon Bradley, et al. v. the Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction. Hereafter cited as Bradley. In 1972, Sanderlin would become Pinellas County's second black elected to public office by winning a position as Pinellas County Judge.

St. Petersburg Times, October 12, 1964.

Ibid., March 11, 1965.

Ibid., March 15, 1965.

Ibid., March 16, 1965.

Ibid., March 8, 1965.


Tampa Tribune, April 1, 1965.


36 St. Petersburg Times, August 21, 1969.

37 Ibid., August 30, 1969.


50 Ibid., July 14 and September 16, 1971.


52 St. Petersburg Times, September 2, 1981.


55 Ibid., p. 19.
DAWN OF THE AUTOMOBILE AGE:
A PHOTO ESSAY

by Cheryl Farnell

The automobile has always held a special fascination for Americans. Regardless of age or class, few people have escaped being enraptured by some motorized dream machine. The gleam of the chrome, the mirror-like finish and the aroma of leather that gave every car its own personality found a place in the American imagination. While some people have longed for the slower pace of the horse-and-buggy era, most have preferred the speed, comfort and convenience of the horseless carriage.

The first commercial automobiles in the United States were produced by Pope, Stanley and Winston, beginning in 1897. Ransom E. Olds founded the Olds Motor Works that same year, but it was several years before his cars could be purchased (and people could sing, “In My Merry Oldsmobile”). Automobiles were a novelty at first, but they quickly found their way into the hearts and garages of many Americans, beginning with some of the more wealthy and adventurous. Edward Manrara, one of the founders of Ybor City’s cigar industry, brought the first automobile to Tampa in 1900. The vehicle was a Locomobile; run by steam, it could reach the speed of ten miles per hour. In 1902, Tampa got its first dealership when Benjamin & Owens began selling Locomobiles. The following year, Fred Ferman of Tampa opened his Oldsmobile agency. By 1910, automobiles plied the streets of most south Florida communities. Five years later, a Tampa newspaper reported that the city had 1,707 registered automobiles.

Automobiles came to Florida long before suitable roads existed, especially for travel from town to town. To emphasize the need for passable roads, a trek from Tampa to Jacksonville to Tampa was held in 1909, sponsored by the Tampa Daily Times, the Tampa Automobile Club and the Coca-Cola Bottling Company. Eighteen cars participated in the Great Endurance Run of 1909, which was won by Horace Williams who drove an EMF. The point was made, and improvements in Florida roads soon began. (The Great Endurance Run has been reenacted the past seven years by the Great Endurance Run Chapter of the Veteran Motor Car Club of America. Each Thanksgiving weekend, eighteen cars follow approximately the same route, although the roads have been vastly improved. Participants wear period costumes. The automobiles, dating from 1929 or earlier, leave from the Esplanade in downtown Tampa on Thanksgiving morning, reach Jacksonville the following day and return triumphantly to Tampa’s Plant Park on Sunday afternoon. The cars no longer actually race; instead, a log is kept, total travel time is tallied and the car with the best average time wins the coveted Tampa Times Cup.)

Henry Ford was principally responsible for making the automobile accessible to masses of consumers. He did this by concentrating on a single car, the Model T, which he introduced in 1908. His use of the moving assembly line made it possible to produce a Model T in one hour and thirty-three minutes by 1914. Mass production helped reduce the price of the Model T from $725 in 1910 to only $345 six years later. By 1920, half the cars in the entire world were Model T’s.
The automobile helped give the 1920s much of their roar. By the end of the decade there was one automobile for every five Americans as compared to one for every forty-three people in Great Britain. The demand for cars in this country not only fueled the economy, but it also stimulated profound changes in American patterns of residence, education, work habits and leisure. The personal car made Florida a mecca for tourists who traveled to the Sunshine State in greater numbers than ever before during the 1920s. The car culture also made possible sprawling industrial cities and their accompanying residential suburbs.

Eventually, the automobile changed the way Americans gauged themselves and their neighbors. A person’s car became one of the criteria by which wealth and social status could be readily identified. The automobile dealership was a magnet that drew those who longed to own a car or “trade up.” The used car salesman joined the Yankee peddler and the horse trader in the pantheon of archetypal American figures. Like their compatriots around the country, Floridians were caught up in the motorization of America, and they left considerable evidence of the impact of the automobile on their lives during the early decades of this century.
The first automobiles deserved the name “horseless carriage.” Fort Myers businessman Gilmer H. Heitman posed as the proud owner of this early Oldsmobile which was the first automobile in Lee County.

Photograph from *Yesterday’s Fort Myers* by Marian Godown and Alberta Rawchuck.

Automobiles quickly represented a certain danger to pedestrians as shown in this 1904 photograph taken on Bradenton’s Main Street.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Sarasota’s first automobile, a Reo roadster, was bought by Dr. Cullen B. Wilson in 1909. The name “Reo” was taken from the initials of its developer, Ransom E. Olds, who left Oldsmobile to start the new company in 1903.

Photograph courtesy of Sarasota County Historical Archives.

By 1910, automobiles figured prominently in this photograph of Palmetto’s Main Street, but they still competed with the horse-drawn carriages parked to the right and the horse shown on the left.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Participants and spectators gathered in front of the Tampa Times building for the start of the Great Endurance Run of 1909, in which drivers raced automobiles from Tampa to Jacksonville and back to Tampa.

Photograph from Tampa: The Treasure City by R. Mormino and Anthony P. Pizzo.

This 1912 Cadillac provided plenty of room for the Bradley family of Palma Sola, in Manatee County, but the road looks ill-suited to the new technology.

Photograph courtesy of Manatee County Historical Society.
Advertising for early automobiles stressed technological advances such as “magneto ignition,” “hydraulic governor” and “forced feed oiling” in this ad for the 1913 Packard. Anyone in doubt could, “Ask the man who owns one.”

St. Petersburg’s first Festival of States parade in 1913 featured a procession of decorated automobiles, shown here on Central Avenue.

Photograph from *Yesterday's St. Petersburg* by Hampton Dunn.

The winner of the contest for the best decorated car in the 1913 Festival of States parade certainly set a precedent for later floats.

Photograph from *Yesterday's St. Petersburg* by Hampton Dunn.
By the 1920s, car dealers used “antique” models to demonstrate the quality of their products. This 1906 Maxwell, a four-cylinder runabout, sits in front of United Motor Company on Tampa’s Franklin Street. The car and building were decked out for a 1923 holiday.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

This 1908 Buick gave its own testimonial in 1928 as it sat in front of Joe B. Johnson Autos in Tampa.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
Dubois F. Owen of Tampa’s Owen Franklin Motor Company stood beside a classic in 1928. Franklins had no radiator, and the engine was air-cooled so the cooler the weather, the better they ran.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Located on the southwest corner of Marion and Madison Streets (with Tampa City Hall in the background), Beman Beckwith Company displayed the Hudson, the Essex and the Packard in 1922.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
The advertising of Dodge Brothers in 1921 clearly appealed to economy-minded consumers who also had enough class to appreciate “Il Trovatore.”

Despite the glowing claims of manufacturers and dealers, cars obviously could break down. Cane & Van Huben, located at 805 Florida Avenue in Tampa, provided a “service car” for those automobiles that could no longer run under their own power.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

In 1920, curbside service was available at Atlantic Tire Service in downtown Tampa.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
A wrecked Buick made its way to a Tampa body shop in 1927.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Two cigar manufacturers, Manuel Corral and C. Sierra, posed in 1921 with their Wescotts, highly regarded six-cylinder cars made in Springfield, Ohio.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
The Plant City branch of Peninsular Motor Corporation advertised new and used cars in 1925, including the Studebakers under the cover in the center of this picture.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

The 1923 Florida State Fair attracted throngs of car owners to the fairgrounds in Tampa and undoubtedly created one of the massive traffic jams that became increasingly familiar.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
A 1924 “auto camp” in St. Petersburg where so-called “tin-can tourists” pitched tents over their cars which were thereby turned into cheap sleeping quarters.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Several tin-can tourists visiting the Tarpon Springs sponge docks in 1924. Their car carried their camping equipment strapped to the outside.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.
Automobiles, along with the “green benchers” shown on the left, had become a prominent feature of St. Petersburg, “the Sunshine City,” according to this postcard from the 1920s, which shows the intersection of 4th Street and Central Avenue.

Photograph courtesy of University of South Florida Special Collections.

In 1926, things were on the move, including this group of women posing in an Oakland which stands in front of the Davis Islands Coliseum in Tampa.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
The rakish José Luis Avellanal, a Tampa entrepreneur, with his Studebaker in the 1920s.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

Model-T cars and trucks being unloaded at Port Tampa in 1926, after a cruise from Detroit aboard the Ford-owned freighter, “East Indian.”

