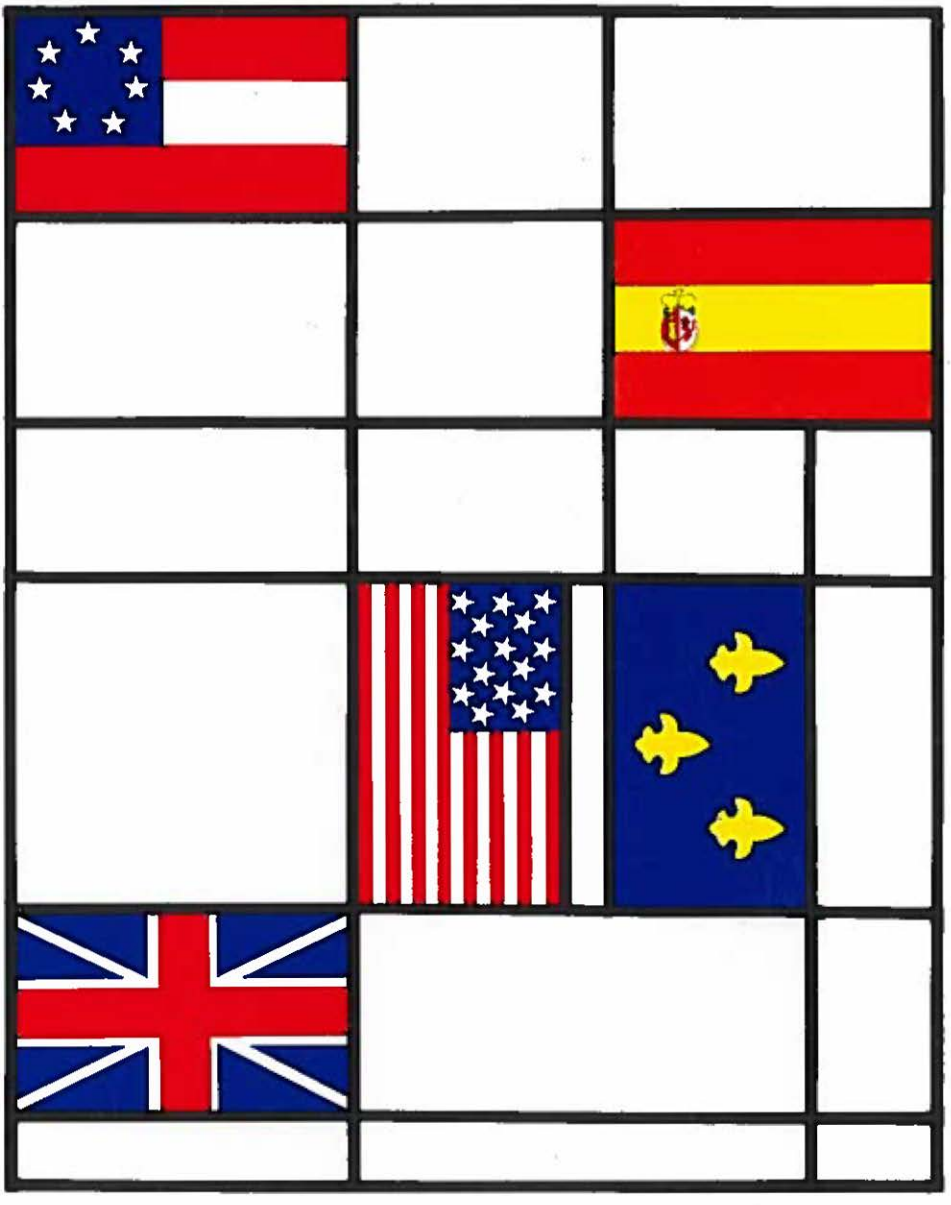
GCHR Gulf Coast Historical Review
Vol. 12 No. 1

The Roaring Twenties on the Gulf Coast



GC Gulf Coast
HR Historical Review

Vol. 12 Fall 1996 No. 1

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From the Editors . . .

Both the summer and fall of 1995 were historic and memorable indeed. With two destructive hurricanes and the coldest fall temperature in decades, the Pensacola Gulf Coast certainly created the atmosphere for the Conference theme, "The Roaring Twenties on the Gulf Coast."

Though set to meet on October 5-6, 1995, at Pensacola Beach, the fifteenth Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference was greeted by Hurricane Opal which roared in and "discombobulated" not only the Conference, but also destroyed much property (material for future historical research). Consequently, the beach was closed and the Conference postponed. The Conference Board chose January 26-27, 1996, for the new dates with the Conference falling on the original days of the week and the sessions set for their original hours. In spite of many relocation problems, Pensacola Beach businesses and organizations cooperated with the Conference, and the sessions occurred on the rescheduled dates with few problems or complaints.

Surprisingly, no participants dropped out of the program, and many excellent papers were presented, seventeen in all. In addition, a keynote address was given by Pensacola editor Earle Bowden and a banquet program featured jazz musicologist Karl Koenig from Louisiana. These two program highlights provided an excellent overview of the Conference theme and an interpretation of the music of the times.

While developing the program, the Conference Board realized the significance of 1995 as an important year of historical remembrance and added a special session, "1995: An Anniversary Year." The session celebrated the bicentennial of the Treaty of San Lorenzo and the sesquicentennial of the statehood of Florida and Texas. Continuing with its original theme, the Conference concluded with a walking tour of historic Pensacola with emphasis on the architecture of the 1920s.

In conclusion, the Conference Board wishes to offer a special thanks and a note of appreciation to Dr. William S. Coker, Professor Emeritus, University of West Florida. The 1996 meeting is considered by Bill as his retiring activity with the Conference. He has worked tirelessly on GCH&HC activities since its inception in 1969-70. Bill has exhibited the unique ability to find appropriate topics, presenters and, perhaps most important of all, funds to make the Conference a continuing success. In fact, there probably would not be a GCH&HC without his efforts. If this Conference is to continue, someone must step forward and provide some of the vision and industriousness possessed by Dr. Coker. Thanks Bill.

Glen H. Coston, Professor of History
Pensacola Junior College
1995-96 Conference Board President

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The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* is published biannually in the Fall and Spring by the History Department of the University of South Alabama, Humanities 344, Mobile, AL 36688-0002. The subscription price is $16.00 a year with payment to accompany order. Inquiries about subscriptions or submission of manuscripts and other material for future issues of the *GCHR* should be sent to the Managing Editor, *GCHR*, at the address above. Authors should write for the *GCHR* style sheet before submitting a manuscript. Any claims for lost or missing issues must be made within six months of that issue's publication. The *Gulf Coast Historical Review* is not responsible for statements of opinion or fact made by its contributors. The *GCHR* is indexed and abstracted in *America: History and Life*. This journal is printed on acid-free paper.

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Gulf Coast Historical Review
ISSN 0892-9025

Because of the embarrassment of riches created by so many presentations, the Editorial Board of the *Gulf Coast Historical Review* has determined to publish two volumes of the Conference proceedings. Thus, the fall 1996 *GCHR* issue contains twelve papers about the general theme of the "Roaring Twenties." This will be followed by the spring 1997 issue with four papers from the "1995: An Anniversary Year" session. Both issues will be mailed to all those who registered for the conference as well as to GCHR subscribers.

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Earlene Elizabeth Bowden and her son Jesse Earle, c. 1929. Bowden Family Collection.

The Twenties: Thoughts on the Unruly Jazz Age

Jesse Earle Bowden

Reflecting on the 1920s I went into an old shoebox filled with family photographs, searching for clues to a time just before my first memories of the thirties.

There I was, a few months old sitting on the lap of my mother, Earlene Elizabeth Bowden. Her velveteen-collared dress and neatly curled chestnut hair radiates the Flapper Era. I was born in 1928; the photograph had been snapped that fateful next year when Wall Street plunged the nation into financial panic. Yet her youth sparkles with an image typical of the gaiety of the twenties that soon turned into the grinding depression decade of the thirties.

There, too, in another yellowed snapshot was my father, sitting on the photographer's paper moon in Akron, Ohio in 1925. The Alabama-born farm boy from rural West Florida was typical of hard-scrabble Southerners. He spent his days in the hot rubber shops, building automobile tires and hoping to return home with an economic stake on the future.

She, looking like Zelda, the flapper; he, with cap, high-topped shoes and dark serge suit mirrored a long-ago glittering age that collapsed into the slowed-down years of the Great Depression of the 1930s.[1]

Americans today are affected by the swirling ballyhoo events of the 1920s, the showboat time before the cold winter of economic despair, World War II, and the turbulent outflow of the long cold war and overpowering technological advances of the last half of the twentieth century.

We see the 1920s in caricature: the flapper era, the age of nonsense, the antics of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, the Lost Generation in the lament of young Ernest Hemingway in Paris. We see in a zany way the dazzling decade for a Lost Generation of restless youth This Side of Paradise, a time when the Sun Also Rises.[2]

Fitzgerald, famous overnight in 1920 with his novel, *This Side of Paradise*, may have defined the decade as much as the images brightening the literature of the period: Prohibition, Lucky Lindy

Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, H. L. Mencken, Ring Lardner, Al Capone, Eliot Ness, the Florida land boom, William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow and the Scopes Trial, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein and the theory of relativity, George Washington Carver and the peanut, Eugene O'Neill's plays, and T. S. Elliot's poetry.

They were joined by the first Piggly Wiggly supermarket, Knute Rockne and the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame, Rudy Vallee and Ed Winn on the radio, Rin Tin Tin, Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix on the silver screen, Burma Shave signs, Little Orphan Annie, John Held's zany flapper cartoons, college humor magazines, static-ridden radio, bathtub gin, tin lizzies, crazy fads and speakeasies and rumrunners and bootleggers which are now legendary in Gulf Coast folklore.[3] "We are all a lost generation," Hemingway quoted Gertrude Stein on a fore page of *The Sun Also Rises*. It is doubtful it was written as prophecy.[4]

As much as any writer and novelist, Thomas Clayton Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* accurately reflected the temper of the 1920s. Published in 1929, this coming-of-age, lyrical, overripe novel inspired generations of southern writers. Too young for World War I, Wolfe did not experience the disillusionment of the older Fitzgerald and Hemingway and always denied he was representative of the "Lost Generation." Nevertheless he inherited a strong sense of the inadequacy of western civilization and of the need to create new ideas. In his attempt to create from his personal experience a new myth–an image which would support and give meaning to life–Thomas Wolfe remains an outstanding example of the individualism of the 1920s.

Few southerners motivated to write since the 1930s escaped the lyrical rhythms and influences of Wolfe, who transformed Asheville, North Carolina, into Altamont and stunned the literary world with a chronicle of his arty, querulous, turbulent dreamers, the W. O. Gant family and his mother's boarding house he called Dixieland.[5]

Still it was Fitzgerald who waltzed a gin-drenched, shimmering dance of reckless rebellion against social norms through the 1920s, as did his wife, Zelda, the model of the Jazz Age flapper. He seemed to personify the era's heedless energy and romance. He was off and running with *This Side of Paradise*, a tale of driven party-going youth in Princeton and New York City. They did their best to bring

the fictional characters to life: They supped at night clubs, danced on tabletops, splashed about in hotel fountains, cruised Fifth Avenue on the roof of a taxi. Wherever they went they were celebrated. Fitzgerald wrote dozens of magazine articles and one of the decade's most highly praised novels, *The Great Gatsby*, about a Long Island bootlegger, in 1925. But like the Jazz Age they represented, everything went sour: the money ran out, Fitzgerald's love of hooch went out of control, and Zelda, always unstable, suffered a severe nervous breakdown.[6]

Hemingway, the former journalist who turned to fiction, portrayed the disillusioned American expatriates on a trip to Spain in his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, in 1926. Between the lines ran undercurrents of discontent and shattered dreams from the horrors of war. He followed with *A Farewell to Arms* in 1929, delivered in taut, stripped-down prose that would become the hallmark of a new kind of tough-guy American literature.

There were others: novelists Sinclair Lewis and John Dos Passos, poets Ezra Pound and Edna St. Vincent Millay, and the failed poet and soon-to-be acclaimed novelist William Faulkner. Theirs was a time in which everyone hated, often without visible reason, the town in which he was born. They have been described as rebellious souls for whom all gods were dead, all causes lost; they lashed out at everything from Puritan morals to cultural boorishness. Their powder keg of prose exploded on the reading public and thrust America to the forefront of the international literary scene.

Some lived in Paris in self-imposed exile as did Hemingway. Others stuck closer to their American roots. As a bearded bohemian in Paris, Faulkner failed to find himself as poet; he finally returned to New Orleans and heeded New Orleans novelist Sherwood Anderson's advice: "Write about that little patch up there in Mississippi where you started."[7]

These literary rebels brandished their pens with such exuberance and style that they created a new era of American letters–William Faulkner's body of work matured in the 1930s, eventually earning Nobel laureate status; Margaret Mitchell created everlasting southern stereotypes in *Gone With the Wind*; John Steinbeck's greatest novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, captured the turmoil and tragedy of the depression.[8]

Has the hard history of the 1920s been overshadowed by the image of its flamboyance? Do we now in the 1990s deal in its caricature rather than sober reflection? Perhaps so, since it was in many ways the party after one war and the preface for the Great Depression and World War II.

The war to end all wars had its disillusion. Woodrow Wilson's liberalism was dead, and so soon would be the ailing president, crushed by his loss of the League of Nations, and a new era of American isolation was aborning.

Warren Gameliel Harding was in sharp contrast with the professorial Wilson, whose dream of the world's first peacekeeping organization was shattered by isolationists in his own backyard. Harding's inauguration in 1920 signaled a new mood, a new outlook, and new aspirations. In 1920 he said, "America's present need is not heroics but healing, not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration, not surgery but serenity."[9]

But Harding would die in office disgraced by the Teapot Dome scandal, ironically a forerunner of Richard Nixon's Watergate debacle: Following him, the nation would have cool, silent Calvin Coolidge, who preferred to nap portions of his White House days. Then in the twilight of the decade, Americans elected Republican Herbert Hoover, whose name later seeped into the language of the Great Depression.[10]

We wonder now, in the New World Order, about the time between the wars, the Roaring Twenties, the light before the dark. Place the twenties decade alongside others of the now-fleeting twentieth century and the images emerge: the wild and zany language, the free and flirtatious flapper, the nonsense that followed World War I. The exciting, frightening 1920s spawned the first youth rebellion; they openly challenged their elders' authority. The girls in particular seemed to have changed in the first flirtations with the feminist movement that would flower after World War II. The sights and sounds reveal Americans turned inward, disillusioned but willing to set aside the straitjacket of social conformity.[11]

Pensacolians chaffed under Prohibition and quarreled with advocates for voting rights for women. Yet liquor flowed. They could get a drink at Sanders Beach, Pensacola Country Club, Barrocoville, the speakeasies, gasoline stations, soda shops, and taxi stands.[12] Evading the law was an enjoyable challenge. Cooking illegal liquor

in remote woods of Escambia and other West Florida counties became a contest between moonshiners and revenue officers. One Pensacolian who worked for a West Florida bootlegger in the small Calhoun County town of Altha said, "You could buy whiskey everywhere in town but the U.S. Post Office and the Baptist Church, and I wasn't too sure about those two places."[13]

The stories of bootlegging are legend, including the liquor-running ring led by Joe Johnson. Johnson's schooner, the *Michigan*, usually docked at the foot of Palafox Street, delivered the illegal brew along the West Florida coast, including Camp Walton. Correspondence to the Prohibition Bureau charged that Johnson's operations were widespread in downtown Pensacola, and his legal adviser was lawyer Philip Beall, who would become a power in Florida politics and state senator for whom the Pensacola Bay Bridge was eventually named.[14]

Typical of Gulf Coast bootleggers was Sam Clepper who became a celebrity and legend. Clepper would deliver a jug in a brown bag; those paying cash could obtain a five-gallon jug for ten dollars at Clepper's place on Perdido Bay. Jailed frequently, infrequently convicted, Clepper was such a necessity that people brought food to him from their kitchens to the jail. Said a Pensacolian: "Jail food was not good for anyone and we wanted to keep Sam healthy."[15] Popular speakeasies flourished: Angelo Maggio's on West Zarragossa Street, the New Warrington Club operated by R.G. (Baby) Green and George Wilson's Pioneer Roadhouse on Gulf Beach Highway.[16] By 1933 Pensacolians voted nine to one for repeal.

When women won the right to vote with the Nineteenth Amendment, Florida did not support it–even though the Pensacola Suffrage League had been a force in the statewide campaign. Defiance of Prohibition and women's suffrage symbolized the changing values. Technology and urbanization eroded the more conservative rural conventions. Movies at the Bonita and Isis theaters brought their patrons Rudolph Valentino, Mary Pickford, Gloria Swanson, and comic Harold Lloyd. Pensacolians showed their pride by turning out for the grand opening of the Saenger Theatre in 1925. Pensacola's Saenger Theatre, built and opened in mid-decade, was less elegant than others in Mobile and New Orleans. Nonetheless it became West Florida's *grand dame* of Broadway lights, vaudeville acts, and flickering silent

movies. Cecil B. De Mille's silent "The Ten Commandments" christened the Palafox Street theater on April 2, 1925. The now-restored and active community theater on Palafox with its Robert Morgan organ was promoted as "Florida's Greatest Showplace," and continued the tradition of the Opera House that had been devastated by the 1916 hurricane.[17]

Escambia County bought Santa Rosa Island, except for the Fort Pickens military reservation, for ten thousand dollars in 1929. In the 1930s the local government would return it to the Interior Department when President Roosevelt proclaimed the barrier as the Santa Rosa National Monument. In the 1920s Pensacolians hungered for island development that would attract tourists. But the old dreams of a national park in Pensacola harbor would not come until 1971 when Congress authorized Gulf Islands National Seashore.[18]

The Pensacola Bridge Company–franchised by Escambia and Santa Rosa counties–began the $2.5 million three-mile concrete toll bridge from Pensacola to the Santa Rosa peninsula, the $250,000 wooden Santa Rosa Sound bridge and the $150,000 Casino on Santa Rosa Island in the late twenties. The Casino consisted of a bathhouse with accommodations for five hundred, a dining room seating three hundred, a dance hall, and a twelve hundred-foot fishing pier. The only road on the island ran from the sound bridge to the Casino. The bridge company secured its investment from a lease for two-and-one-half miles to develop the Pensacola Beach Casino resort.

During the administration of Gov. John W. Martin (1925-29), highway construction had accelerated the dream of encouraging Florida tourism. Visionaries projected a paved highway along the coast from Pensacola to St. Marks and Tallahassee. The Gulf Coast Highway (U.S. 98) opened about two hundred miles between Pensacola and St. Marks, running east across Pensacola Bay to Town Point (Gulf Breeze) on the Santa Rosa peninsula, through Naval Live Oaks Reservation and on to Camp Walton (Fort Walton Beach), Panama City, Apalachicola, and St. Marks. The builders obtained consent from the War Department to build the highway through Live Oaks Naval Reservation to connect the bay bridge with the Gulf Coast Highway.

Gulf Beach Highway (1916-1923) carried visitors west of Pensacola to Gulf beaches on Foster's Island (Perdido Key) and

prompted the beginning of the three-hundred-room Gulf Beach Hotel in 1925. But when abandoned after the devastating 1926 hurricane and collapse of the Florida land boom, the hotel's bleaching concrete bones survived as a skeleton of failed dreams.[19]

Lacking bridges from the mainland, private development on the 44.7-mile-island was minimal in the early 1920s. Pensacola excursion boats *Baldwin* and *Cessna* ferried swimmers, picnickers, and dancers from Palafox Wharf to two island pavilions, a hotel and bathhouse. But storms eventually swept away the resort facilities; the island again was left to the solitude of the dunes.[20]

At Camp Walton, destined to become Fort Walton Beach, lived John William Brooks, son of Brooks Landing pioneer John Thomas Brooks, who had served with the Walton Guards during the Civil War. The son built a boardwalk across Santa Rosa Island and operated a shuttle from the mainland across the Narrows of the sound during the tourist season. His son Thomas (Tom) Brooks built thirty-five cottages and a small casino at Tower Beach on land leased on September 10, 1929, for twenty years from Escambia County commissioners. The first Brooks Bridge spanned the Narrows in 1933 and the first Destin East Pass Bridge–built in 1934–linked the first narrow road on the eastern portion of the island.[21]

Escambia and Santa Rosa county commissioners voted to encourage district Congressman Millard F. Caldwell to seek federal development of the island as a public park, including paving a road the length of the island and building access bridges. Escambia commissioners agreed to lease the island to the government for five years with the right to purchase if the road had not been built from the Pensacola Beach Casino to Fort Walton Beach.

The Florida Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution asking the National Park Service to consider three West Florida areas as national recreation parks–Santa Rosa Island, Crooked Island, east of Panama City on St. Andrew Sound, and St. Joseph's Bay peninsula (Cape San Blas). Eventually only Santa Rosa Island received President Roosevelt's signature.[22]

Along Florida's Gulf Coast, as a highway network opened the undeveloped region, the automobile stretched social practices. Many couples enjoyed ten-mile Scenic Highway which opened in 1929. The eighteen-mile concrete Gulf Beach Highway to the Gulf of Mexico

and the 3.7 mile Escambia River Bridge opened on July 8, 1926, across Escambia Bay. There was also the Lillian Highway Bridge that connected Escambia County with Baldwin County, Alabama. In the twenties, motorists awaited the new Gulf Coast Highway from Pensacola to Carrabelle and Tallahassee that would be completed in the early 1930s.[23]

In many ways the Pensacola Bay Bridge, opened June 13, 1931, was a Pensacola climax to the decade. *The Pensacola News* told the story: Navy planes, often in the skies over Pensacola in the 1920s, stole the show of the ceremonial opening. Three intrepid pilots staged barrel rolls, loops, and gave a realistic imitation of a dog fight in the clouds. Three nine-plane squadrons in perfect V-formation and a giant seaplane flew low while the fliers ground away at their movie machines.

The twenties was the decade of the merging of two small newspapers, the *Daily News* founded in 1889, and *The Pensacola Journal* (1898) into the Pensacola News Journal Company–the largest and only daily newspaper west of the Apalachicola River. Today, there are two dailies east of Pensacola, the *Daily News* at Fort Walton Beach and the *Panama City News Herald*. They reflected the growth of small coastal places that came from the 1920s image of West Florida as a tourist destination.

Florida's first press baron, Kentucky libel lawyer John Holliday Perry, a new resident of Palm Beach, bought the two small dailies and merged them as part of Perry Newspapers. He became a Florida booster, writing two books about the state's magic. Also, his Pensacola newspapers championed the building of highways and bridges and proposed that Pensacola and West Florida were essential for the state's economic growth and the tourism industry. His publishers, Braden Ball and Cecil Kelly, would launch daily Perry newspapers in Panama City, Fort Walton Beach, and Marianna during the next four decades.[24]

In 1925 the city of Pensacola brought radio to West Florida, broadcasting WCOA (Wonderful City of Advantages) from the second floor of city hall. The municipally owned station featured local talent and news. John C. Frenkel, city clerk and treasurer, served as WCOA's sole staff member.[25]

Hotel San Carlos, then one of Florida's largest with five hundred rooms that had been built along with other landmark buildings on Palafox Street for the New Pensacola century, was the region's gathering place. Others envisioned the magic of luring tourists: places like The Inn on Choctawhatchee Bay at Valparaiso, Florosa Inn on Santa Rosa Sound west of Camp Walton, Floridatown in Santa Rosa County, and Paradise Beach Hotel on Perdido Bay were projected as Florida resorts in the twenties. Tourists popularized Bay St. Louis, Pine Hills, Mississippi City, Pass Christian, Biloxi, Gulf Hills, Ocean Springs, and Pascagoula in Mississippi; Daphne and Fairhope in South Alabama; and Pensacola, Florosa, Mary Esther, Camp Walton, Valparaiso, St. Andrew, Panama City and Apalachicola in West Florida.[26]

But the West Florida coastal communities reverted to sleepy areas along the Gulf Beach Highway (U.S. 98) when the Florida land boom nose-dived. Coastal West Florida outside Pensacola would not begin its population growth and primarily military development until the 1940s and World War II.

Charles Lindbergh flew into Pensacola in 1927 only to see remnants of the devastating 1926 hurricane that wrecked the Pensacola Naval Air Station and splintered Pensacola's bayfront. The storm had covered the station with five feet of water; repairs required three years of reconstruction. On September 20, 1926, a tidal wall of ten to fourteen feet–with winds reaching 152 miles per hour–slammed Pensacola, obliterated most of its wharves and piers, and swamped Santa Rosa Island and the Santa Rosa peninsula. The 1926 storm was, until Andrew in South Florida, the state's most destructive and most talked about storm. It wreaked havoc on Miami, then spun north to devastate Pensacola. Some thought Pensacola was washed away.[27]

The 1926 storm, the last of the sixes storms that had followed the 1906 and 1916 tempests, may stand as a metaphor for the chronic depression that shadowed Florida's westernmost city after the timber companies cut down the forests of West Florida and South Alabama, realizing too late that reforestation would have been the more prudent course of action.[28]

In 1922 the city of Pensacola and the Chamber of Commerce bought the navy's first flying field five miles north of the city. Increased flying at the nation's largest aeronautical station soon made

the first Corry field inadequate, and the navy considered abandoning Pensacola. But in 1927 Pensacola businessmen and the Escambia County Commissioners purchased five hundred acres west of the city for the new Corry Field.[29]

Pensacolians jammed Legion Field to see Babe Ruth when the New York Yankees played the Pensacola Fliers. The Babe batted three for four. The first Greater Pensacola Open Golf tournament in 1929 attracted Joe Kirkwood, Craig and Gene Sarazen, and Ed Dudley for the thirty-five hundred dollar purse. The depression years would end Pensacola's place on the Professional Golfers Association tour. Eventually, in 1956, it was revived as the Pensacola Open at Pensacola Country Club.[30]

We probe old documents, finding tales of the rumrunners in West Florida and Gulf Coast waterways. Typical of the period was the legendary federal Prohibition officer J. E. (Pistol Pete) Bowdoin, who was mysteriously shot and killed by a gang of rumrunners and bootleggers in a shootout on the Choctawhatchee River at Caryville in 1925. Houston Harris was killed, and alleged moonshiners Harvey Walker and Sumpter Harris were wounded in the gun battle. Feared in a region known for its outlawry, Bowdoin was reported carrying a pistol carved with six notches, one each for six moonshiners killed in earlier shootouts, when found with a bullet in his forehead.[31]

There were a few paragraphs of humor and commonsense wisdom in *The Pensacola News*. Will Rogers's column was on the left corner of page one of most American newspapers; eventually providing a guiding light into the early thirties and sharing the silver screen with America's sweetheart, Shirley Temple, born in 1928.

Pensacola was abuzz with hope on April 20, 1925, when the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad purchased the Muscle Shoals, Birmingham, and Pensacola Railway. In the process it became a competitor with the L&N, which controlled many of the bayfront wharves at the port and had increasingly shifted its emphasis to the Port of Mobile.

West Florida tried to build a growth industry with groves of satsuma oranges, including the Florida groves at Holt in Okaloosa County with offices in Pensacola's Blount Building. The ten-county area of West Florida was advertised as "Satsumaland," until the severe 1924 freeze devastated many of the groves. Pensacola's

industries reflected the times: The pioneering Newport Company manufactured steam-distilled turpentine, pine oil, and wood rosin; other industries were Pensacola Creosoting Company and the Bruce Dry Dock Company for ship repair.[32]

Pensacola's economy in 1920s was increasingly forced to depend on the Naval Air Station, as hopes of attracting outside capital evaporated with the collapse of the Florida land boom. Pensacolians speculated that the coming of the Frisco Railroad, and the area's road and bridge programs in the 1920s, might have produced salutary results if the depression had not paralyzed trade and confidence so soon after their completion.[33]

Pensacola's relatively poor performance with regard to industries, real estate promotion, and transportation prompted an observer in *The Pensacola Journal* to describe the Naval Air Station in 1928 as "the city's greatest industrial plant." As a result Pensacola business leaders turned increasingly to the navy, which in 1930 was probably supplying one-fourth of the total salaries in the city, for economic growth.[34]

The Pensacola Electric Company which operated the streetcar system experienced a loss of revenue in the early 1920s attributed to the popularity of automobiles. The *Journal* noted in 1925 that for the first time the New Year's Eve celebration turned Palafox Street into "a veritable race track filled with cars from Wright Street to Zarragossa," the cars' occupants were yelling and blowing their horns as if from a scene in a wild movie of the period.