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
For people who could not afford a new car, the used car salesman stood ever ready to cut a good deal. Although the round signs display the Studebaker motif, quite a variety of “Late Model Used Cars” were available in 1925 at the Peninsular Motor Corporation’s lot on Tampa’s Franklin Street.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

The annual show of Tampa auto dealers at the Davis Islands Coliseum featured the new models. Shown in this spectacular display are the 1927 models.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
The 1100 block of Tampa's Florida Avenue, viewed from south of Harrison Street, was quite an “auto alley” in 1927 with a variety of businesses that catered to the automobile.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.

Eli Witt posed as the proud owner of a 1930 Lincoln in front of his Tampa cigar company. The look of this $4,300 car clearly distinguished it as a symbol of wealth.

Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System.
The 1930 “Parade of DeSotos” in front of the Tampa Theatre gave no hint that the economy was in a nose-dive. Billed as “the world’s cheapest eight-cylinder car” and selling for under $1,000, the DeSoto–like so much else– suffered badly as a result of the Depression.
Selected Bibliography


One sunny morning in late 1905 or early 1906, Blanche Williams Bell, wife of the young mayor of Fort Myers, Florida, left the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sol Sanchez, where she and her husband Walter boarded, and headed toward Henderson’s General Store. Located in the corner of the new Bradford Brick Block, the store carried a complete stock of dry goods, fancy dress goods, laces, embroideries, shoes and other items of general use. Shortly after leaving the house, Blanche was suddenly aware of quiet footsteps following her, but she did not look back. With a more rapid heartbeat and faster pace, she made her way quickly to the store, breathing a sigh of relief as she entered. The sense of peace did not last. Whoever was following her came on into the store. It was a tall, well-built Seminole Indian. He probably had eaten breakfast on the back
porch of the Sanchez home that morning and watched her leave the house. Sol Sanchez was the town marshal, and he sometimes fed the Indians upon their release from an overnight stay in jail.

The Seminole continued to follow Blanche from counter to counter until Miss Murray, the clerk, suggested that Blanche stand by her side at the case register, and this she did. The Indian looked around the store, selected two red bandana handkerchiefs, paid for them, and then thrust them toward Blanche, saying, “You be my squaw.” Weak-kneed and shaking with fear, Blanche was speechless.

Two bookkeepers had been observing the situation from the loft above the main floor with great amusement. One of them now called down to the Indian, saying, “She is already a squaw.” With that announcement, the Seminole turned suddenly, threw the handkerchiefs to the floor in disgust and left, uttering words which sounded like, “Holy waugus.” When Blanche regained her composure, she asked Miss Murray what that meant. “In Indian, it means, ‘No good,’” Miss Murray replied.

For several years thereafter, Walter Bell teased Blanche about her Seminole romance and referred to her as his “Indian bride.” Walter did not know then, and neither did Blanche, that there was some Cherokee in her ancestry. But that Indian had probably sensed this fact. Surely, Blanche’s long dark hair worn in braids, her deep, sensitive brown eyes, high cheek bones and fair complexion must have caught his attention.

Blanche and Walter had met in 1901 when she was thirteen and he was twenty-one. At that time he was the teacher in the one-room school at Brownville, Florida, a small community five or six miles north of Arcadia, and she was one of his students. She liked him from the start. He must have liked her, too, for after he left Brownville to study law, he often wrote to her.

They met again four years later while Walter was in Tampa to argue a case in federal court and Blanche was a student at Hatton Business College. He spoke to her as she came down the college stairs to head home. He said he was in town attending court and thought he would look her up. He accompanied her to the boarding house where the landlady asked him to stay for dinner. After dinner, Walter and Blanche attended a revival meeting at a church across the street. When Walter left, the landlady remarked, “I kinda like that young man.” Blanche responded, “I kinda like him, too.”

Photograph courtesy of author.
At the time of that Tampa visit, Walter had asked Blanche to come to Fort Myers to work for him after she completed her course at the business college. She had agreed, and it was said that she was the first woman “typewriter,” as secretaries were sometimes called, in the town of Fort Myers. Her career as a secretary, however, was of short duration. Within a year she had married the boss and changed her occupation to housewife and mother.

In 1966, following Walter D. Bell’s death at the age of eighty-six, Blanche wrote her children telling them how he had proposed to her in 1905. She said that since there were few automobiles in Fort Myers in those days, walking was an acceptable evening activity. One night on such a walk, Blanche and Walter stopped under a large magnolia tree to listen to the sound of piano music coming from a nearby house. The then popular tune they heard was “Listen To The Mockingbird.” As they stood under the tree enjoying the sweet smell of magnolia blossoms, the music and the big full moon, Walter had said, “All I need to make me happy is for you to say you will marry me.” It did not take Blanche long to make up her mind. Two weeks later, on October 21, 1905, they were married at the home of Georgia Carson, mother of one of Walter’s best friends. This ideal marriage was to continue for almost sixty-one years.

Walter had often told Blanche about his parents’ home on top of “Paradise Hill” facing a lake in Clermont, Florida. That is where he and Blanche spent their honeymoon, and Blanche thought it was beautiful. She later recalled that a young doctor staying there told her he had travelled through the Alps and other places in the world and had never seen any place he considered more beautiful than “Clermont Lake Country” in Florida.
Notwithstanding its remoteness, Fort Myers was a growing, thriving community when Walter and Blanche Bell lived there in the early 1900s. Among other things, the town had churches, hotels, stores, a newspaper, telephone service, electric lights, an ice plant and at least two brick buildings. The railroad was completed, and trains had begun arriving and departing in 1904.5

Blanche’s older brother, Eugene L. Williams, Sr., had learned telegraphy at Hatton Business College in Tampa, and he had worked in Fort Myers for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in 1904 and 1905, prior to Blanche’s arrival there. Among Eugene Williams’ most pleasant memories were the delicious evening meals he often enjoyed in the dining room of one of the river steamers, such as the *Thomas A. Edison*, *Gray Eagle*, *Suwannee* or *Anah C*. Plying the Caloosahatchee, Orange and Kissimmee rivers, these steamers carried loads of oranges, grapefruit and other produce, as well as the mail and passengers. Once the passengers had disembarked and the produce had been reloaded onto trains for shipment north, usually at about seven in the evening, one of the captains would occasionally ask Eugene to eat. It was a much better meal than he could get at any of the local restaurants, and something to which he always looked forward.6

Eugene L. Williams, Sr., later became a prominent businessman and realtor in St. Petersburg, Florida. He was a co-founder of Pinellas Lumber Company along with his brother-in-law, Wesley A. Hendry. For a number of years, he owned and operated a company known as Fifth Avenue Lumber Company which changed its name to Acme Lumber Company when the late E.C. Reed of St. Petersburg became a partner. Still later, he owned and operated the Williams Realty Company. Eugene died in St. Petersburg at the age of ninety-four on April 20, 1981.7

Blanche and Eugene were the children and grandchildren of Florida pioneers. Their paternal grandfather, Thomas Williams, was one of the first residents of what is now Arcadia, Florida, and their father, David Sampson Williams, served as Arcadia’s first postmaster in 1883. When Blanche was born on March 11, 1888, her father was serving as DeSoto County’s first elected tax collector. Her maternal grandfather, Levi Pearce, was an early Methodist circuit rider, credited with having established several churches in the Tampa Bay area.8 He was also a farmer who fought in Florida’s Third Seminole War during the 1850s.9
Walter Douglass Bell’s parents came to Florida by covered wagon from Winnsboro, South Carolina, in 1877 with their two oldest children, Ethel and William Edward. A third child, Arthur Hampton, was born in Nassau County, Florida, at a camp-site on the south bank of the St. Mary’s River on the morning after the family had forded the stream. They settled first at a sawmill community in Alachua County, known as Fairfax, where Walter was born on March 16, 1880. His mother, Martha Crosby Bell, had papered the cracks in the cabin walls to keep the cold air out. His father, Dr. Alexander Douglas Bell, had graduated in 1870 from Emory University Medical College in Atlanta, Georgia. Seeking better health, he had come south to Florida, where he practiced medicine, served as a justice of the peace and sold cross ties to the railroad. Dr. Bell followed the construction as far south as Clermont.

In a taped conversation shortly before her death in 1971 at the age of ninety-eight, Ethel Bell Stevens, a retired school teacher, discussed her vivid recollections of the family's early covered wagon trip to Florida.