Pensacola flappers were typical of the New Women with short hair, bare arms, and low necklines. They also smoked, went without stockings, wore the popular one-piece bathing suit, and shared in the "necking parties," which even though they were not socially acceptable, were nonetheless a fact of Gulf Coast life.[35]

City planners reflected on Pensacola's eternal optimism yet its victimization by predatory industries that once had made it a flourishing port. There was further dependence on timber and turpentine industries during the decade of the 1920s. A Jacksonville engineering company concluded that the absence of industrial replacements of equal magnitude had increased the dependence on Pensacola NAS and had "lulled the city into a false sense of economic stability."[36]

But Pensacola like the nation had its dance bands, and the Pensacola Fliers were playing Southeastern League opponents at American Legion Field. Everyone was doing the "Charleston" and the "Big Apple," listening to Paul Whiteman's orchestra, and watching the movies of Rudolph Valentino and Gloria Swanson. Steamboat Captain Willis Green Barrow ("God makes the weather, but I make the trips") was becoming a legend with the *Tarpon*, skippering two-week journeys from Mobile, Pensacola, Panama City, Apalachicola, and Carrabelle. Pensacolians had love affairs with the automobile and expanding highways in their carefree adventures modeled on the exploits of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.[37]

Pensacolians had begun to work for changing their commission form of city government; by the early 1930s they had voted a new charter calling for ten councilmen and an appointed city manager. George Roark, recruited from Beaumont, Texas, brought the city into a new municipal era as the first city manager.

By mid-decade Mobile had far outpaced Pensacola in gaining trade though the Frisco Railroad had begun a comprehensive study of ways to improve the storm-shattered port. By 1929 there were dark clouds, much as there had been following the decline in military activity and shipbuilding after World War I.[38] And there would be "Hoovervilles," or hobo shantytowns, west of O Street (Pace Boulevard) in West Pensacola or near Seventeenth Avenue by the L&N railroad tracks. And Palafox Street merchants would peddle the now endangered gopher tortoise as "Hoover chicken" and fatback pork as "Sawmill chicken."

The glitter, the emancipation of women, the Dixieland trumpet of Louis Armstrong, and the New Orleans jazz sounds moving upriver to Chicago and the world, collided with financial uncertainty. The isolationist and rebellious 1920s were squeezed between the incompleteness of World War I and the cold hollow years of the down-and-out 1930s. That decade was to be followed by the sobering reality of Nazi jackboots across Europe, the flames of Pearl Harbor, and the war that changed the world forever.

Notes

[1]Jesse Earle Bowden, *Always the Rivers Flow* (Pensacola, 1979), 30-44.

[2]Edmund H. Harvey, Jr., *Our Glorious Century* (Pleasantville, NY, 1994), 136-37.

[3]*Time-Life* editors, *This Fabulous Century: Sixty Years of American Life* (New York, 1970), 49.

[4]Jonathan Daniels, *The Time Between the Wars: From the Jazz Age and the Depression to Pearl Harbor* (Garden City, N.Y., 1966), 137, 158.

[5]Terence Dewsnap, *Thomas Wolfe's "Look Homeward, Angel" and "Of Time and the River": A Critical Commentary* (New York, 1965), 67; David Herbert Donald, *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe* (Boston, 1987), *xiii*, passim; Jesse Earle Bowden, *When You Reach September: An Editor's West Florida Essays and Other Episodic Echoes* (Pensacola, 1990), 148-51.

[6]Harvey, *Our Glorious Century*, 136.

[7]Bowden, *When You Reach September*, 151-55.

[8]Harvey, *Our Glorious Century*, 136-37.

[9]*Time-Life* editors, *This Fabulous Century*, 23.

[10]Harvey, *Our Glorious Century*, 108-13, 144-45.

[11]Harvey, *This Fabulous Century*, 30.

[12]James R. McGovern, *The Emergence of a City in the Modern South: Pensacola 1900-1945* (Pensacola, 1976), 111.

[13]Author's interview with John Deese, Pensacola, 1979.

[14]C.L. Bryant to J.M. Doran, Prohibition Bureau Chief, Washington, D.C., June 27, 1927, Historic Pensacola Preservation Board Collections.

[15]McGovern, *Emergence of a City*, 111-12; Virginia Parks, *Pensacola: Spaniards to Space Age* (Pensacola, 1986), 94.

[16]McGovern, *Emergence of a City*, 111-12.

[17]Ibid., 98-99.

[18]Jesse Earle Bowden, *Gulf Islands: The Sands of All Time, Preserving America's Largest National Seashore* (Pensacola, 1994), 38-51.

[19]Ibid., 46.

[20]*Pensacola News Journal*, June 17, 1973; Pensacola history reminiscences by Simon Wagenheim, author's copy.

[21]Bowden, *Gulf Islands*, 38-46.

[22]Ibid.

[23]McGovern, 90-93.

[24]Jesse Earle Bowden, "Editors and Other Hell Raisers of West Florida," *The Threads of Tradition and Culture Along the Gulf Coast*, ed. Ronald V. Evans (Pensacola, 1986), 2, 19-24.

[25]Jesse Earle Bowden, *Pensacola: Florida's First Place City* (Norfolk, VA, 1989), 166.

[26]*Pensacola Today*, Pensacola Chamber of Commerce publication, April 1925; Parons, Klapp, Brinchoff & Douglas, *Industrial and Economic Survey of Pensacola* (New York and St. Petersburg, 1927), Historic Pensacola Preservation Board Collections.

[27]Jesse Earle Bowden, "Pensacola Storms," *Pensacola Magazine* (October 1995): 26-27; Bowden, *First Place City*, 150.

[28]George W. Simons, *Comprehensive City Plan of Pensacola, Florida* (Jacksonville, 1948).

[29]Bowden, *First Place City*, 150.

[30]McGovern, *Emergence of a City*, 100.

[31]E.W. Carswell, *Holmesteading: the History of Holmes County, Florida* (Chipley, FL, 1986), 295-98.

[32]McGovern, *Emergence of a City*, 86-87; *Pensacola Today*.

[33]Simons, *City Plan*.

[34]Parks, *Pensacola, Spaniards to Space Age*, 93.

[35]McGovern, *Emergence of a City*, 102, 104.

[36]Simons, *City Plan*.

[37]McGovern, *Emergence of a City*, 89; Lucius Ellsworth and Linda Ellsworth, *Penscola: Florida's First Place City* (Tulsa, 1982), 104.

[38]Ibid., 99, 109.

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The Free State of Galveston

David G. McComb

They knew it was coming. Their resident climatologist Isaac M. Cline had warned them with red and black square flags sent whipping to the tops of flagpoles. It was just that the people on Galveston Island did not expect the hurricane that struck on September 8, 1900, to be so severe, so destructive. The storm surge washed completely over the three-mile wide sand barrier island, smashed into splinters a line of houses six blocks deep, and killed six thousand people. In terms of mortality the Great Galveston Hurricane was the worst natural disaster in the history of the United States.

It was also the pivot point of history for the city of Galveston and for the next twelve years its citizens worked to protect themselves from the future storms of the Gulf. They built a seventeen-foot high seawall of solid concrete, raised the grade level of the town, and constructed an arched, all-weather causeway to the mainland. These projects did their job well, but they drained the city and county of its treasury. Moreover, while preoccupied, Galveston missed out on the Texas oil boom of the early twentieth century and lost its hegemony as a port to man-made channels at Houston, Texas City, and Port Arthur. Galveston City was thus left behind, frozen at mid-size, and only gradually raised its population from thirty-eight thousand in 1900 to fifty-nine thousand in 1990.[1]

In the first half of the twentieth century Galveston supported itself with declining port activity, a growing medical school, military bases, and a rising tourist trade. For the 1920s, however, it was the tourist trade and smuggled liquor that made Galveston unusual on the Texas Gulf coast. These activities put the "roar" into the Roaring Twenties.

For family tourists the twenty-seven miles of beige sandy beach was the most attractive element. Rail access to the island came shortly before the Civil War and a mule-car line connected the town, located on the bay side, with the Gulf beach in 1869; a causeway opened to automobile traffic in 1912; and successive hotels and bathhouses catered to a public ever more interested in travel vacations.[2] Along the marine drive on top of the seawall developed

International Pageant of Pulchritude contestants, Splash Day, Galveston, 1922. Courtesy of Rosenberg Library, Galveston.

an amusement park, a salt water swimming pool, the Galvez Hotel, and more bathhouses. Murdoch's, the most popular bathhouse, provided towels, bathing suits, showers, and a place to change for 129,000 people in 1929.[3] In 1930 it was estimated that one million bathers visited the beach.[4]

The Galveston Commercial Association advertised the island as "The Playground of the Southwest," and displayed the city's first pinup girl, "Galvie Stone."[5] The manager of the Galvez Hotel, P. L. Sanders, suggested in 1916 the most famous of the beach celebrations, Splash Day, to mark the official opening of the swimming season. The Commercial Association organized the three-day event with parades, dances, and fireworks, all led by King Neptune and his bride, Galvie Stone.[6] As might be expected, a bathing beauty contest started as a part of Splash Day in 1920. Supported by various civic groups and condemned by churches, the contest evolved into the International Pageant of Pulchritude which called its winner "Miss Universe." In 1927 it attracted a record 250,000 spectators, but succumbed to the economic depression in 1931.[7] Splash Day itself, however, continued until 1965 when excessive crowds and violence overwhelmed the police.

Beyond the beach Galveston offered tourists and others another sort of entertainment–illegal liquor, gambling, and prostitution. Following the Civil War when an occupying northern army encamped on the island, prostitution flourished as never before. A vice district of bawdy houses, saloons, and low class theaters developed in a six-block area that endured until the early 1950s. National legislation that banned prostitution within five miles of an army base closed the houses in 1917. Of course sex did not stop and the War Department condemned Galveston in 1918 as the worst place in Texas for venereal disease. After the war the houses of ill repute resumed their business as before–open and without particular condemnation from the community.[8]

In 1930 Granville Price presented a remarkable study of Galveston's prostitution of the late 1920s for a master's thesis in sociology at the University of Texas. A former police reporter for the *Galveston Daily News,* Price asked the right questions and wrote down the results of his interviews in straightforward manner. There were fifty-four brothels and an estimated 809 prostitutes in Galveston

in 1929. It cost three dollars to visit a young woman, one dollar for an older one. The whores were there of their own free will, according to Price, but were influenced by desertion, bad company, and a desire to make money. The properties were owned by a variety of people and controlled by individual madams. There were no vice lords. As Mrs. Ardie Smith, the successful owner of the "Brick House," later explained, "I have something that men want and are willing to pay for. It's my property, so why shouldn't I sell it? Your goody-goody wives that try to drive us out make me tired. Why can't they see that Galveston's better off because of us?" She had little to worry about. While crusades in other places eliminated vice districts, the politicians, ministers, and police of Galveston tolerantly allowed prostitution to thrive within the red-light district.[9]

The Galveston community in the 1920s was equally tolerant of illegal gambling and liquor. In time this activity devolved into the hands of two remarkable brothers, Sam and Rosario Maceo. As Texas and the nation became legally dry in 1918, Galveston became conspicuously and illegally wet. Geography and attitude made Galveston Island an ideal, but somewhat surprising smuggling point as a federal incident brought out in 1930. Agents discovered a carload of liquor in a railroad car labeled "junk" in Cleveland. The shipment of illegal alcohol had started in Canada, traveled to British Honduras, and then by freighter to "rum row," forty miles at sea from Galveston. Smugglers met the ship with small fast speedboats to take the shipment to the island in small quantities. Outside the main railroad yards where the railroad picked up scrap metal the gangsters loaded the boxcar with the liquor, labeled it "junk," and sent it to Cleveland. The officers estimated that merchandise worth some $500,000 had been shipped in this manner during the preceding six months.[10]

As might be expected with such illegal activity historians can glimpse only portions of the story, but the main outline is clear. The Galveston bootleggers operated mainly as wholesalers and divided into two groups. The Beach Gang led by O. E. "Dutch" Voight used Galveston's western beach as a landing point for smuggled whiskey from "rum row." The Downtown Gang, however, was more willing to use the docks and the common landing places of boats. It was led by George Musey and John L. "Johnny Jack" Nounes. "Johnny Jack"

wore a diamond stickpin, gave toys to kids at Christmas, and was known as the "Beau Brummel of Galveston." He started with a keg of expensive whiskey he found on the beach, but was caught in 1924 while taking delivery of forty-two hundred cases of assorted liquor from a British schooner. After two years in Leavenworth Prison he was caught again in 1928 along with Musey smuggling liquor into Seabrook on Galveston Bay. While leaving for prison in Atlanta "Johnny Jack" commented, "It's in again, out again, caught again. Just the same old story. It's too tough a racket to continue."[11]

Caught at the same time, George Musey skipped bail and fled to Canada. He argued with his new partner Marvin J. "Big Jim" Clark, perhaps over a woman, and Clark told the rival Beach Gang about a $210,000 shipment belonging to Musey. The Beach Gang hijacked the liquor in Beeville, Texas in 1931 and this precipitated a blazing gun battle in downtown Galveston. It started in Kid Backenstoe's cigar store and moved onto the front sidewalk where Kye Gregory, holding an old-fashioned six-shooter, dropped dead from three bullet wounds. Mitchell Frankovich, hit in the chest, crouched between the parked cars and exchanged shots with Theodore "Fatty" Owens who fired back from a nearby alleyway. Pedestrians scattered in panic as an errant shot shattered the display window of the Mainland Motor Company. The police arrived, ordered the gangsters to stop shooting–which they did–and took Frankovich to the hospital.

Owens came to trial for murder and testified that he just pointed his forty-five automatic, closed his eyes, and pulled the trigger. "I don't even like to kill a bird," he said. Despite affirmation by the police chief and one of the city commissioners that Owens was a law-abiding man, the mobster drew a two-year sentence. Meanwhile, federal agents arrested Musey, Clark, and Voight.[12] This left the Galveston gangs without leadership, a vacuum easily filled by the dynamic Maceo brothers.

Sam and Rosario "Rose" Maceo moved to Galveston to open a barbershop shortly before World War I. They came from Palermo, Italy via Leesville, Louisiana. At Christmas time after the war they began giving their good customers a bottle of "Dago Red" wine, and drifted into bootlegging. In 1921 Sam Maceo opened a "cold drink stand" to sell liquor and an aging gangster, Ollie J. Quinn, agreed to share his Galveston gambling territory with the energetic young man.

Gambling, of course, was illegal throughout Texas at the time, but this is what interested the Maceos most of all. In 1926 with the backing of Dutch Voight and Ollie Quinn, Rose and Sam opened the Hollywood Dinner Club on the western side of Galveston. Equipped with a searchlight beacon, dance floor for five hundred people, crystal chandeliers, attractive menu, gaming tables, and liquor by-the-drink the Hollywood Dinner Club became famous on the Texas coast. Gregarious Sam Maceo, sporting his trademark white carnation in his lapel, greeted customers at the door and offered first class entertainment–Guy Lombardo, Ray Noble, Sophie Tucker, Joe E. Lewis, and Harry James. Rose remained behind the scenes and watched the account books.

From this point, although connections are tenuous, the Maceos were at the center of gambling and liquor activities. Between 1929 and 1937 there were a series of unsolved gangland killings. In 1929 James Clinch died with a shotgun blast in the back; in 1931 the bullet-riddled body of Sam Lachinsky, still warm, was dumped on West Beach; George Musey recently returned from prison tried to muscle in on Maceo territory and was shot down by a Maceo underling in 1935; and Maxie Parsutte who had ejected an influential man from his beer joint died by shotgun blasts from a nearby car as he walked to his rooming house in 1937. An old man sitting outside as Parsutte was gunned down later said that he could not see what was happening. He was too busy lighting his pipe. The Maceo brothers continued in control of illegal Galveston liquor and gambling until the early 1950s. At the end of Prohibition they took up unlawful liquor by-the-drink to supplement their illegal gaming activity. They also opened other facilities, including the famous Balinese Room in 1942, a nightclub-casino built on a pier that extended into the Gulf of Mexico from the seawall.[13]

By and large the State of Texas left Galveston alone. There were periodic raids by the Texas Rangers, but in most cases the Maceos, somehow, were informed before the big-hatted law officers crossed the two-mile causeway. All was cleaned up and put away before the officers appeared. This did not change until after federal investigations and the death of the brothers in the early 1950s. As a member of the Maceo family later commented, "I think what it really comes

down to was that nobody in the State of Texas really gave a goddamn about Galveston."[14]

It should be noted that the community tolerated and actually liked the Maceos. The minister of the First Presbyterian Church even characterized Sam Maceo as a "very lovable sort of fellow."[15] The brothers gave money to the churches and to charities, cooperated with community organizations, and contributed to city celebrations and projects. They courted the community and appealed to the underlying feeling that Galvestonians believed that they were somehow different and separate. The people lived on an island, had endured the worst natural disaster in the history of the country, survived, and had successfully fortified their homes against future hurricanes. They had beaten nature. Galvestonians seemed to feel that the rules and regulations of the country did not apply to them, and local folk liked to call their city, "The Free State of Galveston." The 1920s witnessed the emergence of this lawless attitude in Galveston with its wide-open prostitution, gambling, and drinking. It was indeed a place to "roar" in the Roaring Twenties, and for a few decades after that.

Notes

[1]*Texas Almanac, 1992-1993* (Dallas, 1991), 172. For details about this early history see David G. McComb, *Galveston, a History* (Austin, 1986), 121-149.

[2]McComb, *Galveston*, 63-65; John A. Jackle, *The Tourist: Travel in Twentieth Century North America* (Lincoln, 1985), *xi*, 53-57, 104, 186.

[3]*Galveston Daily News*, October 1, 1929.

[4]Ibid., October 1, 1930.

[5]Ibid., August 15, 1939. See also the brochure of the Galveston Commercial Association in the Werlin Collection at the Rosenberg Library, Galveston.

[6]*Galveston Daily News*, April 5, 7, 9, 1916.

[7]Ibid., May 14, 24, 1920; May 21, 1922; January 26, 1923; May 17, 1926; May 23, 1927; June 23, 1928; October 9, 1931.

[8]McComb, *Galveston*, 108-109, 155.

[9]Granville Price, "A Sociological Study of a Segregated District" (MA thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1930), 2-85, 102. *Galveston Daily News*, July 12, 1935, June 30, 1939.

[10]Ibid., December 11, 1930.

[11]McComb, *Galveston*, 160.

[12]*Galveston Daily News*, April 19, 1931; August 13, 14, 25, 1931; February 14, 1932. Also, McComb, *Galveston*, 161.

[13]Ibid., 161-64, 175-77.

[14]Robert L. Fabj, oral history interview by Robert Jones, May 15, 1980 (Rosenberg Library, Galveston), 31.

[15]McComb, *Galveston*, 175.

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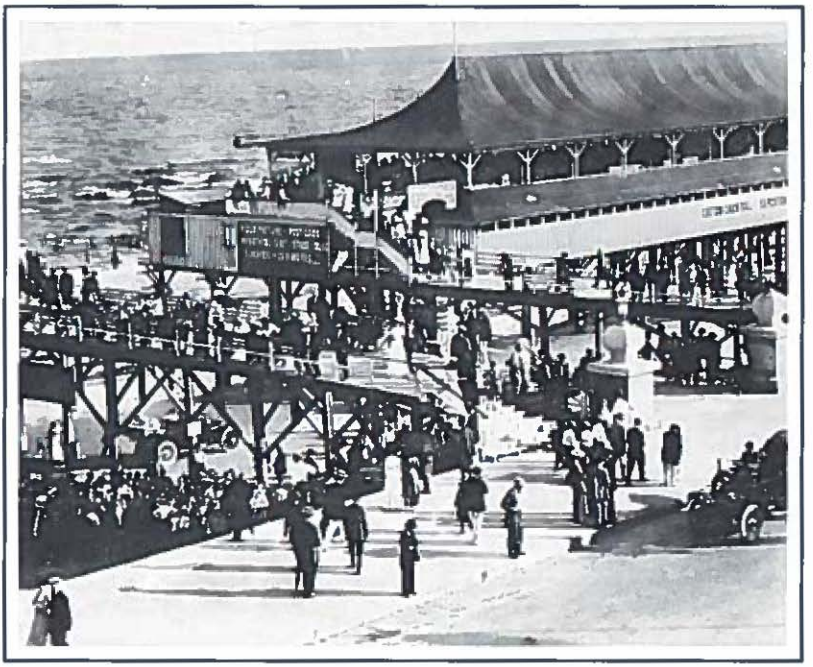

Beach Buildings, Galveston ca. 1922. Courtesy of Rosenberg Library Galveston.

"Justice is Only a Name in This City"; Tampa Confronts the Roaring Twenties

Michael H. Mundt

In 1920 after forty years of continuous population growth, Tampa stood poised to meet the challenges of a new decade. But the changes the city soon faced rocked the community's foundations. Tampa's 1920 population of 52,000 burgeoned to 119,000 in just five years.[1] While city leaders praised Tampa's boom, this dramatic demographic change brought considerable tensions to the city in the Roaring Twenties and earned the city an undesired reputation. Shortly after the close of the decade, sociologist Harrington Cooper Brearley noted that the stupendous growth of cities in the United States in the early 1920s was almost invariably accompanied by an increase in crime.[2] Tampa exemplified this trend. Property, violent, and moral crimes swelled substantially in the 1920s, confronting citizens with a crisis of law and order in their community.

In the early 1920s property crime in Tampa evolved from an occasional annoyance to a chronic plague. From pickpocketing to large heists Tampans suffered as criminals capitalized on a booming city flush with cash. Automobile thieves were perhaps the most visible. Tampans despised these crooks not only for the number of vehicles they stole, but for their astonishing audacity. Of the stolen automobiles recovered, many were being driven openly by thieves on Tampa's streets. The car thieves' choice of vehicles also surprised many. In 1925 a deputy sheriff's car was stolen from Tampa's courthouse. Between 1923 and 1925 thieves stole six vehicles belonging to Tampa's federal Prohibition agents. In 1924 a Tampa police officer's personal vehicle was stripped by thieves, and a "nervy" thief stole a police car from police headquarters, prompting the *Tampa Tribune* to announce in bold headlines: "Even Cops' Possessions Not Safe."[3]

Other criminal acts mounted. Highway robbery had plagued automobile travellers in rural Hillsborough County prior to 1920. But in the early part of the decade, this crime increased drastically on the many miles of desolate county roads, usually leaving the victim

Tampa Times, April 17, 1925.

stranded miles from Tampa. In 1923 some highwaymen moved their trade to urban areas, perpetrating a series of daring incidents in Tampa's better neighborhoods, which relieved residents of jewelry, cash, and cars. Despite two gunfights with Tampa Police Department detectives, these culprits were never apprehended.[4]

Car thefts, highway robberies, and other property crimes frequently struck the city in waves. Tampans periodically faced

"epidemics" of street muggings and city-wide "raids" and "invasions" by home burglars. As news of a crime wave spread in 1924, the *Plant City Courier* noted nonchalantly: "Tampa is staging another crime wave." But the frequency of property crime heightened Tampans' sensitivities, and residents were shocked by especially violent incidents, such as one in 1924 when thugs broke into a middle-class Tampa house, drugged its two residents, ransacked the home, and fled with money and jewelry, leaving the couples unconscious for over twenty-four hours. While such spectacular incidents were rare, Tampa's media ensured that these stories received great attention. But the local papers also recorded the prevalence of less spectacular burglaries; the *Tribune* lamented: "A number of homes are entered practically every night.... And the burglars get away with it...Tampa seems to be a free field for this variety of criminal."[5]

Despite the prevalence of property crimes, the frequency of homicide in Tampa proved more distressing. Between 1920 and 1925 the number of murders in Tampa increased by 420 percent. Even adjusted for Tampa's phenomenal population growth, this figure still indicates more than a doubling of Tampa's homicide rate. By 1925 the city's murder rate had swelled to 44.26 occurrences per 100,000 residents, a figure several times greater than the nation's urban rate.[6] Tampans' proclivity for murder plagued the city with a high incidence of mysterious disappearances, suspicious suicides, and unsolved murders, a fact which did not escape the attention of other Florida communities. In 1924 the *Arcadia News* sarcastically remarked of Tampa: "If the murder orgy...keeps up the next census will show a decrease in the population." That same year, the *Plant City Courier* noted that scarcely a week passed without mention of a new murder in Tampa, an observation which more accurately depicts the city's exploding homicide rate.[7]

While property crime threatened Tampans' possessions and violence shattered their sense of personal security, crimes which tore the community's moral fiber also increased in the 1920s. By 1923 narcotics had become a serious concern among Tampa citizens. The *Tampa Times* published an exposé revealing what most Tampans already knew: the city was plagued by morphine and cocaine dealers and addicts, or "dope fiends." Tampa police estimated that at least

five hundred addicts wandered the streets of Tampa: a "dope army" which the police blamed for half of all thefts within the city. The substantial costs of arresting and sustaining these addicts in jail fell upon the city; the state of Florida was unwilling to sponsor rehabilitation programs sufficient for them. In fact the state hospital had directed a reform-minded Hillsborough County judge to stop sending addicts for treatment, as Tampa's problem was overwhelming that facility. The drain on city coffers and city manpower prompted that judge to warn: "Something is going to have to be done and done quickly."[8]

Federal narcotics agents based in Tampa added to the alarm. In 1923 they revealed to the press that drug prices were falling as Tampa's dealers waged a "drug war," flooding the city's streets with greater amounts of narcotics to maintain profits. These agents observed that Tampa was rapidly becoming a "notorious" drug selling and smuggling center, drawing addicts from across the South. Residents feared the agents' admonitions that Tampa threatened to surpass New Orleans–the traditional "mecca for the dope fraternity"–in the narcotics trade. Federal agents continued to feed the fire by warning: "The dope fiends are flocking this way." Throughout the 1920s narcotics importation and use "remained a serious problem" in Tampa.[9]

Less destructive physically–but no less offensive to many Tampans–was gambling. Tampa and Hillsborough County were riddled with gambling houses where patrons allegedly fell into financial and moral ruin. In 1924 Tampa's police chief claimed there were over a thousand slot machines within the city limits, which constituted "a menace to the health and morals of school children, who frequently lost all their lunch money" playing the slots. Similarly, the *Times* lamented the prosperity of the city's "gambling 'industry.'" Many proprietors of gambling houses were implicated repeatedly in other crimes including larceny, fraud, and Prohibition violation, thus adding to the widespread opinion of the low character of these purveyors. Additionally, many Tampa citizens linked gambling to governmental corruption. Local law enforcement officers–from patrolmen and deputies to the chief of police and the county sheriff–were accused repeatedly of accepting payoffs and protection money from gambling dens. In the 1923 mayoral race, the media and the opposition

candidates condemned the incumbent administration for tolerating the city's deplorable gambling conditions–allegations which implied a vested interest by the mayor in the continued existence of gambling establishments.[10]

As in many other cities, the most widespread moral offense in 1920s Tampa was the distribution and manufacture of alcoholic beverages in violation of federal and state Prohibition laws. The buying, selling, smuggling, distilling, and brewing of alcoholic beverages were all highly visible in Tampa and surrounding counties, as many residents "made a mockery of prohibition laws." Boats laden with liquor from Cuba and the British West Indies entered Tampa Bay and the many secluded inlets and coves along Florida's west coast. Hundreds of moonshine stills dotted the swampy backwoods areas around Tampa, and many citizens of rural Pasco and Hernando Counties (to the north of Tampa) made a comfortable living by quenching Tampans' thirst. But large stills also operated in the heart of the city under the nose of enforcement officials, and speakeasies and "soft-drink stands" lined the streets of Tampa's Latin enclaves and many parts of downtown. In 1923 one resident determined that 142 places within the city limits sold alcohol "more or less openly," and a survey of the local media correspondingly suggests that Prohibition-era Tampa indeed was swimming in liquor.[11] The Tampa Police Department, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, and federal Prohibition agents made frequent arrests, but to little avail as low court fines and short jail sentences allowed repeat liquor offenders to ply their profitable trade with only minor interruptions. Many of the violators' names appeared habitually on county and city court dockets, which the local newspapers printed so all Tampans could observe the ineffectiveness of the community's Prohibition efforts; their city became known as one of the wettest in America.[12]

In this atmosphere of criminality, Tampa citizens turned to law enforcement officials to subdue vice and violence. But the city's rapid population increase had left Tampa's law enforcers woefully unprepared for the law and order crisis of the 1920s. For much of the decade the city's police force remained understaffed and underfunded. As late as 1924 Tampa's chief of police lamented that only nine policemen patrolled the entire city on any given shift.[13] Not until well into the decade did the community sufficiently increase

expenditures to provide law enforcement commensurate with the increase in Tampa's population.