I was a little thing when we came to Florida but I remember it. We carried everything we owned—our beds, our stove (of course, we had a wood stove), the mules and horses. And we had no roads. We’d come to a creek, the shallows, as we called it—a ford. Some of the men would swim by the side of the wagon, take the horses through, hold to the wagon and pull it across. It scared me so bad, I thought I would never get over it. Mama had a wooden dough tray and she had to get out and make her biscuits. She would cook them in a big old dutch oven. She put some coals on the top and, of course, coals underneath. They were the best biscuits you ever tasted. The tragedy was that she went off and left the dough tray, and it was ruined. Couldn't make any more biscuits. Left the dough tray sitting on a stump.
Walter Bell’s arrival in Fort Myers, in 1903, had not been planned. As a member of an Arcadia law firm, he had gone to Punta Gorda to open a branch office. One day, while in Punta Gorda, he boarded a boat to cross the Peace River for a visit to Charlotte Harbor. The boat, probably the St. Lucie, was headed to Fort Myers. While it made stops at Captiva Pass, Wulfert, St. James City, Sanibel and Punta Rassa, it did not dock at Charlotte Harbor. Surely, Walter must have enjoyed that unexpected eight-hour cruise. He would have eaten lunch in the dining room on the upper deck, met and chatted with interesting persons, watched the disembarkation of passengers and the unloading of freight at the various stops and probably laughed at the antics of playful porpoises along the way.\(^\text{12}\)

While standing on the dock in Fort Myers awaiting a boat to take him back to Punta Gorda, Walter met an influential citizen who urged him to remain in Fort Myers. The citizen indicated a need for another lawyer there, saying, “Stay and we’ll elect you mayor.” Walter stayed, at first practicing law with Louis A. Hendry in his office on Jackson Street.\(^\text{13}\) He later opened an office of his own in the Brick Block, where his office was located when Blanche became his secretary.

Walter Bell’s first venture into politics came in 1904 when he ran for the office of county judge. He lost to his opponent, Phillip Isaacs, editor of \textit{The Fort Myers Press}. It appears that Walter might have won that election if Isaacs had not received the block support of the members of the Koreshan Unity. In 1905, however, Walter was elected mayor of Fort Myers and served one term.\(^\text{14}\)

The year 1906 was a disturbing one for Walter and Blanche Bell. In March, Walter was appointed by the court as counsel for a defendant by the name of Walter Brown who had been indicted for the murder of Kib Murphy at Denaud, a former Indian fort and small community east of Fort Myers. The murder was said to have been committed “in cold blood.”\(^\text{15}\) Brown was convicted of murder in the first degree and sentenced to life imprisonment. In all probability, this was Walter’s first murder case.

In July, 1906, Walter’s good friend, Bob Carson, was shot and killed one night while taking a short cut home through a neighbor’s yard after a visit with the Bells who were then living in a rented house. Action by the coroner’s jury was swift, and Jasper N. Edwards was charged with the murder. Newspaper accounts suggested that after counsel had been obtained for the defendant, a preliminary hearing would be held and that Edwards would probably be bound over until the fall term of the court. But Circuit Judge Joseph B. Wall called a special term of court to try the case, commencing July 31, 1906. On that day, a grand jury was secured, set to work and came in with an indictment of murder in the first degree.\(^\text{16}\)

As Walter Bell was the only lawyer in town who was neither a witness nor related to any of the possible witnesses or the deceased, he suddenly realized that he would probably be the one whom the court would appoint to defend Edwards. Not wishing to represent the person who had killed his best friend, Walter quickly packed a bag and caught the first train out town, presumably headed to the home of his parents in Clermont. At Wauchula, a sheriff boarded the train and notified Walter that the court had ordered him to return to Fort Myers to receive appointment as counsel for Jasper Edwards or be held in contempt of court. Reluctantly, Walter took the first train back to Fort Myers. It was a traumatic experience.
Walter’s first action as counsel for the defendant was to petition the courts to appoint a committee of physicians to examine Edwards with regard to his mental condition. The committee reported that they found Edwards to be of low intellect, but of sufficient intelligence to know and distinguish between right and wrong so that he could be held responsible for the crime he was charged with committing.

On August 1, 1906, the defendant was arraigned and pleaded not guilty. A jury heard the case on August 2, and after two hours deliberation, it brought in a verdict of guilty. Judge Wall pronounced the death sentence, which was said to be the first such sentence ever issued in Lee County, Florida. Sheriff Frank B. Tippins, who supervised the hanging of Edwards on February 28, 1907, was quoted in a biographical sketch contained in Karl H. Grismer’s book, The Story of Fort Myers, as having said that the trial was a “tragic farce.” Perhaps that was because of the haste in which the trial was conducted. Following the conviction of his client and the sentence by the court to death by hanging, Walter vowed that no future client of his would ever go to the gallows. Insofar as can be ascertained, none ever did. However, one came very close to hanging.
Shortly after the Edwards case was concluded, Walter Bell was overwhelmingly defeated in his bid for reelection as mayor of Fort Myers. Disillusioned and considering his reputation completely ruined, Walter closed his office in the Brick Block, and he and Blanche moved to Tampa, where the first of their six children, Douglass, was born on November 25, 1906.

Walter Bell practiced law briefly in Ybor City where he used the services of an interpreter because he did not speak Spanish. His business, however, did not prosper, and the Bells again moved, settling in Sanford, Florida, where Walter purchased and edited *The Sanford Chronicle*, for several years. But he was not destined to spend his life as a newspaper editor. Within a few years, he returned to Arcadia where he had originally been admitted to the bar and resumed the practice of law.

Upon his return to Arcadia, Walter Bell rented space in a suite of rooms over the Boston Store at the corner of Oak Street and DeSoto Avenue. This suite was occupied by several colorful pioneer attorneys, among whom were John L. Burton, Arthur F. Odlin, and CW Forester, who was murdered in 1908 while having dinner at the Arcadia House. The building in which these offices were located had been constructed after the fire of 1905 which had destroyed most of downtown Arcadia. It replaced the old frame building which had contained the Oak Street Sa-
loon. The burned-out building across the street had been replaced by a modern brick one housing the DeSoto National Bank.

Walter’s law office was well equipped. There was an oak roll-top desk and black L.C. Smith typewriter for the secretary, as well as a Burroughs adding machine. On the wall of the secretary’s office was the old oblong telephone box with its metal crank to generate electricity and transmit the call to central. It was on this telephone in the early 1920s that Walter tried to reach a circuit judge in Sebring to present a petition for a temporary injunction against the State Livestock and Sanitary Board restraining the dipping of cattle to eradicate the fever tick. Informed that the judge had just left for Tampa, Walter drove to an intersection east of Wauchula where he flagged the judge down and presented the petition. The court signed the temporary restraining order on the fender of a Model “A” Ford.

From the windows in his office facing DeSoto Avenue, Walter Bell had a view of two of Arcadia’s leading sights. Across the railroad tracks and over the next block he could see the lovely new courthouse facing North Brevard Avenue, or he could look down on the Tree of Knowledge in the middle of DeSoto Avenue. This live oak commemorating the birthdays of two pioneer citizens became an Arcadia landmark.19 Under its branches the townspeople gathered to debate the issues of the day. Much recorded folklore found its genesis there among those who sat on the benches, leisurely chewing tobacco, whittling cedar and recounting stories that reached the community.

From the attorneys in the Boston Store building, Walter Bell acquired a legal library covering the walls of seven rooms which included almost everything of that day from Blackstone’s Commentaries to the Trinity Series. He could often be seen walking to the courthouse carrying an armload of books containing the cases he intended to cite to the court. He also walked to and from his home and the office every day, and he almost always went home for lunch with his family. They lived at 227 North Brevard Avenue. His legal practice was general—real property law, probate, civil actions, domestic relations, criminal law—and he enjoyed it.

About two years after his return to Arcadia, Walter Ball ran for and was elected county judge of DeSoto County for a four-year term. During that period, his office was at the courthouse. When his daughter, Evelyn, was five years of age, she thought her daddy owned the courthouse. She recalls saying to a young friend, “Let’s go up to my Daddy’s courthouse and get money for

Blanche Williams Bell with her children, Douglass and Evelyn, in 1910.

Photograph courtesy of author.
some candy.” And they did just that. As county judge of DeSoto County, which at that time included 3750 square miles (the area now encompassing Hardee, Glades, Charlotte and Highlands counties, as well as present day DeSoto), Walter’s duties included the granting of licenses, acting as committing magistrate, probate and juvenile judge, with jurisdiction over all cases at law in which the demand or value of property involved did not exceed five hundred dollars, proceedings relating to forcible entry or unlawful detention of lands and such criminal cases as the legislature might prescribe.\(^{20}\) The counties formerly included in DeSoto were cut out by a constitutional amendment passed in 1921 and ratified in 1922. Today, anyone who reads real property abstracts in those counties is likely to come across Walter Bell’s signature on judicial documents in the chains of title.