This shortcoming allowed the criminality and violence raging in Tampa to engulf the city's law officers. The theft of police vehicles proved a repeated embarrassment, and more than once, police headquarters was burglarized by those seeking to destroy evidence in Prohibition cases. Law officers frequently faced assaults and gunfire when making arrests. One Tampa officer was killed while arresting a disorderly lush; the city's chief of detectives received a severe gunshot wound after a shootout with bank robbers; another officer was shot during a cigarworkers' strike; a city detective survived a drive-by shooting which the media labeled an assassination attempt. Within the period of one year, an unfortunate city officer fell victim to a mob, was stabbed, knocked unconscious in a pool hall brawl, and survived a blast from a shotgun. Clearly, Tampa's law officers found themselves in the tumultuous center of the city's ongoing crisis.[14]

The illicit liquor trade sparked a high level of violence around Tampa. In 1922 two federal Prohibition agents for Tampa's district were killed by moonshiners who laid in ambush on a lonely road. The incident shocked many, and two thousand Tampans attended the funeral of one of the slain agents who had family in the city. The state director of the Anti-Saloon League declared that the two agents were the first killed in Florida's ongoing "whisky rebellion." Three years later a moonshiner wounded another Tampa Prohibition officer in a shootout near neighboring Plant City.[15]

This "whisky rebellion" also flared on the streets of Tampa as liquor purveyors assaulted police officers attempting to apprehend suspects. In one incident a Tampa undercover officer monitoring a business for liquor violations was attacked with a hail of fists and gunfire by the proprietors and employees of the establishment. Similarly, when a county deputy raided a cafe, Sunday-morning drinkers threw wine bottles, and the establishment's proprietors assaulted him. In another case a Prohibition violator literally held up a police officer at gun point, demanding that the officer return the liquor he had just seized from that proprietor's establishment. When four officers returned to arrest this assailant, he held a gun to the officers while his wife destroyed evidence. Two years later an

undercover officer who had been "instrumental" in convicting several gambling operators and liquor dealers was shot five times and his body dumped in the Hillsborough River. Gun battles repeatedly broke out between bootleggers and police officers; these skirmishes wounded several Tampa officers, and a few lost their lives in the line of duty as Tampa's liquor war raged. One area resident recalled the fate of those who challenged the bootleggers' trade: "My God they would do away with you."[16] Such violence demonstrated the liquor dealers' resolve, but also annoyed and offended many law-abiding Tampans.

Amid Tampa's thievery, wandering drug addicts, seedy gambling dens, free-flowing liquor, and rampant violence, three well-known personalities–a liquor dealer, a criminal attorney, and the unlikely mastermind of a massive heist–concisely illustrate the magnitude of the law and order crisis Tampans faced. Cafe owner Leo L. Isaac serves as a prototype of the city's liquor distributors. In his mid-forties and a father of three, Isaac worked as a clerk after his arrival in Tampa around 1919. Two years later he opened the Nebraska Cafe at a prominent intersection. In 1922 he changed the cafe's name to the more suggestive Isaac's Nest, an establishment that quickly gained great notoriety in Tampa. From his place of business Isaac sold alcohol and ran a liquor distribution service. So profitable was Isaac's establishment that in just two years of operation the former clerk was wealthy enough to own a home near the bay in posh Hyde Park. Considered an impure dive by many Tampans, Isaac's Nest was frequented not only by drinkers but by some of the city's least reputable and most infamous citizens. In 1922 a teenage girl–loaded with illicit liquor–committed suicide in one of the back rooms of Isaac's Nest after sharing the company of a notorious criminal.[17] This well-publicized incident confirmed many Tampans' suspicions of the fundamental immorality of liquor joints and the danger such operations posed to the moral health of the community.

Leo Isaac was arrested repeatedly and tried for liquor offenses although he generally escaped punishment through the shrewd actions of his attorney. Thus, like most liquor dealers, Isaac found it only mildly dangerous and highly lucrative to disregard community laws. Continued success flaunting the law increased Isaac's impudence. In 1923 he rudely introduced two investigating police officers to his bodyguards and threatened to notify his attorney of this violation of

his rights. Isaac's hiring of gunmen lent him the appearance of a small-time gangster.[18] His brazenness typified the exploits of many local liquor dealers and illustrated the city's inability to curb extensive Prohibition violation.

But Isaac's illegality was facilitated by defense attorney Pat Whitaker. Whitaker had built a successful Tampa law practice largely by defending liquor and narcotics violators. Whitaker repeatedly had charges against Leo Isaac dropped, had his convictions overturned, and had his fines and jail sentences reduced. Perhaps no attorney in Tampa understood the law's intricacies so well as Pat Whitaker. Keen and flamboyant, Whitaker's histrionics irritated prosecutors; his challenges to judicial objectivity and his motions for change of venue annoyed municipal judges, and his courtroom machinations earned him the audible wrath of many Tampa citizens. But these legal maneuvers secured dismissals and overturned convictions for his often unsavory clients. Whitaker's actions on his clients' behalf became notorious. In 1923 when the county sheriff's actions threatened Whitaker's legal tactics, he attempted to have the sheriff removed from office for neglect of duty. Two years later Whitaker secured a dismissal of charges against a client by successfully challenging a city-wide annexation election, thus removing his client from both the city limits and the jurisdiction of the city police.[19]

In the 1920s the "noble experiment" flooded America's courts with Prohibition violators, although the trade in illicit liquor was not suppressed. Many Americans held maneuvering attorneys responsible for the courts' ineffectiveness and derth of convictions. In Tampa Pat Whitaker symbolized the shrewd attorney who manipulated the law and abused the judicial system for the benefit of the guilty. Whitaker's publicized audacity reaffirmed many Tampans' notion that the courts were becoming favorable to the obviously guilty whose behavior threatened community law and order.

But a single incident may have done more than the combination of the city's skyrocketing crime rate and the actions of men like Leo Isaac and Pat Whitaker to undermine Tampans' confidence in the justice system and to make citizens realize the extent of the law and order crisis facing their community. In April 1924 two armed men robbed Alonzo C. Clewis, president of the Bank of West Tampa, of $24,000 as he made a transfer to the Exchange National Bank.

When the Tampa police prematurely suspended their investigation, an attorney for the Exchange National Bank hired private detectives to investigate the heist. Four months later these detectives discovered the principal of the crime and supplied his name to the Tampa police. Upon his arrest the principal confessed and implicated four others as part of a conspiracy to rob Clewis. One of the implicated was a local private detective and former Hillsborough County deputy sheriff. Another was the former fingerprint specialist for the Tampa Police Department. Yet another was a former police undercover man. Investigators soon revealed an unlikely mastermind of the operation: Edith M. Conway. A widow, Conway had lived in Tampa only two years. She had served as a Tampa police officer and secretary to the chief of police, maintaining ties to many of the area's former and contemporary law enforcers. But a family connection proved more beneficial to her criminal plot. Her son was an accountant for one of the banks involved, and he had passed the information to his mother which resulted in Clewis' robbery. Conway confessed after police revealed the strength of their evidence against her, which included the testimony of the two holdup men and the discovery of part of the loot underneath her house. But she soon hired an attorney, recanted her confession, and asserted her innocence. In August a special grand jury was impanelled to investigate the crime. They indicted Conway and five others for varying offenses, and revealed to the press an "astounding" conspiracy including the indictment of former Chief of Police Frank M. Williams. The involvement of the chief (a married family man) in the crime arose from an apparent romantic tryst with Edith Conway.[20]

The court proceedings dragged on for two months. Two of the six defendants pled guilty, two were convicted; all four were sentenced to prison. However, the much-publicized trial of Conway resulted in an acquittal despite her previous confession and strong evidence against her. As Conway's verdict was announced, Williams (whose trial had been severed from that of Conway) pushed his way through the overcrowded courtroom to embrace and kiss Conway, lending credence to the increasingly common rumors regarding his and Conway's relationship. Four days later, the assistant county prosecutor asked the presiding judge to terminate the case against Williams, because the evidence against him and Conway was closely

interwoven and the prosecutor's office did "not care to enter into a further farcical procedure." However, the prosecutor's office–realizing the political ramifications of the case–was not ready to concede defeat on the Conway matter. Within one hour of this action, the prosecutor charged Conway with receiving stolen property and issued a warrant for her arrest, in an attempt to thwart Conway's plans to leave the city. But Conway was released quickly as a judge granted her attorney's plea of prior jeopardy. Adding insult to injury, less than a week after this prior jeopardy plea, Conway attempted to retrieve her share of the Clewis loot (only a small portion of the funds from the robbery was ever recovered). She turned to the circuit court seeking an order mandating that Hillsborough County return to her the recovered money which it still held as evidence.[21]

The brazenness of the Clewis crime, the involvement of several former members of the area's law enforcement agencies, and the lack of punishment for the principal player angered crime-weary Tampans. One resident proclaimed that "laws, courts and juries mean absolutely nothing to the people of Hillsborough county." Another citizen heaped "discredit and disgrace" on the jurors and suggested that the defense attorneys were accessories "after the fact." The *Times* lamented the "court house fiasco," and the *Tribune* proclaimed: "Justice is only a name in this county–a discredited impotent thing, which, with the aid of influential friends, smooth-tongued lawyers, and a jury deaf to law and evidence, any criminal may laugh and scorn!" The editor continued: "A person who pleads guilty to a crime even though caught red-handed in its commission, when he has a chance to put his case before a Hillsborough County jury, is a fool." The *Tribune* also suggested that the money recovered from the Clewis robbery–part of which was now claimed by Edith Conway–should be used to fund "a home for feeble-minded jurors."[22]

For many Tampans this entire six-month-long incident symbolized the magnitude of the problems confronting their city. The Clewis case heightened residents' frustrations with the excessive crime in their community, the lack of justice for the guilty, the grotesque ineptitude of juries, the motives of defense attorneys, and the questionable ability and integrity of Tampa's law enforcers, who so readily engaged in criminal activity themselves.

The Clewis case also brought Tampa unwanted publicity from other papers across the state. The *Sarasota Times* noted that "in Tampa one can confess to handling and receiving $24,000 of stolen money taken at a point of a gun, and be acquitted with acclaim." The *Palmetto News* observed: "The worse a criminal is in that county [Hillsborough], the more liable he is to be turned loose when caught." The *Plant City Courier* sarcastically remarked that Edith Conway must have been "tried by a jury of her peers." The *Bradentown Herald* refused to be surprised by the Conway decision, insisting that such verdicts were typical in Hillsborough County. A Manatee resident recommended community ostracism of the jurors, while a Clearwater citizen suggested the abolition of the jury system in favor of a judge; if this judge's verdict was fallible, the citizen warned, vigilantes should dutifully mete out justice.[23]

The concerns Florida residents expressed regarding Tampa's Clewis case reflect the significance of the law and order issue throughout the state. The *Plant City Courier* asserted that criminality had assumed "formidable proportions" and claimed Florida was "not protecting the lives of its citizens." The *Bradentown Herald* wrote of a "wave of crime" in the state. The *Florida Advocate* noted: "It is a self-evident fact that something is wrong in dealing with law breakers, and that our courts are becoming a game of chance, rather than courts of justice," a situation which "encouraged crime." The *Plant City Courier* opined that never in Florida "has crime been more prevalent, or life and property less secure, than it is today.... [Crime threatens to] penetrate every part of our national life, poisoning...our whole system of civilization." Governor Cary A. Hardee condemned the ease with which men "commit criminal acts and escape consequences of their criminality....The enforcement of law, of all the laws, is the great question before us at this time."[24]

Tampa's crisis of law and order served as a poignant reminder to Floridians of the extent of the judicial system's decay in their state. When writing of Tampa, the state's newspapers repeatedly referred to "crime waves" and "murder orgies." In 1924 the *Plant City Courier* noted that one need spend but a day in Tampa to realize the severity of the problem. Several months later the *Palmetto News* sarcastically observed: "Hillsborough County is planning to build a bigger and better court house. What for? Why not sell the

one you've got and quit business?"[25] Clearly, Tampa had become notorious in Florida for its lawlessness and "court house fiascos." Tampa's notoriety put the city's reputation as a business and tourist mecca in jeopardy, but for those who had to live and work in Tampa, the conditions had greater relevance. In 1923 the *Tampa Times* admonished that it was "high time that decent, fair-minded people of Tampa give attention to these conditions."[26] But this editorial lagged behind public sentiment. By the early 1920s, the magnitude of Tampa's problems had fueled a growing lack of faith in traditional judicial processes and generated political and social turmoil as citizens blamed community leaders for the deterioration of Tampa's law, order, and morality. Throughout the Roaring Twenties, Tampans would explore a variety of social and political options–both legal and extralegal–to address this crisis of law and order.

Notes

[1]*Tampa Tribune*, July 23, 1921; *Tampa Times*, December 31, 1923; January 16, 1925; April 27, 1925. Hereafter cited as *Tribune* and *Times*.

[2]Harrington Cooper Brearley, *Homicide in the United States* (Montclair, NJ, 1969), 149.

[3]*Times*, May 25, 1925; November 23, 1925; November 24, 1924; *Tribune*, May 13, 1924 .

[4]*Times*, June 26, 1923,.

[5]*Tribune*, May 13, 1924; February 19, 1924; reprinted in *Tribune*, August 28, 1924.

[6]*Times*, May 24, 1923; Brearley, *Homicide*, 19, 149-50.

[7]Reprinted in *Tribune*, April 22, 1924; *Tribune*, September 20, 1924.

[8]*Times*, October 31, 1923; August 27, 1923.

[9]Ibid., August 24, 25, 1923; Frank Alduino, "The Smugglers' Blues: Drug and Alien Traffic in Tampa During the 1920's," *Tampa Bay History* 13 (Fall/Winter 1991): 27-39.

[10]*Tribune*, May 6, 1924; October 5, 1947; *Times*, July 31, 1922; September 11, 1923.

[11]Frank Alduino, "Prohibition in Tampa," *Tampa Bay History* 9 (Spring/Summer 1987): 20; Richard Cofer, "Bootleggers in the Backwoods: Prohibition and the Depression in Hernando County," *Tampa Bay History* 1 (Spring/Summer 1979): 17-23; *Times*, February 14, 1923; October 1, 1923.

[12]Alduino, "Prohibition," 20.

[13]*Tribune*, April 24, 1924.

[14]Ibid., June 27, 1924; June 14, 1924; June 13, 1924; *Times*, June 26, 1925; July 2, 1925; March 25, 1924; June 27, 1925; June 26, 1924; May 4, 1926.

[15]*Times*, October 5-7, 1922; December 18, 1922; March 27, 1925.

[16]*Tribune*, March 7, 1924; March 24, 25, 1924; March 26, 1926; *Times*, August 17, 1925; Cofer, "Bootleggers," 22.

[17]*Tampa City Directory*, 1920-22; Florida Genealogical Society, *Hillsborough County, Florida Cemetaries, 1840-1985* (Tampa, 1990), 6: 297; *Times*, December 11, 1923; April 6, 1922; *Tribune*, January 16, 1924.

[18]*Tribune*, October 21, 1923; *Times*, December 11, 1923; January 12, 1923.

[19]*Times*, August 26, 1922; January 30, 1923; May 24, 1923; January 13, 1925; January 15, 1925; May 19, 1923; *Tribune*, October 22, 1926.

[20]*Tribune*, July 20, 24, 25, 31, 1924; August 12, 13, 1924; *Tampa City Directory*, 1922, 1924.

[21]*Tribune*, August 28, 31, 1924; September 3, 9, 11, 1924; October 1, 4, 7, 1924.

[22]*Tribune*, September 1, 3, 5, 6, 1924; *Times*, March 18, 1925.

[23]Reprinted in *Tribune*, September 14, 1924; *Tribune*, September 3, 4, 6, 10, 1924.

[24]Reprinted in *Tribune*, August 30, 1924; reprinted in *Times*, October 24, 1923; *Times*, March 5, 1923; reprinted in *Tribune*, September 20, 1924; *Tribune*, November 30, 1923.

[25]Reprinted in *Tribune*, September 20, 24, 1924.

[26]*Times*, September 11, 1923.

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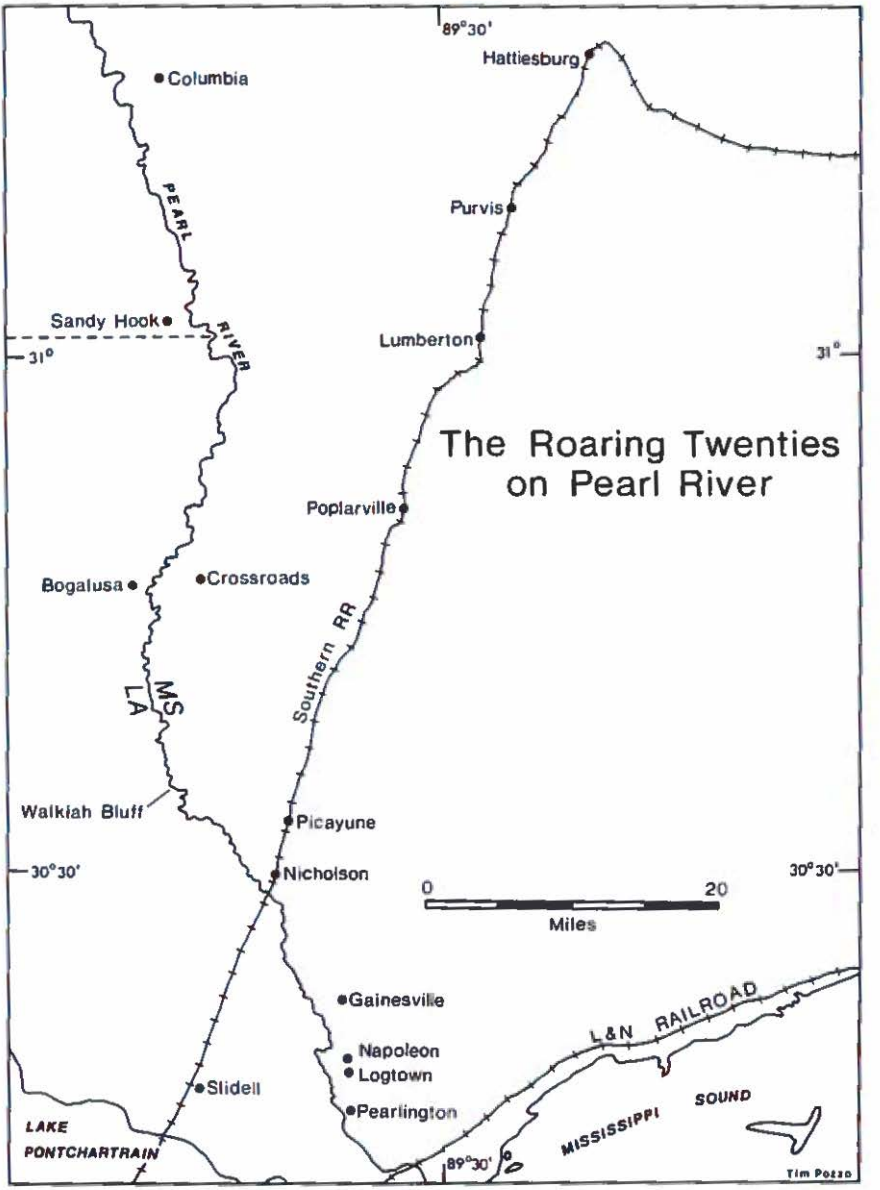

The Roaring Twenties
on Pearl River
89°30'
Hattiesburg
Columbia
PEARL RIVER
Purvis
Sandy Hook
31°
Lumberton
31°
Poplarville
Bogalusa
Crossroads
Southern RR
MS
LA
Walkiah Bluff
Picayune
30°30'
Nicholson
30°30'
0
20
Miles
Gainesville
L&N RAILROAD
Napoleon
Logtown
Slidell
Pearlington
LAKE
PONTCHARTRAIN
MISSISSIPPI SOUND
89°30'
Tim Pozzo

The Roaring Twenties on Pearl River: Poverty, Populism, and Prohibition

Lt. Col. John Hawkins Napier III

Elsewhere in America they may have been the Roaring Twenties, but the lower Pearl River piney woods of south Mississippi and Louisiana were not exactly Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald country. The Great Gatsby was not to be seen. There the decade was characterized by poverty, populism, and "prohibitionism." At the very start, in January 1920, three events underlined this: the announcement that half of the region's virgin yellow pine timberland had already been cut over; Mississippi Governor Theodore G. Bilbo ended his first progressive term of office; and the Volstead Act became effective, carrying out the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that mandated the prohibition of liquor.

By then the southeastern gulf coastal plain was almost entirely dependent on the timber industry. After a brief boom during World War I, it was about to pay the piper. The distribution of wealth was terribly unequal and most of it in absentee northern hands. As a result, the progressivism of President Woodrow Wilson was, in the piney woods, about to return to the protests of populism of the 1890s. Modernism in all its forms after World War I was anathema to the fundamentalist Deep South, which fought it bitterly, a reaction this author calls "prohibitionism." It went far beyond outlawing beverage alcohol. This was indeed a far cry from the hedonism of the flapper age and its exemplars, Scott and Zelda.

Here one must look at the national picture as a backdrop. America had turned its back on the idealism and internationalism it had shown in "making the world safe for democracy" in "the war to end all wars." Instead, Americans sought a return to "normalcy," to use that malapropism of the sage of the age, Warren Gamaliel Harding. His successor as president, Calvin Coolidge, would announce that "the business of the United States is business." As historians Morrison and Commager subsequently noted:

> The Republican party was in almost undisputed control of national affairs and regarded itself as an instrument for the

> advancement of business. There was a florid but badly distributed industrial prosperity accompanied by agricultural distress and succeeded by acute and prolonged depression.[1]

An industrializing New South tried hard and eagerly to share in the general business bonanza. Since 1880 southern industry had slowly and painfully increased its share of the national product, especially in developing electrical energy, in textile output (at the expense of New England), in the revolution in cigarette smoking that the war had brought on, and in Coca-Cola, first a southern and later a national institution.

However, "except for food processing, which was largely for the local market, lumbering was the most ubiquitous of Southern industries." It was also massively exploitative. By 1921 about a hundred million acres "had been devastated in the coastal plain from South Carolina to Texas–equal to half the total state of Texas" and the entire cutover lands in the South amounted to 156 million acres.[2] Lumber was Mississippi's greatest resource, after the land itself. But more than half of the state's virgin forests were only a memory by 1920, cut down in a few years mostly by outside corporations.[3]

By 1921 half the population of the Lower Pearl River piney woods was employed in the timber industry and another 15 percent working in turpentine. Wages were from $1.50 to $2.50 a day and the work was dangerous. There was one month in the woods when two men were killed and forty injured.

Those who did not work in timber or on the railroads which carried it to market were mostly subsistence farmers, many of whom tried to scratch out a small cash crop from stunted cotton fields on poor soil. After a brief wartime boom, American farmers everywhere found themselves mired in the worst agricultural depression since the 1890s. At the same time, the general business boom roared ahead and Rotarians expounded upon progress and efficiency.

The poorest farmers were in the South and the poorest of them were in Mississippi, white and black. They were ground down and could barely keep body and soul together. By the end of the twenties agricultural depression would spread to the rest of the economy, so that by 1930 total United States debt may have been as much as $150 billion, one-third of the national wealth.

Mississippi, the richest state per capita in the Old Union in 1860, had long been the poorest. By 1930 it and the rest of the South lagged far behind the rest of the United States economically and socially. Southern wages were 30 percent and more below the national average, while per capita income was 53 percent of that elsewhere in the country. Half of southern workers were still in agriculture, most tilling small, inefficient, worn-out farms. All of this was before the Great Depression.[4]

In the twenties profits in the timber industry lagged behind those in other fields of the economy because of overproduction, which hastened the demise of the virgin forests. One reason that the timber was cut without regard to market demand was due to the property tax burden local governments levied on timbered lands.[5] For example, the Pearl River County Board of Supervisors raised the valuation of Michigander John W. Blodgett's vast holdings from $808,000 to $1.33 million, increasing his annual county land tax by nearly $16,000. The board also refused to reclassify some of Chicagoan Edward Hines's property as cutover lands, so he quickly clearcut them to reduce his taxes. This killed the golden goose because leaving a few trees, even one per acre, would have reseeded the tracts in time. The county's greed thus "contributed to complete destruction of the forests," and sped the depression in the piney woods.[6]

In the long run technological change would do more to end the traditional agrarian way of life than economic booms and busts. In the twenties the principal ones would be in the forms of the automobile, the cinema, newspapers, and electrification. These ensured the rapid spread of urbanization throughout America, including the South. Some would add the radio, but in the Lower Pearl River piney woods, its effect came in the next decade. For example, a Picayune physician's family did not buy their first radio and start listening to WWL in New Orleans until about 1930. The airplane remained an exotic novelty, although Paul Rowlands of Picayune owned one some time before 1932.[7] Television was only a laboratory experiment and the only computers were adding machines and slide rules!

The motor vehicle demanded better roads, gave easier access to the city (in our case, New Orleans), and contributed to the demise of smaller villages and hamlets. This trend had begun with the coming

of the railroads a half-century earlier. New towns sprang up along the railroad which killed the older river towns up and down Pearl River. Water traffic on Pearl River had already ceased by the twenties, the United States Army Corps of Engineers having ended its navigation improvement project in 1922.[8] The coming of rural free delivery or RFD by the United States Post Office also wiped out many postal hamlets.

Between 1870 and 1920 Mississippi lost at least fifty-four populated places and would lose another sixty-three between 1920 and 1950. Fifteen were in Lower Pearl River's piney woods, including the three counties of Hancock, Marion, and Pearl River. They were Cybur, Fenton, Gainesville, Goodyear, Hillsdale, Ladner, Logtown, McLure, Millard, Napoleon, New Camp, Orvisburg, Ozone City, Sellers, and Westonia. Of these, twelve had sprung up along the railroads to exploit the virgin pine forests and shut down when the woods were clear-cut.

The coming of RFD resulted in a decline in Mississippi post offices from 1,048 in 1905 to 1,020 in 1920 and finally to 766 in 1940.[9] From the 1880s to 1930 there had been seventy-two post offices in the tri-county area. By the end of that time, fifty-nine had been discontinued and only thirteen remained.[10] The disappearance of so many villages and hamlets made the automobile, originally a luxury, a necessity. In rural Mississippi the Tin Lizzie appeared everywhere, speeding the growth of some towns and hastening the decline of smaller places. In our own time we have seen another phase of this with the advent of the interstate highway system that began in the late fifties. By 1921 there were 401 motor vehicles in Pearl River County after the first one was seen in about 1912.[11]

Underlying the technological changes was electrification. As one might expect, in the piney woods it began in the timber mills and railroad shops. For instance, E. F. Tate installed an electric generator in his Rosa Lumber Mill in Picayune some time after 1904 and it became the village's electric plant. In the twenties the Mississippi Power Company took over the town's system and a "White Way" of street lights was installed on Goodyear Boulevard in 1927.[12]

Without electricity there would have been no cinema, which brought depictions of big city, high society high jinks, not to mention sex, to the hinterlands. It is hard to overestimate the effect of the

movies on the country especially after the first "talkies" in 1927. There was a primitive movie theater in Poplarville as early as 1910 or 1911, one in Picayune in 1918, and so it went in other small towns of the region. In the thirties this author can remember an uncle who was the proud projectionist at the Fornea Theater.

In the towns that survived, there was often a weekly newspaper, especially in the county seats where one was necessary to carry legal notices. Newspapers were not rare in the area, the first one of record being in Gainesville on the Pearl in 1845, but they gained importance in the twenties. They were another vehicle of urbanization, since most relied on "canned" news, features, and editorials that originated in a few large cities. Also the early morning train from New Orleans brought *The Times-Picayune*. E. F. Tate founded *The Item* (Picayune) in 1904 and in 1911 there was *The News* (Poplarville).[13]

One southern historian has called the resurgence of populism in Dixie in the Roaring Twenties "the metamorphosis of Progressivism." In his January 1920 farewell address to the Mississippi Legislature, outgoing Governor Theodore G. Bilbo, a Pearl River countian, outlined a program of outstanding progressive accomplishments of his administration (which would be his first of two). According to one historian it had been "one of the most progressive and humanitarian programs which the state had ever known."[14] Previously, rich Delta counties were under-assessed and hence under-taxed. Bilbo pushed through a tax equalization bill and began a state tax commission. He established a pardons board, a tuberculosis sanitarium, and a reformatory for whites. He abolished public hangings, pushed through the initiative and referendum, organized a state highway commission, ratified the Eighteenth (Prohibition) Amendment to the United States Constitution, and signed legislation to eradicate the cattle tick.[15] The last item had proved to be a political liability among some of his strongest supporters. All this stood in great contrast to Bilbo's earlier corrupt populism and later racist demagoguery.

Theodore Gilmore Hutto Bilbo, "The Man," as he liked to call himself, was born October 13, 1877, at Juniper Grove, six miles southeast of Poplarville. He was the youngest of nine children of a yeoman farmer who later would become president of the Bank of Poplarville. There is much cloudiness and controversy about his early years. He attended school at Poplarville, became a lay Baptist

preacher (he said, "When it comes to being a Baptist, I'm as strong as horseradish"), taught school, went off to college, was elected to the Mississippi Senate in 1907, was admitted to the bar, and for a short time practiced law in Poplarville with my grandfather John Hawkins Napier.[16]

While governor, Bilbo also ran for the United States Congress in 1917, but lost for several reasons, one of which was his signing of the cattle-dipping bill. It was a farsighted measure which eventually would restore the cattle industry to Mississippi. However, farmers, especially in his own south Mississippi, were violently opposed to driving their herds to vats and dipping them in an arsenic solution. As one said, "I'm for Bilbo but I'm agin dippin'." There was violence, mainly in dynamiting vats. Bilbo declared, "I was crucified on a cross of ticks!"[17]

Out of office for the first time in ten years, he returned to practice law and to farm the several hundred acres (later three thousand) he had inherited or bought. He considered running for the U.S. Senate in 1922, but was implicated in a scandal involving his successor as governor, Lee M. Russell, and instead backed his old ally, former Governor and Senator James K. Vardaman who was defeated. In 1923 Bilbo lost a second race for governor, but won on his third try in 1927 and embarked on his second term. Racked by controversy, it stands in sorry contrast to the record of his first.