During the time Walter Bell served as county judge, which extended into the Prohibition era, there was a custom in DeSoto County under which the county leased out prisoners to work in the community. The Bells had a cook who came to work in their home each day, returning to the jail at night. One day the cook disappeared. Sheriff J.L. Hampton, who lived just two or three doors down the street, had recently raided a liquor still and brought two barrels of mash or “buck” to his back yard, presumabably for use as evidence. There the cook was found face down in a barrel of buck. Walter, who shortly after his return to Arcadia had purchased *The Enterprise*, a small newspaper, feared that *The DeSoto County News* would “scoop” the story, so he hurriedly
published the next edition of *The Enterprise* with a bold headline reading, “JUDGE’S COOK DROWNS IN BARREL OF BUCK.”

In 1922, Walter Bell was first elected to the state legislature from DeSoto County. Commencing in 1923, he served three consecutive terms in the State House of Representatives. Following that, he served four years as a state senator. During his term as senator, he authored a resolution for Amendment 2, Section 6 of Article 9, of the 1895 State Constitution. This related to the authority of cities and counties to issue bonds, and some of the language of that amendment is retained in Florida’s current state constitution. From time to time while in the legislature, Walter introduced bills to make the University of Florida and the Florida State College for Women (now Florida State University) coeducational, but he did not succeed in having the bills passed. While was in the Senate, he worked long and hard one year during the depression for an increase in the salary of the justices on the State Supreme Court and succeeded in getting the bill passed by both houses of the legislature. Thereafter, a vacancy occurred on the Supreme Court and Governor John W. Martin asked him to fill the vacancy. This he could not do because of a state constitutional prohibition against acceptance by a legislator of a civil office, the emoluments of which had been increased during his term. What a great disappointment this
was to Blanche who had looked forward to the possibility that her husband might some day serve on the Supreme Court.

The 1930s were among Walter Bell’s most successful and interesting years, and yet, financially, they were difficult. The entire state of Florida was engulfed in the economic depression which had spread across the country. When the runs on the banks occurred, Walter, along with so many others, lost all the cash he had. He was even forced to dispense with the services of his very efficient secretary. Fortunately, three of his older children had learned shorthand and typing in school, and he trained them to do the work.

To support his family during the depression was a struggle. While work was plentiful, clients often could not pay legal fees, but Walter managed. A rancher client brought in a dressed beef and placed it on cold storage at the ice plant in lieu of a fee. Another client turned over title to a sports roadster with a rumble seat. Still another gave him title to land which he lost because of failure to pay taxes. One furnished some venison. Blanche’s relatives living on nearby farms often gave the family fresh fruits and vegetables, and Peggy, the Bell family cow, gave much more rich milk than the family could use. They could even share it with others. Several years earlier, Peggy had provided one of the more comical incidents in Walter’s life. She escaped from the back yard and trotted toward the downtown area of Arcadia with Walter running close behind. When she crossed DeSoto Avenue and headed into the open doors of the DeSoto National Bank on the southwest corner of Oak Street, the “town philosophers” sitting on the bench under the Three of Knowledge, stopped their whittling and “discourses” to yell: “Let’er go, Judge, she just wants to make a deposit.”

Over the years, Walter Bell’s law practice in Arcadia was extensive. His clients came from all over middle and southern Florida, and he spent many hours in court in Tampa, Sebring, Fort Myers, LaBelle, Moore Haven, Sarasota, Wauchula, Bartow and other places. He argued numerous cases before the Supreme Court of Florida, the Federal District Courts and Appeal Courts and the Supreme Court of the United States. He was considered to be an outstanding criminal lawyer. Many of his cases made newspaper headlines and at least one, the Carver case, was the subject of a story in a national detective magazine.

Among his most publicized cases were the Whitten case in the 1920s, the Carver murder case in the early 1930s and that referred to by the press as “The Mystery Slayings of Gator Slough.” In the first, Bernard Whitten had been convicted of shooting his estranged wife as she sat at the organ in her parents’ home in Wauchula. Walter obtained a stay of execution just as the sheriff was leading Whitten to the scaffold before a large crowd assembled on the courthouse square in Arcadia.

In the second case, William Raymond Carver, a Florida real estate man living in Sebring, had been tried and convicted in the brutal hatchet murders of his wife, Ruth, and their young son, Lee Townsend Carver, and the shooting of Ben Whitehead, employed as a yard boy by the Carvers. The conviction was based upon purely circumstantial evidence. After an appeal to the Florida Supreme Court which first upheld the jury’s verdict and then reversed its judgment after a rehearing, Walter Bell obtained a new trial and a change of venue to Arcadia. At the second trial, Carver was acquitted of the crimes. It is believed that there are now seven justices on the Florida
Supreme Court bench, rather than six, as an indirect result of the Carver case. When the first hearing before the Supreme Court occurred, there were five justices and one substitute justice who heard the arguments. The decision to affirm was four to two, with the chief justice writing a lengthy dissenting opinion. At the rehearing, one of the justices who had voted to affirm was absent because of illness. Nevertheless, the arguments were presented before the five justices without objection by the lawyers on either side. The substitute justice, who had originally voted to affirm, changed his mind on the rehearing and voted to reverse. The decision to reverse was then three to two. Had the justice who was ill participated, the decision might possibly have been three to three. The State’s motion for another rehearing was denied. Following these appellate decisions and for several years thereafter, there were numerous editorial comments in the newspapers around the state debating the validity of the Supreme Court reversal and suggesting the need for an additional justice. In 1939, Article V, Section 4 of the 1895 Constitution was amended to add a seventh justice to the Supreme Court bench.

In the case of “The Mystery Slayings of Gator Slough,” Walter Bell was counsel for two of the accused who had been indicted for the 1933 murders of three men found in a pickup truck on a lonely sand road in the Everglades, eighteen miles north of the town of Moore Haven. The first of two trials which took place in Sarasota resulted in a mistrial in 1936 when the jury could not reach a decision. In the second trial, the men were acquitted, and “The Mystery Slayings of Gator Slough” were never solved.

One of the witnesses in the “Gator Slough” trials changed her testimony at the second trial and was later charged, tried and convicted of perjury. Walter Bell represented that witness in the perjury trial. In his appeal of the judgment to the State Supreme Court, he asserted the then almost unheard of argument that the defendant had been denied due process of law and equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States because there were no women on the jury. Under the Florida Constitution in effect at that time, only men were qualified to serve as jurors. While the Florida Supreme Court denied this argument, it reversed the conviction on other grounds.

Throughout her husband’s long legal career of more than fifty years, Blanche Bell was keenly interested in his cases. While trials were in progress, there were many evenings that she sat listening intently as he read aloud to her from that day’s testimony in his advance copy of the court transcript.

Walter Bell’s interests were not confined to his law practice. He was always a devoted family man and an avid reader of history, poetry, philosophy and religion. He was a member of civic organizations and continued to pursue politics, running unsuccessfully for Congress in 1932 and 1936. The presence of so many books about various religions of the world in the Bell home library prompted the tenants of the house during World War II to ask the neighbors what religion the owners professed. They were Baptists. A letter written by Walter in 1907 to his brother stated that he was giving serious consideration to studying for the ministry. While he did not do that, he did teach a men’s Bible class at the First Baptist Church in Arcadia for a period of more than twenty-five years. Walter passed away June 15, 1966, in Miami, and Blanche died, October 14, 1973. Both are buried in Oak Ridge Cemetery in Arcadia.
During his later years, Walter Bell was looked upon by other attorneys as a “lawyer’s lawyer.” They came to him for assistance and advice. They respected his ability, his experience, his ingenuity, his diligence on behalf of clients and his integrity. The arguments he presented over the years, without doubt, have had an impact on the laws and rules of court as they exist in Florida today.


2 Letters of Blanche Bell, April 15 and 22, 1967; tapes of conversations with Blanche Bell (various), 1967-73, in possession of the author.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.


7 *St. Petersburg Times* and *St. Petersburg Independent*, April 22, 1981.


10 Emory University Medical College Alumni Records, “Class of 1870” (Atlanta, 1925), 311.

11 Tapes of conversation with Ethel Bell Stevens, sister of Walter D. Bell, circa 1979, in possession of the author.


13 Hendry & Bell advertisement in *Fort Myers Press*, January 21, 1904; Walter D. Bell advertisement, ibid., October 26, 1904.