Without success he again tried to have the University of Mississippi removed from Oxford to Jackson, enraging Ole Miss' influential alumni. He did get control of the state board of higher education and embarked on a purge of the administrations and faculties of Ole Miss and the four white state colleges. In one case he and his cronies considered replacing the head of the university's Greek department. The governor asked his cohorts, "Is there anyone in my gang who can teach Greek?" There was silence and the department head retained his job. He also wanted to fire a brilliant, individualistic chemistry professor. When asked how he managed to stay on, "Dr. Foglesong" replied, "Hell, they couldn't spell my name."[18] The state institutions all lost accreditation, and as a result Ole Miss never got a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa.

One story has to do with Mississippi's first paved highway, from Tupelo to Corinth. Because of lack of funds, it was only one-lane.

Bilbo answered criticism, thus: "Hell, I gave them two choices, either pave it two lanes half-way or one-lane all the way."[19] He built his twenty-three-room dream house, a mansion at Juniper Grove, for an estimated $75,000 on an annual salary of $7,500. This was the man who once wanted to sell the historic governor's mansion in Jackson as an aristocratic extravagance unworthy of a simple republican state! His second term left a barren record as the state was broke and rumors of his womanizing continued to follow him. Despite such a record and his shenanigans, he was widely popular in his Pearl River Piney woods and few there dared speak out openly against him.[20]

For awhile, Bilbo and his neighboring demagogue, Huey Pierce Long of Louisiana, were friendly, but "the Bilbonic Plague" and "the Napoleon of the Bayous" fell out. Later, as United States senators they got into fisticuffs on Capitol Hill. "The Stormy Petrel of Mississippi Politics" literally personified south Mississippi populism in the Roaring Twenties. The oppressive old-line planter-business conservatives, heirs of the Bourbon Redeemers, regained control of Mississippi politics. Generally, "blacks found themselves crushed between the upper and nether millstones of white class politics, exploited on the one hand and resented on the other."[21]

During the Roaring Twenties, a man considered to be a business progressive for his day was more influential in Lower Pearl River's piney woods than Bilbo. It was a time when the economy overshadowed the politics which reflected it. Eight years older than the bantam politico, he was Lucius Olen Crosby, born in 1869 near Bogue Chitto, Mississippi, son of a confederate veteran and yeoman farmer. At twenty-three he became a sawyer in Louisiana's Tangipahoa Parish, returned home to farm for several years, and resumed the lumber business in 1905 in which he prospered. In 1916 he came to Picayune.

Previously, banker E. F. Tate had sold his interest in the Rosa Lumber Company to partner R. J. Williams. The mill burned but was rebuilt and Crosby joined forces with Michigan-born Lamont Rowlands to buy it. They formed the Goodyear Yellow Pine Company and bought 42,000 acres of land in Pearl River County from John W. Blodgett of Grand Rapids, Michigan. This set the stage for their large-scale lumbering operation, which began just in time to profit from the World War I lumbering boom. Previously the Gulf

Coast lumber trade had been primarily an export one, but the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 cut off the markets in Europe. There was a slump, but when the United States entered the war there arose a huge domestic demand for timber for wooden ships and for army cantonments, two-thirds of which were in the South.

By 1920 the Goodyear Yellow Pine Company faced a seemingly bright future, with contracts with the Ford Motor Company, International Harvester, the Illinois Central Railroad, American Car and Foundry, and the Pullman Company. In 1921 Crosby led in forming the Mississippi Development Board and two years later he became president of the state chamber of commerce. The two agencies merged and he continued as head until 1930. During the great Mississippi flood of 1927 Governor Dennis Murphree picked the now "Colonel" Crosby to head the state's relief effort. In this he worked with United States Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who said: "That fellow Crosby is beyond my understanding. He works longer, thinks of more things to do, and gets more things done than any man I have ever met. And in the end he swears he has done nothing but talk somebody else into working."[22]

However, by the end of the decade the virgin yellow pine forests had disappeared into the insatiable maws of the sawmills. As one worker recalled: "The work just about stopped completely."[23] At the same time farmers who were still trying to grow cotton on the poor piney woods soil saw their market collapse. In April 1920 wartime inflation had boosted the price of cotton to 41.75 cents a pound, but it slid to 13.5 by December. By 1927 it had recovered to 20.19 cents, but by 1930 it had dropped to 9.46.[24]

Nearly everyone was in sore distress. Unlike most other big timber operators who had cut and run to the Pacific Northwest (where some of the same companies today are still cutting out virgin timber), Crosby stayed and fought it out. He tried to find alternative jobs for his workers, provided their families with relief, and he and Rowlands searched for other uses for their cut-over land. However, that story belongs to the following decade.

Before the bubble burst some piney woods citizens enjoyed the results of wartime prosperity at the start of the twenties. Singling out Pearl River County, property assessment peaked at $19 million in 1920, but would fall to $6 million in 1934. As a result Pearl River

countians got some of the best roads and schools in Mississippi. A county road bond issue in 1919 lifted Pearl River out of the mud with more than five hundred miles of good graded and gravelled roads. Mississippi joined the Federal Highway Program and what became U.S. highways 11 and 90 gave residents reliable automobile access to "the City" (New Orleans), the Gulf Coast, Hattiesburg, and points north. Paving would come later. This author can remember as a child in 1932 that these highways were still gravelled. A state one-cent per gallon gasoline tax was apportioned forty percent to the state and sixty percent to the counties. "Enactment of the gasoline-tax law was perhaps the longest step toward revolutionizing society and economy that Mississippi took in its first century of existence."[25] Building U.S. Highway 11 through Honey Island Swamp was a considerable challenge with its earthen causeway and numerous bridges, including two large ones over East and West Pearl rivers. Over the former bridge, heading north, the Louisiana governor had erected a banner that proclaimed "Goodbye, Huey."[26]

Mississippi's shortcomings in public education in the early twentieth century were many and beyond the abilities of either the state or local governments to meet. There were particular needs felt by an agrarian society which were over and beyond the burden of a dual segregated public school system. Consolidation of the old one-room, one-teacher schools, establishment of separate municipal school districts and agricultural high schools were authorized by a 1908 Mississippi statute and all were necessary. The first of fifty agricultural high schools was Pearl River County's which opened in 1909 at Poplarville, succeeding Professor W. I. Thames's Poplarville High. It graduated its first class in 1913. In 1906 Picayune had organized a separate municipal school district.[27]

The first consolidated school in Mississippi opened in 1910 at Woolmarket in the piney woods of coastal Harrison County.[28] The first in Pearl River County was in the appropriately named Progress Community in 1912 and others followed at Industrial (Henleyfield), Steep Hollow, and Whitesand. My father was principal at all three at different times before he was twenty-one years old. The consolidated schools paid teachers much better than had the old county schools. The superintendent at Savannah was paid $3,600 a year and his teachers $110 a month. To translate those amounts into today's

purchasing power requires multiplying by twelve or thirteen! The consolidated schools were nearly all built of brick, required transportation for pupils, and sometimes had dormitories as well as teachers' homes.

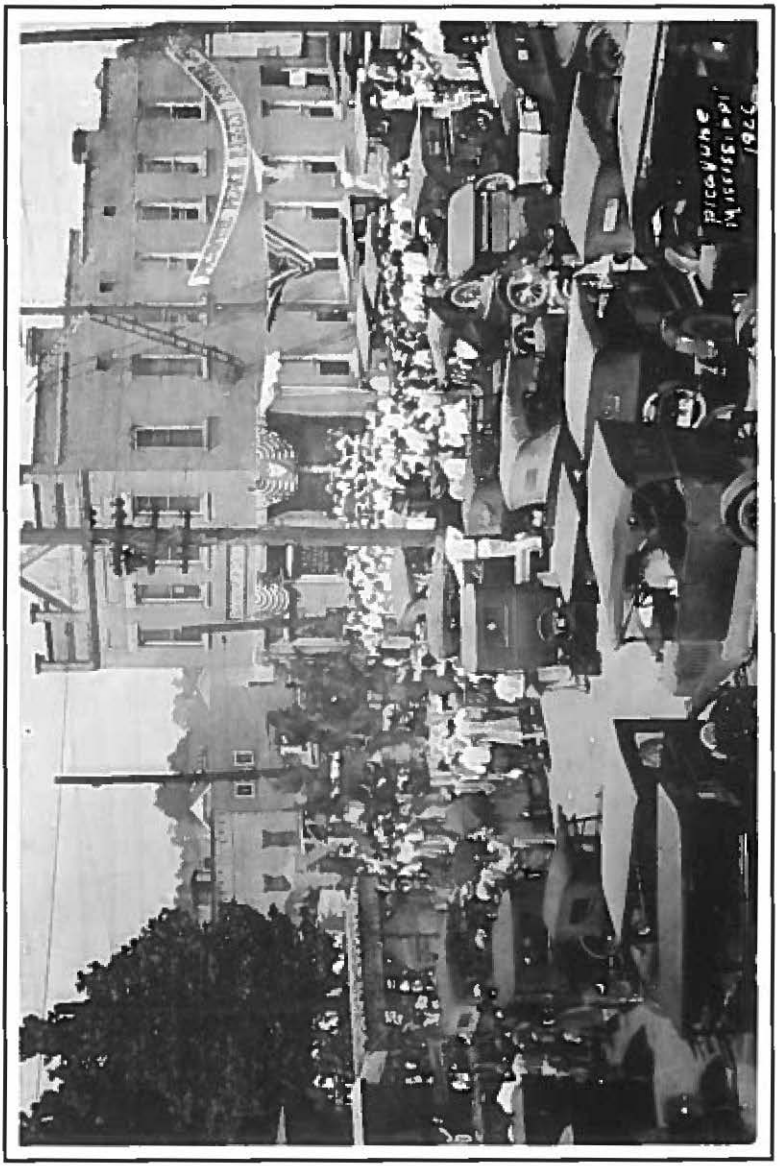
As consolidated schools emerged, the agricultural high schools began to disappear or merge with the former. However, several became junior colleges after 1928 when such institutions were first authorized. Perhaps the first was Pearl River College at Poplarville in that year.

Another issue in Mississippi's educational system was the standardization of textbooks and their free issue to pupils. Although the State Textbook Commission was organized in 1905, neither issue was resolved during the twenties. Not until 1940 would public grade school pupils get free textbooks and two years later high school students would follow.[29]

There was an obvious need for better educated and trained public school teachers. In 1910 Governor Edmund F. Noel signed a bill establishing the Mississippi Normal School. It opened in 1912 at Hattiesburg deep in the Pine Belt and is now the University of Southern Mississippi. In 1924 a second state teacher's college opened at Cleveland in the Delta, while Jackson State provided teacher training for blacks.

Because of its progress in improving public education, in 1916 Pearl River County had been singled out of Mississippi's eighty-two counties by the Rockefeller-supported General Education Board to be a model county school system for four years. It earned the name of "The Model School County."[30] The Picayune Separate Municipal School District also progressed, building a new white high school in 1923, two white elementary schools in 1927, and a new black school. Football arrived on the scene in 1922 when Picayune won its first game against Gulfport High School 6-0.

There was further local progress when Governor Lee M. Russell raised Picayune from the status of a town to that of a city in 1922 while E. F. Tate was serving his second term as mayor. In 1921 an ice plant opened; in 1923 a city hall was authorized; in 1927 street lighting and the first paved street appeared; in 1928 the YMCA opened, as did Fornea and Ideal theaters and the public library which



Picayne Peach Harvest Festival, June 17, 1926. Author's Collection.

boasted having 907 volumes. It was one of only twenty-nine in the entire state.[31] However, there would be no municipal water or sewage systems until the fifties! In the end material progress virtually halted in the twenties with the exhaustion of the forests. The H. Weston Company had already closed down in 1923, dooming three old towns on lower Pearl River–Gainesville, Logtown, and Pearlington. Hines shut his mill at Kiln in 1929. Rowlands began to grow tung trees on nine thousand acres of cutover land near McNeill in 1928. Others, including Crosby, E. F. and Monroe Tate, had begun planting peaches as early as 1921. In 1925 Picayune had its first Peach Harvest Festival. People also planted grapes, satsuma oranges, pecan trees, and vegetables in the thin acid soil of the former pine forests, while raising ducks in the groves. There was no solution to the piney woods's economic woes at the end of the twenties, however.

There was another strain to piney woods life in the twenties, an opposition to modernization, urbanization, and to so-called progress that this author has labeled "prohibitionism," although the prohibition of beverage alcohol was only one manifestation. The "P" could stand as easily for a Protestant fundamentalism under tension between principles and performance, hedonism and hellfire. As a noted historian observed:

> Another manifestation of the reform spirit in the 1920s was a series of campaigns to protect moral standards and traditional cultural values. This morality was closely identified with evangelical Protestantism, rural and small town life, agrarian reformism and the politics of William Jennings Bryan.... The result was a kind of "political fundamentalism"...[which] contained an element of popular democracy.... One element of the drive for cultural conformity was the zealous campaign to enforce prohibition.... Alarmed by the growing secularization of their society, southern fundamentalism became more involved in the support of prohibition, the anti-evolution movement and the conservative Protestant opposition to Roman Catholicism.[32]

One might add that another manifestation was the growth of the second Ku Klux Klan, organized in Atlanta before World War I.

Mississippi had already enacted statewide Prohibition in 1908 and across the nation ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment was rushed

through in record time during World War I, while two million "doughboys" in France were unable to vote on the issue. Lower Pearl River's piney woods were enthusiastically for Prohibition, both because of evangelistic fundamentalism and in reaction to the excessive drinking of the previous generations of nineteenth-century pioneer settlers. Also, there was a racial component–to keep liquor from blacks.

Prohibition enforcement in Mississippi varied between bone-dry hill counties and the openly wet Delta and Gulf Coast, where the ban was generally ignored, unless there was a zealous sheriff. The Lower Pearl River country was officially dry, a policy popular among an overwhelming Baptist populace. Such folk drank grape juice at their infrequent communion services and denied Jesus's first miracle at Cana.[33] However, there were holes in enforcing dry laws. For one thing, hedonistic polyglot Louisiana lay just across Pearl River. The Gulf Coast was near, where the young William Faulkner claimed (probably falsely) to have brought Cuban alcohol ashore from Deer Island off Biloxi.[34]

Besides, illicit liquor distilling was an ancient tradition in the depths of the piney woods, in those by-passed pockets of the old frontier where it possibly was handed down from the mostly Scottish and Scotch-Irish forbears. One could easily hide "blind tigers," as stills were called, in the fastnesses of the Pearl River bottoms and in the Honey Island and Wolf River swamps of the coast.