15 *Fort Myers Press*, March 8, 1906.

16 Ibid., July 19, 1906.

17 Ibid., August 2, 1906.


20 Constitution of Florida (1885, as amended), Art. 5, secs. 16 and 18.

22 Constitution of Florida (1895), Art. 3, sec. 5.

23 Gene Plowden, “The Inside Story of the Celebrated Florida Carver Case,” The Master Detective (September 1932), 12-17, 54-56.

24 Whitten v. State, 82 Fla. 181, 89 So. 421, 86 Fla. 111, 97 So. 496, 267 U.S. 608.


27 Sarasota Herald, October, 1936, January 19, 21, 23, 26, 27, 1937.

The 1890s were a pivotal decade for the development of public education in Florida. Throughout the state, communities began to bend their energies toward providing improved schools for their children. Although it had only been incorporated in 1892, the growing community of St. Petersburg was no exception to this great educational stirring.

At that time a part of Hillsborough County, the town of St. Petersburg had provided a school for its children as early as 1888, but no publicly owned school house was available before 1894. In that year, local voters passed a $7,000 bond issue to build the town’s first real school building. The school house resulting from this initiative opened for classes in December, 1894. It was a
handsome two-story wooden structure located on the southeast corner of Second Avenue North and Fifth Street, and it contained seven class rooms, a library and an assembly hall.

In 1983, the University of South Florida Library acquired an interesting collection of manuscript documents shedding light on this key period in St. Petersburg’s educational history. The core of the collection consists of four original record books for the city's first publicly owned school, covering the period from 1890 to 1900. The collection also contains a later record book for the 1932-33 school year, together with numerous teachers’ reports and printed school ephemera. Accompanying the collection are two original photographs, one showing the 1894 school house, and the other showing an early class mustered in front of the building.

Although the rather discouraged-looking bundle of worn ledgers and yellowed papers is not visually impressive, it contains a wealth of invaluable historical data relative to St. Petersburg’s early schools and scholars. Perhaps the most interesting item in the collection is a manuscript entitled, “History of School No. 83 at St. Petersburg.” This account of the city’s first public school was written in 1894-95 by Olin King, the school’s first principal. In narrating the history of his community's educational institutions, King illustrated in passing many of the problems faced by nineteenth-century Florida educators, ranging from community opposition to educational reform to inadequate funding and facilities. His account provides an illuminating window into a major element of St. Petersburg's historical experience.

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History Of School No. 83 At St. Petersburg
by Olin King

In the latter part of the year 1887 in a thinly settled neighborhood, and in an almost unbroken forest, St. Petersburg was located by the O.B. RY. Co.¹

Within a year a sufficient population had gathered there to organize a public school. Accordingly an appropriation for a four months term was secured, and a school with 29 pupils was opened by Miss Mamie Gilkeson as teacher, in a house built by the people, under the directions of the trustees of the Cong’l Church of St. Petersburg.² This school was opened on the 26th of Nov. nearly three months later than the other schools of the county.

At the end of two months Miss Gilkeson resigned her charge, and Miss Olive Wickham was installed as teacher and completed the term. On the 2nd of Sep. 1889 Jacob Keagy opened a school with 32 pupils enrolled, and taught without interruption the entire term of six months, having an average attendance of 26.

Sep. 1st 1890, Mr. Keagy having again been chosen by the patrons of the school³ received the appointment and opened with 40 pupils in attendance.

Average daily attendance for the term of seven months, 31.

Term of 1891-2. The number of pupils in the neighborhood having increased so much that two rooms were necessary to accommodate them, the difficulty in securing rooms adapted to the
purpose delayed the opening of the school to the 21st of Sep. The same teacher was continued in charge with Mrs. Keagy as assistant, and the school was opened under auspicious circumstances. 60 pupils were enrolled the first month.

Total enrollment for the term 74. Length of term, 7 months.

During this term the bitter opposition of a few patrons was aroused by the improved methods of teaching introduced into the county by the Superintendent. But this opposition was without apparent effect and the school flourished to its close.

Adverse political influences being at work the beginning of the term of 1892-3 found the town still without a school-house and again the public school was not opened until Sep. 26th, and then in a most trying situation, being in close proximity to rail-road and noisy machinery.

Notwithstanding the difficulties the school was continued by Mr. & Mrs. Keagy, to the close of a seven months term—but with results less satisfactory than might have been expected under more favorable conditions.

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**Scholastic Year 1893-1894**

The St. Petersburg Graded School opened Sept. 13th, 1893 in a building known as the May Building with the following teachers: Olin King as Principal, E.C. McPherson, Intermediate, and Mrs. E.J. Orr, Primary. The teachers immediately after opening the school set about grading the same, and the result was, seven regular grades were established. The school moved along nicely the first term which closed a short time before Christmas. Two weeks were spent in vacation—one week of same the teachers attended the State Association which was held at Gainesville—after which school reopened with the usual attendance and was continued till April the 27th 1894, with an average attendance gratifying to both patrons and teachers. A closing exercise was held in Clark’s Hall—the schoolhouse not being sufficiently large—consisting of songs, recitations, etc.

The municipal authorities defrayed the general expenses of the school—rent of house, etc.—thereby rendering a valuable aid to the patrons, and dispensing with much anoyance [sic] that has hitherto attended the management of the school by the supervisor.

The supervisor—Mr. D. Moffett—has visited the respective rooms of the school once each month during the eight months session.

April 25, 1894

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**Scholastic Year 1894-95**

To write a history, or rather to pen successive events in a manner both correct and attractive, is not an inviting undertaking. Yet to write a history of any nature other than that of a school would be more inspiring, for what teacher has not at times been almost overcome by the monotony
attendant upon the daily duties of school life, and what pupil has not often wished the idea of schools had never been conceived? However, teachers continue to teach and schools are still maintained; and since they both are conducive to the formation of history as well as character it can not possibly be of evil to commit to these pages for future reference some of the happenings relative to the St. Petersburg Graded School during the scholastic year 1894-95.

Be it remembered that the school was conducted previously to the year just mentioned in just such a building as the Supervisor could rent, hence there naturally grew in the minds of the school public a desire for a good school building. Many plans were suggested for obtaining a suitable building, but none was executed until the year 1894. In the early part of this year the municipal authorities of the town took hold of the affair, and issued City Bonds to the amount of $7000.00 for the erection and completion of a commodious house, to be, when completed, the exclusive property of the town. During the summer of this year a large frame building, two stories high, containing seven rooms, was built near the central portion of the town. The structure is finished throughout, and stands today an ornament to the thriving, prosperous town to which it belongs. In point of fact it would be deserving of praise were it the property of a city of thousands of inhabitants. The furniture purchased at a cost of $1000.00 is handsomely finished and adds much to the appearance of the interior, as well as to the comfort of the occupants.

Some changes made in the school law by the Legislature of 1893 concerning the appointment of teachers created not a little disturbance in this place. For some time school matters were the chief topic of conversation, especially among those who were wont to express their opinions often, freely, publicly, and oftentimes vociferously. To an uninterested mind such niggardly actions would certainly indicate that submission to the law had ceased to be a cardinal virtue, and that attempts were being made to initiate personal feelings and prejudices as controlling factors in the management of legal affairs. Notwithstanding the many nefarious vituperations uttered by persons not less vile than anxious to perpetrate such, and notwithstanding the many uncharitable influences exercised against the execution, as well as the executors, of the law, yea, notwithstanding many other hinderances too puerile to mention sound judgement and reasons were the prevailing influences that led to at least a reasonable measure of success.6

The school was, however, not permitted to open at the appointed time—Sept. 17, 1894. This delay was caused in the main by not having desks for the new house. The desks were ordered from another state and were to arrive here not later than Oct. 1st, but when even the 1st day of Nov. had come the desks were still not here. This state of affairs continued to test the patience of many until Dec. the 1st found the desks in the house.

On Monday Dec. 3rd the school opened with nearly a hundred pupils who perhaps had waited anxiously for the first day in the new school building. The following teachers, Olin King, Prin.; Mrs. Chas. Weihman, Miss Susan Abercrombie, and Mrs. H. Bomford, having been appointed by the Board of Public Instruction, assumed their duties which owing to the loss of time appeared multitutinous [sic].

After some deliberation the teachers concluded that the school could be classed into eight grades, following as far as practicable the arrangement made by the teachers of the previous year. The Board had granted permission for the teaching of some of the higher studies, viz.;
Algebra, Physical Geography, Rhetoric, etc. These studies were consequently pursued by a few pupils, a much less number than was desired, during the whole term. The teachers realized the impossibility of crowding into five months the work that naturally requires eight months; yet it was their unanimous hope to as far as possible make up the time necessarily lost at the beginning of the term. This loss of time just mentioned rendered it almost impossible for the pupils as a whole to complete satisfactorily the work in the different grades; although this fact is prominent it seems that the present mode of grading, with a few exceptions, is as nearly perfect as could be expected under similar circumstances. To pursue it would its merits or defects disclose.

For several reasons, the teachers decided that no public entertainment would be given at the close of the term. This conclusion was announced with some degree of sadness on the part of the teachers who realized that school entertainments are a source of some profit to pupils, also of enjoyment to patrons and the school public. It was much hoped that environments of a different nature would render it both pleasant and possible to have at the close of each succeeding year an entertainment worthy of praise.
Again it is pleasant to note that the municipal authorities of the town defrayed the petty expenses of running the school this year. These expenses, though small, are necessarily incurred, and this defrayal of same bespeaks much in favor of the authorities of the town.

'Twould be almost a sign of non-appreciation to finish this task without noting the interest that the Supervisor, Mr. David Moffett, has manifested in the welfare of the school. He has visited the rooms as often perhaps as his business could reasonably permit, and has all the time and under all circumstances exercised his best efforts in behalf of the school and its teachers. In the opinion of this writer it would be a job of no little magnitude to find a person better suited to the overseership of this school than that found in the person of Mr. David Moffett.

In conclusion it would not be out of place to say that the enrollment this term was some larger than it was last year, but there were many boys and girls of school age in this district who ought to have attended school. The average attendance this year was some larger than last; yet for the most trivial reasons imaginable many would remain at home, often to the extent of a week’s time. Or when will parents ever learn how to send their sons and daughters to school?8

This closes the statement of just such facts as seemed best to write. The St. Petersburg Graded School has just really begun to exist. There are yet great possibilities for her. May the time soon come that will witness true, noble, educated young men and women leaving her walls to take positions in the battle of life beside the best warfarers [sic] of their day and generation.

April 26, 1895

1 Orange Belt Railway Company.

2 This was a small wooden structure located between Ninth and Tenth Streets near Central Avenue. Hampton Dunn, Yesterday’s St. Petersburg (Miami: Seemann, 1973), 20.


4 According to Grismer, the town rented a three-room structure located adjacent to the railroad tracks near Eighth Street. Ibid., 217.

5 Grismer quotes teacher Jacob Kreagy as writing, “Confusion created by the distracting noises of trains, lumber cars and novelty works, so near the school rooms, renders teaching almost an impossibility.” Ibid., 217-18.

6 The law in question, Chapter 4192, Laws of Florida (1893), extensively reformed the state’s teacher certification rules and, most significantly, provided for a system of uniform teacher examinations. The law provoked a great deal of opposition, both from many teachers and from certain elements of the public. Thomas Everette Cochran, History of Public-School Education in Florida. Bulletin 1921, No. 1 (Tallahassee: State Department of Education, 1921), 188-89.

7 Florida did not adopt a state-wide law prescribing the curriculum for public elementary schools until 1919. Ibid., 118-19.

8 The first Florida compulsory school attendance law was not passed until 1915. This was a local option law. The first state-wide compulsory school attendance law was passed in 1919. Ibid., 114.

Compiling information for a history of the Republican party in Florida is almost as difficult as compiling the history of a Caribbean bank which has shielded the assets of depositors from scrutiny. The discovery must have been painful to Peter Klingman as he pursued the record of an elusive political organization. Except during the eight years of Reconstruction and the two most recent decades, data on Republican activities are in short supply. Even in these periods of maximum visibility, reliance must be placed largely on newspapers, minutes of conventions, an occasional public document, and a handful of biographies.

Between the two bursts of activity is a century in which relevant material is still scantier and for good reason. The party was confined to a coterie of mutually suspicious insiders who wanted to control federal patronage in the state when a Republican President occupied the White House. Perceiving that a broadly based party would be difficult to dominate, these wily manipulators discouraged potential recruits. Instead they came out of hibernation and attracted public attention only in election years—holding a convention to ascertain which faction would monopolize power until the next contest. Such self-seeking political operators were not the type who reveal their motives in speeches or letters. Far from wanting publicity, they preferred to avoid the scrutiny of the press. Lacking an interest in public affairs, they rarely took a stand on issues that concerned the voters.

Accordingly, Klingman has been obliged to squander much energy on inconsequential political vendettas. Not surprisingly he devotes a third of the book to the eight years of Republican ascendancy after the Civil War. In this section, he has found some noteworthy developments to analyze, but the impact of the narrative is weakened by an overabundance of switchbacks. Although the frequent references to earlier events yield some useful insights, the reader may not learn as much as he should because he will be busy extricating himself from chronological detours.

What stands out is the determination of the author to drive an additional nail in the coffin containing members of the Dunning school. His specific concern is to demonstrate that the Republican Reconstruction governments in Florida were neither as incompetent nor corrupt as pictured by the Dunningites. Klingman provides persuasive evidence that the so called Carpetbag administrations not only revived a moribund economy and expanded educational facilities, but saw to it that blacks shared in the benefits. In the process, he mobilizes statistics behind the comparative judgment that Florida fared somewhat better than most of her sister states during Reconstruction. He ascribes the superior progress partly to moral scruples which he thinks minimized, if they did not altogether eliminate, the appetite for corruption. Since he also cites several instances of financial irregularities for which Florida Republicans were responsible, his verdict is not altogether convincing.
In examining the reasons for the sudden demise of the state party in 1877, the author places considerable stress on a surfeit of factional disputes. He also feels that the authority of Florida Republicans was undermined by the carelessness of Washington in dispensing patronage. Nobody can dispute either point. Intraparty feuding was endemic, and President Grant cared little about which pigeons fitted which holes in the back end of his dovecote. Preoccupied with high level apathy and the suicidal impulses of Florida Republicans, Klingman pays less attention to the machinations of the Democrats than they deserve.

After 1876 the Florida G.O.P. is such a shadowy organization until the 1960s that there is little to tell. The author is visibly tired when he reaches the modern era and does a perfunctory job, but he can build on his existing foundation and expand his treatment as more material becomes available.

George H. Mayer


John Henry Klutho (1873-1964) came to Jacksonville after the great fire of 1901 in order to use the opportunity to build an architectural practice. He not only succeeded in doing so, but was Jacksonville’s foremost architect in the early decades of this century. His best years came between 1907 and 1917, when he graced the city with many buildings in a style derived from Louis H. Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. He was thereby the first to bring modern architecture to the South. Robert Broward has written an excellent book about Klutho’s work and its context, abundantly illustrated and documented, and beautifully brought out by the University of North Florida Press. As its subtitle indicates, the book focuses on the buildings which show the influence of Sullivan and particularly Wright, but it follows chronologically the whole Klutho’s often eclectic practice.

The author is well-suited for the task. A native of Jacksonville and practicing architect there since the 1950s, he served an apprenticeship under Frank Lloyd Wright and enjoyed Klutho’s friendship during the fifteen years prior to the latter’s death. The book is a pleasure to read. Broward writes with a clarity that makes it accessible to the non-specialist. His research and thorough knowledge of the buildings provide the architectural historian with a valuable record of Klutho’s work and the Prairie School’s manifestation in Jacksonville. The social and cultural context in which he places Klutho’s career gives the reader an idea of the forces that went into the making of the material city. From an early time, Klutho was aware of the necessity of city planning, but the same cannot be said of the leaders in business and politics. His plans for a Civic Center (1913) and the Northside Waterfront Development (1944) were rejected, but his Hogan’s Creek Development (1929) was put in place, only to be left to deteriorate in later years. In the 1910s several film studios settled in Jacksonville, and for a while the city had the opportunity to become America’s motion picture capital. Klutho worked tirelessly toward that goal. He designed and invested in a studio and twice drew up plans for a “Fine Arts City.” In the ’20s the
city short-sightedly decided against this possibility. In an “Urban Postlude” Broward sums up Klutho’s and his own case for urban design in Jacksonville.

Mention should be made of the book’s fine graphics. There are nearly 40 illustrations. Aside from the photographs, Broward provides numerous crisply drawn plans based on working drawings and measurements on site. He made four lively double-page pen drawings of the Jacksonville skyline and inked sixty drawings (first made in pencil by R.B. Porter, Jr.) of Klutho’s ornamental designs for his buildings. In another appendix, there are photographs and descriptions of other Prairie School buildings in Jacksonville.

Of Klutho’s finest buildings, the Florida Life Tower (1911) still stands essentially unaltered. Two other outstanding works, the St. James Building (1908) and the Klutho residence (1908), have been detrimentally altered. All in all, we have here a first-rate book on an important and instructive period of architecture in Jacksonville and on a man who at his best gave the best architecture has to offer.

_Sape Zylstra_

This book is obviously a labor of love—pictures, maps, tabulations and quotations collected over many years by Mrs. White, and painstakingly edited by Dr. Brown. It deals, in impressive detail, with a local story familiar to many old-timers but almost certainly unknown to thousands of recent arrivals in the Tampa Bay area. The title, The World’s First Airline, requires a bit of examination. The St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line was indeed the world’s first scheduled air transportation company using heavier-than-air equipment. But Anthony Sampson, that omniscient British analyst and author, tells us in his encyclopedic Empires of the Sky (1984) that the German DELAG company offered regular lighter-than-air service in 1910. This fine distinction is reminiscent of the airline terms “direct”—meaning without a change of planes—and “non-stop” meaning just that. They are constantly confused.

The modest volume is packed with names known to this reviewer, and to many other long-time aviation buffs. It was my privilege to know Gay Blair White, who for years worked in the public relations department of the City of St. Petersburg; and J. D. Smith, mechanic, pilot, and crash survivor extraordinary. Other familiar names are Lew B. Brown, founder of the St. Petersburg Independent; Byrd Latham of the Florida Power Company, aviation hobbyist; and Ted Baker who built National Airlines. All of these have answered their final flight calls. Remarkably enough, the airline’s former “lineboy,” J. Leland Seale, is going strong in his nineties and has attended several recent Tony Jannus banquets in Tampa as an honored guest.

The World’s First Airline tantalizes your reviewer with items that call for further investigation. Examples: Were the Railsbacks (O.T. and Tony), mentioned several times in the text, related to the Captain Railsback who flew so long and expertly for Eastern Air Lines, despite the poundage which made us wonder how he passed his annual physicals? If the Percival E. Fansler who was the moving spirit in founding and financing the airline venture had been the Florida representative for a successful Wisconsin Diesel engine manufacturer, why the persistent story that the inventor Rudolph Diesel jumped to his death in the English Channel in 1913, despairing of ever making a success of the Diesel engine? Were the “secret” test flights of the Benoist seaplane off Ballast Point in 1916 the basis of the enduring rumors about Japanese planes flying World War I spy missions?

Enough of speculation. On the record, and very fairly treated in this volume, is the story of the Tony Jannus Award banquets which have taken top rank among the world’s aviation events. As a member of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce task force since the initial 50th anniversary observance in 1964, it has been the writer’s privilege to meet most of the distinguished award winners, and to work with the dedicated area aviation enthusiasts who make the event successful year after year. Whose is the “soul so dead” that mingling with the great personalities of man’s final conquest of the air would not be thrilled?
It was a pleasure to read this book, and I recommend it to those who would learn more about our area, its pioneers and continuing achievers. After all, where else could you learn the number of the railroad car which brought the Benoist to St. Petersburg from Paducah? Or find out that J. D. Smith stayed at the Hillsboro Hotel on a visit to Tampa in 1918?

Wayne Bevis


“Tracking down (D.P) Davis’s career is a little like trying to nail jello to a tree. . . .” Such descriptive phrases as this about a colorful character in a colorful era of Florida’s history make Nolan’s fresh approach to an old subject most readable, exciting and informative. The author has done monumental research on this state’s background from the days of Andrew Jackson up through the dazzling Florida real estate boom of the 1920s. It was from the latter period that *Fifty Feet in Paradise: The Booming of Florida* got its charming title. It refers, of course, to owning a little plot in the sun—fifty feet in paradise—as part of the American dream. The grand peninsula of Florida was subdivided into these bits of paradise and auctioned off during the helter-skelter days of the “Roaring Twenties.”

Nolan, a thirty-eight-year-old St. Augustine resident, is making his debut as an up-and-coming historical author with this volume. It is appropriate that his book is the first offering by the
distinguished publishing house Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich since moving much of its operation to Orlando.

Nolan tells history the way it should be told. He looks for the people who make history and writes about them and how they did what they did. Florida has an overabundance of interesting characters and superior developers. This historian plows up new anecdotes about our early heroes including Henry Flagler and Henry Plant and moves rapidly along to tip his hat to the real hey dey of the Sunshine State's exploitation during the boom. He touches all bases reporting on Julia Tuttle, George Merrick, Carl Fisher, Addison Mizner, John Ringling, Mrs. Potter Palmer, an all-star cast of legendary promoters and builders.

D. P. Davis, Nolan writes, was the quintessential boomer. “Floridians took special pride in ‘Doc’ Davis because he rose higher and faster and became richer, than any other native son during the Roaring Twenties,” he notes. This remarkable entrepreneur came to Tampa from Green Cove Springs as a boy, hawked the *Tampa Daily Times* on the streets during the Spanish-American War, and learned his first lessons in salesmanship. He struck it rich during the boom dredging up the bay to build on several grassy keys and turning them into the exclusive Davis Islands residential section. (Today, he would have been stopped cold by the environmentalists for disturbing the sensitive wetlands). Davis was busy starting a new development in St. Augustine when the boom went bust. Davis after that went abroad on a steamship and was mysteriously lost at sea.

Such are the tales Nolan has spun so well in this excellent panorama of paradise. The book is enriched with an expert selection of photographs that complement Nolan's picturesque writing.

*Hampton Dunn*


Florida, long known for its bilious retirees and its bellicose tourists, is less recognized for its *belles-lettres*. While the literary *cognoscenti* know of the Florida contributions of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Zora Neale Hurston, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and John D. MacDonald, the state has provided a rich setting for hundreds of other authors. Key West, for example, has attracted scores of literary illuminati to its haven on earth, including Zane Grey, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Wallace Stevens, Elizabeth Bishop, Tennessee Williams, Ralph Ellison, John Hersey, Joseph Lash and Philip Caputo.

Research librarians and bibliophiles of Floridiana are indebted to Janette C. Gardner for her exhaustive *An Annotated Bibliography of Florida Fiction, 1801-1980*. Gardner has amassed 1,101 works of fictional nature with a setting in some part of Florida. The books range from gothic romances set in Florida castles that never were to science fiction novels that were to be. A brief annotation follows each listing.
This reference book should appeal to a variety of readers, who will find some of the more obscure novels ever written: Millard C. Horton’s *Joan of the Everglades* (1922) and Edward Stratemeyer’s *The Moving Picture Girls Under the Palms* (1914). Readers should have great fun in wandering down the eddies and currents of Florida literature. One will discover that the Rev. Michael Smith wrote the state’s first novel in 1830, *The Lost Virgin of the South*. Or that James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *Jack Tier* was placed in Florida, written in 1848 about filibustering off the Florida coast.

Readers interested in the Tampa Bay area will be pleased to know that the region has served as a setting for hundreds of novels. St. Petersburg, by Gardner’s count, has been depicted in twelve such works, including *A Knight Comes Flying*. This 1931 melodrama involved a World War One ace who crash lands his plane in a Pinellas orange grove, only to discover that the grove’s owner is a damsel in distress, victimized by rum-running gangsters. Sarasota has been the setting of fourteen novels, whereas Sanibel, LaBelle, Immokalee, Ruskin, Bartow, and Bradenton serve as the backdrop of one book each. Tampa has been popularized in print forty-one times. Tampa’s two most acclaimed novels are by Rex Beach and José Yglesias. Politically and culturally, they accentuate Tampa’s diversity. Whereas Beach migrated with his family from Michigan to Florida in the 1880s, Yglesias was born in Ybor City in 1919. Beach achieved popular acclaim for his nostalgic renderings of the Florida cattle trade in *Wild Pastures* (1935), where Yglesias sings an elegy to the Latin barrio of his youth, a bittersweet memory etched in *The Truth About Them* (1971) and *A Wake in Ybor City* (1963).

One wishes Gardner had gone beyond the mere indexing of literature and authors and offered readers additional information, such as how many novels or plays featuring a Florida setting have won Pulitzer Prizes. (The answer is two: Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings’ *The Yearling* (1938), and James Gould Cozzens’ *Guard of Honor* (1948), although one might claim Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) violated Florida’s territorial waters.)

*Gary R. Mormino*


Historians, as Howard N. Rabinowitz points out in his essay on Albuquerque, unlike journalists and politicians have focused scant attention on the “causes and consequences of the (Sunbelt’s) remarkable postwar expansion” (p. 255). The essays included in Richard M. Bernard and Bradley R. Rice’s anthology, *Sunbelt Cities: Politics and Growth Since World War II*, broaden significantly our understanding of the historical dimensions of America’s Sunbelt phenomenon. This volume provides a thought provoking introduction to the similarities as well as the diversity that characterize Sunbelt cities in the United States.

As the editors indicate in their introduction, increasing use of the term Sunbelt has not been accompanied by a commonly accepted definition of the term. Coined by Kevin Phillips in 1969 in *The Emergent Republican Majority*, the “Sunbelt idea” has come to mean “a mix of economics, conservative politics, and demographic change generally associated with the
observation that the southeastern and southwestern sections of the country have been growing and prospering more than the Northeast or Midwest in recent years” (p. 3). But beyond this general sense of what comprises a Sunbelt area, little agreement seems to exist over the boundaries of the Sunbelt. As a result, the actual components of the Sunbelt change from author to author and this lack of scholarly consistency has hindered general understanding of the dynamics of the Sunbelt experience.

In *Sunbelt Cities* the editors have defined the Sunbelt as that part of the United States that falls below the 37th parallel, a line roughly stretching along the top of North Carolina westward across the country to the Pacific Ocean. The states included in this area have increased their population by 112.3 percent since World War II, reversing a century-old pattern of South to North migration. And within the states comprising the Sunbelt, the metropolitan areas provide striking illustrations of the demographic explosion. To explore the dimensions of the urban Sunbelt experience the editors chose twelve cities—Atlanta, Miami, New Orleans, Tampa, Dallas-Fort Worth, Houston, Oklahoma City, San Antonio, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Phoenix and San Diego—for examination. Selected for “their size, regional importance and historical significance” (p. 1), these cities all experienced a postwar boom fostered by federal spending—especially defense—a friendly business climate, and an attractive quality of life.

The twelve essays are preceded by an interpretative introductory essay written by the editors. This introduction not only sets out the scope of the volume but also places the various articles in historical context. The editors discuss the definitional problems associated with the term Sunbelt
and explore the various factors that have triggered metropolitan growth in the Sunbelt. They also, based on the twelve case studies, reflect on two important challenges now faced by Sunbelt cities as these growth areas enter a new phase of development. One challenge centers around the failure of the central cities to keep pace with suburban growth through annexation. The second threat to metropolitan Sunbelt stability rises from increasing assaults on the established leadership by minorities and neighborhood organizations for more political and economic participation. In the years ahead leaders of Sunbelt cities will have to learn to accommodate these challenges.

Although the editors left the organization and emphasis of each article at the discretion of the author, all contributors were to concern themselves with economic growth and the political changes wrought by the elevation of their particular city to Sunbelt status. Taken as a whole the volume more than fulfills the editors’ desire “to provide readers with convenient and authoritative introductions to the histories of these major sunbelt cities and their suburbs” (p. 2). As with any collection, however, the essays are of an uneven quality and demonstrate a variety of strengths and weaknesses. The essays on Atlanta, Miami and San Antonio offer readers useful discussions of the impact of minorities on the overall development and character of these Sunbelt communities. In his article on Tampa, Gary R. Mormino explores the changing levels of power and participation of minorities in Tampa’s metropolitan development, and at the same time traces the emergence of an urban environment along Florida’s gulf coast. In doing so, he examines the ambiguities that surround those communities propelled into Sunbelt status without a clearly defined urban tradition to anchor the rapid growth associated with the Sunbelt area’s development. Arnold R. Hirsch’s piece on New Orleans highlights the problems faced by a well-established metropolis, shaped by more than two centuries of development, as it adjusts to its position as a Sunbelt community. The articles on Houston, Albuquerque, Oklahoma City, Phoenix and San Diego provide more than adequate discussions of each city’s development, initial accommodation to growth, and strategies (or lack of) for facing the challenges of the future. Martin V. Melosi superbly discusses the experiences of two distinct yet related urban centers, Dallas-Fort Worth. Finally, only David L. Clark’s article on Los Angeles is disappointing. Clark has packed his essay so full of information that one loses sight of his point. Nonetheless, overall the volume represents an important addition to the literature on America’s Sunbelt.

Patricia Moone Melvin
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Regular meetings of the Manatee County Historical Commission are held at noon on the second Friday of every month, at the United Methodist Church, 315 15th Street East, Bradenton. The meetings are open to the public, and everyone is welcome to attend. For more information contact the Commission, 604 15th Street East, Bradenton, Florida 33508, or telephone (813) 747-9664.

The 11th Annual Pioneer Florida Day Festival will be held on Labor Day on the grounds of the Pioneer Florida Museum in Dade City. The festival will include such activities as demonstrations of early Florida crafts and folkways, an arts and crafts show, music and Florida "Cracker" foods. For more information contact the Pioneer Florida Museum Association, Inc., P.O. Box 335, Dade City, Florida 33525, or telephone (904) 567-0262.

The Pinellas County Historical Society announces the following events for 1985. On Saturday, July 13, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Civil War re-enactment groups will stage mock skirmishes complete with cannon, while ladies in antebellum costumes cheer them on. On Wednesday, October 26, the 8th Annual Country Jubilee will be held. Both events will take place at the Heritage Park complex. For more information contact the Pinellas County Historical Society, 11909 125th Street North, Largo, Florida 33540, or telephone (813) 448-2474.

Gamble's Battery, a Civil War re-enactment group based in Tampa, is looking for a few good men to fill its thinned ranks. Volunteers must have a real interest in the Civil War, be able to travel to re-enactments and be willing to portray both Union and Confederate soldiers. For more information contact K.D. Hill, 10928 N. 15th Street, Tampa, Florida 33612, or telephone (813) 971-8491.
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HAMPTON DUNN, Senior Vice President of Peninsular Motor Club (AAA), is the author of numerous history books, including *Yesterday’s Tampa* and *Yesterday’s St. Petersburg*.

CHERYL FARNELL works in the Cataloging Department of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library, and she and her husband won last year's reenactment of the Great Endurance Run.

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COVER: The 1924 Gasparilla parade created a massive traffic jam on Tampa’s Lafayette Street (today's Kennedy Boulevard). Looking eastward, the center of the city is in the background. Photograph courtesy of Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System. See photo essay, page 42.
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                                                       University of South Florida

ANTHONY PIZZO ................................................Historian

SAM RAMPELLO ................................................Hillsborough County School Board

CATHY SLUSSER ................................................Manatee Village Historical Park
TERRY A. SMILJANICH .......................................................... Attorney

JACKIE WATSON ....................................................... Pioneer Florida Museum
CIVIC RIVALRY

"A soldier was so disappointed with Fernandina as a camping site, that he committed suicide by drowning himself No such catastrophe ever occurred in Tampa." *Tampa Tribune*, July 28, 1898.

"THE RIVIERA OF AMERICA"

"That section of the country which embraces the Manatee River and the coast extending southward to, and inclusive of, Charlotte Harbor, seems destined to become the Riviera of America. It is the almost oriental setting of a perfect cluster of beautiful residential spots of which Sarasota is the central gem.

"In addition to its own peculiar and untranslatable advantages it possesses all the charm of climate and beauty of surrounding which have made the European Riviera so famous, while it is free from conjective dangers arising from icy mistral winds shooting down the gorges of snow-clad mountains into warm unsheltered valleys, and free also from the terrors of seismic or volcanic disturbance.

"America is now fully equipped in winter resorts, and it is time that she should cease pratting about the beauties of Nice and Mentone." Jacksonville Florida Times-Union, March 4, 1887.
FEARS OF FEMINISM

"Never enter into a partnership with a man whose wife is president of a woman suffrage club."
*Tampa Morning Tribune*, September, 12, 1901.
"A New One Cent Envelope. A letter from Washington states that the Postmaster General has adopted and ordered a one-cent self-sealing envelope, which will be supplied to post offices throughout the country." Tampa Florida Peninsular, November 10, 1860.
"YOUNG LADIES ATTENTION!"

"Two young Gentlemen, who used to be good 'rebs,' are anxious to occupy their leisure movements by corresponding with a limited number of young ladies; object-fun and mutual improvement; perhaps, Matrimony; Photographs exchanged. Address either Charles Frankland or William Hawkhurst." Tampa Florida Peninsular, October 27, 1866.
PRO BONO PUBLICO?

"It shall not be lawful for any person or persons to sell or offer for sale, within the limits of this city, between the hours of three and ten o'clock A.M., any fresh beef, pork or mutton, or any other fresh meats or fresh fish at any other place than the market house." Tampa City Ordinance, July 10, 1867.