Once, when my grandfather E. F. Tate was mayor of Picayune, he went turkey hunting in Honey Island Swamp. He stumbled onto a blind tiger and the two moonshiners working it assumed he was there in his official capacity. They threatened to kill him and he had to go down on his knees to beg for his life. When he got home safely, he told his younger brother Monroe, then Pearl River County sheriff and a tough customer. Uncle Monroe went out after the two miscreants, told them to clear out within twenty-four hours or he would kill them. The next day, as young folks say now, they were history.

Another story concerns Kiln in Hancock County, where supposedly moonshiners burrowed into the huge sawdust piles left from Hines's mill to hide their stills. Years later, in 1944, when this author was a nineteen-year-old marine private first class stationed at

Camp LeJeune he told older marines from Chicago that he was from Picayune. They reminisced over the purity and quality of Kiln whiskey. Puzzled he asked how they came by it and they told him that Al Capone's gang ran it north. They also surprised him when they said the whiskey was made from rye, not bourbon. However, since then this author has learned–and paid his dues–that Northerners, except in Maryland, use rye to describe blended whiskey, a term which can cover a lot of sins.

Other manifestations of prohibitionism were the so-called Blue Laws, which sought to prohibit any business or recreational activity during the Sabbath, as though the Baptists were ultra-Orthodox Jews, an allegation both groups have indignantly denied. Groceries, movie theaters, and organized athletics were all forbidden on Sunday. The day was reserved for morning services and evening prayer services. It was stifling. Dancing, card playing, and smoking were also frowned upon. Bills were introduced into the legislature to authorize a state film censorship board.

The general American nativist and anti-Roman Catholic prejudice of the twenties was not virulent in the Pearl River country, since that was where the "coon-ass" and the "redneck" came together, the Dubuissons and Ladners, alongside the Stockstills and McQueens. There was a Jefferson Davis Klavern of the KKK in Picayune, which advertised in *The Item* in 1923. Given the low percentage (less than 25 percent) of blacks in Pearl River County, the few Roman Catholics, most of whom were Cajuns, and the presence of only one Jewish family, it is hard to see why the klavern existed, unless it was to enforce moral conformity among all the citizenry. That might be borne out by the fact that the only lynching was that of two white ne'er-do-wells in 1926. They were accused of killing two government entomologists in Honey Island Swamp. A mob sprung them from the county jail in Poplarville and carried them down to Picayune, where they hanged them on the Highway 11 Hobolochitto Bridge. No tears were shed.

Early twentieth-century America religious fundamentalists had reacted against the rise of liberal religious belief and the social gospel, while holding to an element of imminent millennialism. At first southern churches were little involved, since they were already so conservative. However, when William Jennings Bryan was

persuaded to lead the fight against teaching evolution in the public schools, the South became the movement's stronghold. After the celebrated 1925 Scopes trial at Dayton, Tennessee, four other southern states, including Mississippi in 1926, joined the Volunteer State in forbidding such teaching. "No serious attempt was made to enforce the law in Mississippi." It was probably unnecessary. Literal belief in the Bible was the norm among a people increasingly drawn to conservative fundamentalist Protestant churches. One may be surprised to know that in 1900 the Mississippi Baptist Convention and Mississippi Methodist Episcopal Church were nearly equal in numbers–100,000 and 95,000, respectively. However, the Baptists leapt ahead with 146,000 in 1910 and 228,000 by 1930. There were also white and black members of other Baptist and Methodist groups. This trend was evident in Lower Pearl River's piney woods, where emphasis in religion was still upon individual salvation, defined by adherence to a rigid social norm, and little or no interest in the social gospel. That would have to wait until the social and economic devastation of the Great Depression in the following decade of the thirties.[35]

The Roaring Twenties were through–but so too were Scott and Zelda.

Notes

[1]Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager, *The Growth of the American Republic* (New York, 1941), 2:315.

[2]George B. Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, 1967), 82.

[3]James B. Loewen and Charles Saddis, eds., *Mississippi: Conflict and Change* (New York, 1974), 210.

[4]Dewey W. Grantham, *The South in Modern America: A Region at Odds* (New York, 1994), 92.

[5]James E. Fickle, *The New South and the "New Competition"* (Urbana, 1980), 117.
[6]Nollie W. Hickman, *Mississippi Harvest: Lumbering in the Longleaf Pine Belt, 1840-1915* (University, MS, 1962), 257-60.

[7]Conversation with my first cousin, Mrs. Yvonne Woodward Loe, Picayune, MS, October 2, 1995.

[8]Chief of Engineers, War Department Report, *Pearl River, Mississippi and Louisiana* (1930), 71st Cong., 2d sess., H. Doc. 445.

[9]Howard G. Adkins, "The Historical Geography of Extinct Towns in Mississippi" in *Sense of Place: Mississippi*, ed. Peggy W. Prenshaw and Jesse O. McKee (Jackson, MS, 1979), 123-30.

[10]Card file in my possession of U.S. Post Offices in Hancock, Marion, and Pearl River counties taken from postal records in the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

[11]John Hawkins Napier III, *Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods: Its Land and People* (University, MS, 1985), 125-26.

[12]Ibid., 144.

[13]Ibid., 127.

[14]Tindall, *Emergence of the New South*, 23-25.

[15]William D. McCain, "The Triumph of Democracy, 1916-1932" in *A History of Mississippi*, ed. Richard A. McLemore (Hattiesburg, 1973), 2:61-72.

[16]A. Wigfall Green, *The Man Bilbo* (Baton Rouge, 1963), 18. However, my Grandfather Napier told me that he disliked Bilbo and soon ended the partnership.

[17]Chester M. Morgan, *Redneck Liberal: Theodore G. Bilbo and the New Deal* (Baton Rouge, 1985), 38-39.

[18]Green, *The Man Bilbo*, 75. I suspect that "Dr. Foglesong" was actually Dr. Anthony Moultrie Muckenfuss of the chemistry department at Ole Miss and my late first wife's great-uncle. There could not have been two men with such names in that department then!

[19]Told to me at Ole Miss in 1948 after I had driven over that road on the way to the Shiloh Battlefield with the late Dr. James W. Silver and members of the Claiborne Society, an honorary history group.

[20]My father's family disliked him heartily, but we were then living on the West Coast.

[21]Morgan, *Redneck Liberal*, 8.

[22]Napier, *Lower Pearl River*, 114-18, 121, 123-25, 136, 146.

[23]Paul Travis interview with Belton Watts, Summer 1981.

[24]Tindall, *Emergence of the New South*, 111-12, 138, 354.

[25]Thomas D. Clark, "Changes in Transportation" in *A History of Mississippi*, ed. Richard A. McLemore, 2:291.

[26]My childhood recollection.

[27]My late father, Dr. John Hawkins Napier, Jr. was valedictorian of the first AHS graduating class in 1913 and my late mother, née Lena Mae Tate, whose father, E.F. Tate, was school board president, was valedictorian of Picayune High School's first graduating class in 1912.

[28]Reuben W. Griffith, "The Public School, 1890-1970" in *A History of Mississippi*, ed. R.A. McLemore, 2:398.

[29]Ibid., 403.

[30]Wallace Buttrick, "Pearl River: An Educational Idea in Action" in *Outlook* 128 (1921):655-57.

[31]Napier, *Lower Pearl River*, 143-44; Joseph C. Kiger, "Cultural Activities in the 20th Century" in *A History of Mississippi*, ed. R.A. McLemore, 2:500.

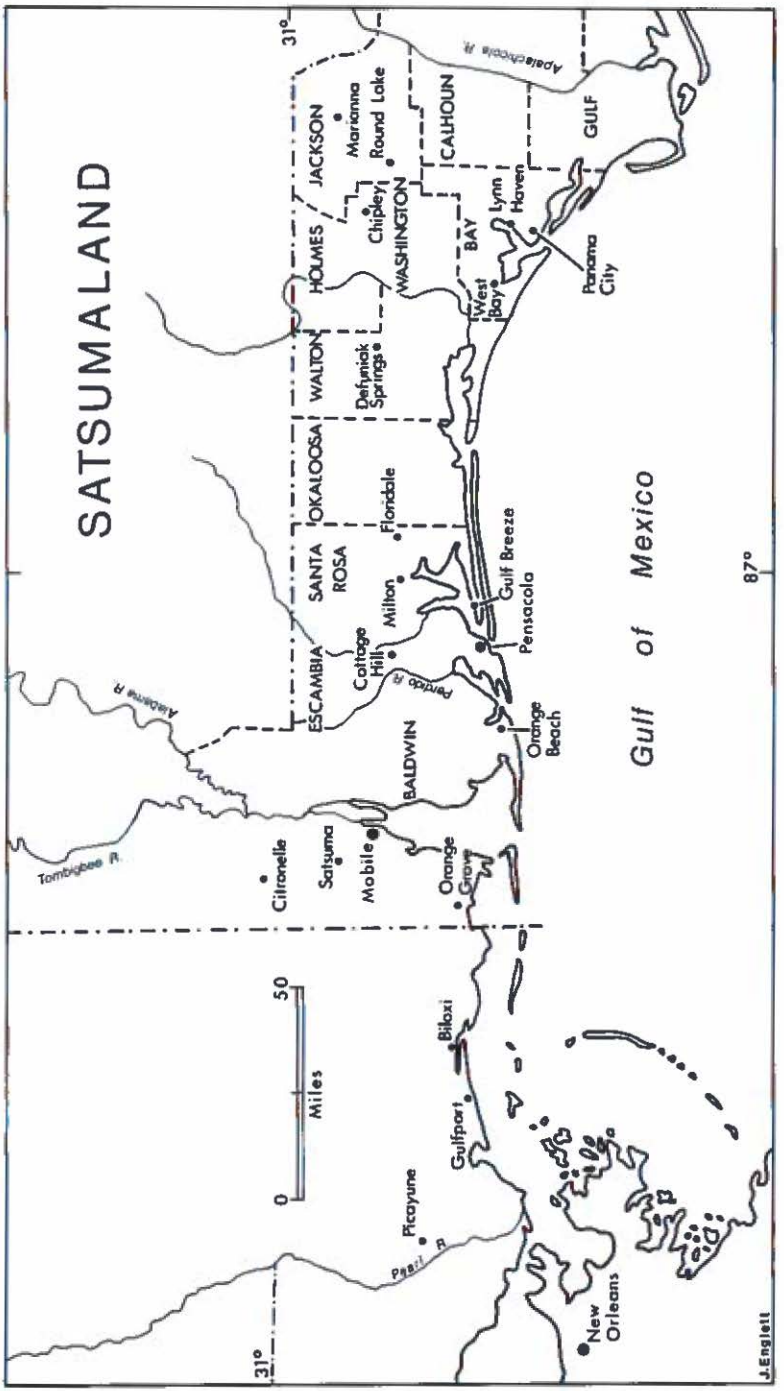
[32]Grantham, 101-2.

[33]John 2:1-11.

[34]Joseph Blotner, *Faulkner: A Biography* (New York, 1974), 1:427-28. Mississippi would not vote "wet" until 1966!

[35]David Harrell, "Fundamentalism" in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill, 1989), 1288-89; McCain, *Triumph of Democracy*, 2:83; Jack Winston Gunn, "Religion in the Twentieth Century" in *A History of Mississippi*, ed. R.A. McLemore, 2:478.

John Hawkins Napier III is a retired Lt. Colonel in the Air Force and past president of the Alabama Historical Association.


SATSUMALAND
Gulf of Mexico
31°
87°
ESCAMBIA
SANTA ROSA
OKALOOSA
WALTON
HOLMES
JACKSON
WASHINGTON
CALHOUN
BAY
GULF
BALDWIN
Cottage Hill
Milton
Floridale
Defuniak Springs
Chipley
Marianna
Round Lake
Lynn Haven
West Bay
Panama City
Gulf Breeze
Pensacola
Orange Beach
Citronelle
Satsuma
Mobile
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Satsumaland! A History of Citrus Culture in West Florida

Brian R. Rucker

The state of Florida has long been noted for its production of citrus fruits. It is generally perceived, however, that only the central and southern portions of the state have been regions of citrus culture. West Florida is neglected in the history of Florida's citrus industry. Because of its northern latitude, susceptibility to cold waves, and lack of any contemporary citrus industry, this portion of the state has been ignored in major studies of the Florida citrus industry. But at one time West Florida was the center of a dynamic citrus boom. From approximately 1920 to 1940 entrepreneurs widely cultivated satsuma oranges, and the region even became known as "Satsumaland." Climatic and economic changes eventually ended this grand experiment in citrus cultivation.

Citrus fruit was introduced into the region much earlier than the twentieth century. Spaniards first brought oranges into Florida perhaps as early as 1521. Explorers like Ponce de León, Narváez, and de Soto may have carried orange seeds with them to plant at the sites of encampments.[1] Tristan de Luna, when he arrived at the Pensacola area, may also have brought seeds or young trees for this first unsuccessful attempt at colonizing Florida in 1559.[2] It is uncertain if any of these experiments in citrus cultivation materialized and produced results. The earliest substantiated record of oranges in Florida occurs in 1579. In a letter from St. Augustine to the Audiencia of Santo Domingo, Pedro Menéndez Marquis wrote: "There are beginning to be many of the fruits of Spain, such as figs, pomegranates, oranges, grapes in great quantity." Since these trees were already bearing, they must have at least been planted in 1575. Orange trees began to spread in the St. Augustine area, but the Spanish rarely cultivated the trees for revenue during this first Spanish period; the oranges were used primarily for local consumption.[3]

In West Florida it is unclear if the second settling of Pensacola in 1698-99 included the importation of orange trees or seeds. Judging from the agricultural practices of neighboring settlements along the Gulf Coast, oranges were probably grown in the Pensacola area. In the French colonization of the Gulf Coast, Sieur D'Iberville introduced either orange trees or seeds as early as 1703. In the first half of the eighteenth century there are reports from New Orleans, Natchez, Mobile, and Biloxi of many fruits being raised successfully, including oranges and lemons.[4] Citrus fruits were probably cultivated in neighboring West Florida as well.

When the English took possession of Florida from 1763 to 1781, they utilized the Spanish orange groves and turned the orange into a commercial commodity. The British began to ship oranges and orange juice from St. Augustine around 1776. Groves were expanded and new ones were planted.[5] British West Florida could not compare with the large established groves of East Florida, but citrus fruit was grown in the region. Export records from British West Florida present a wide variety of colonial commodities, including oranges.[6]

After the British occupation of the Floridas ended, the Spanish reviewed their position on citrus cultivation. The development of citrus fruits was encouraged in 1787, yet by 1790 the orange did not appear in the list of fruits advised for profitable cultivation. Oranges from existing groves in the St. Augustine area were used for local consumption and were not transformed into a commercial commodity until the United States acquired Florida in 1821.[7]

In West Florida the return of the Spanish also marked an overall decline in agriculture and commercial activity. Oranges, however, were still being grown in the area. C. C. Robin, who traveled to Louisiana in the years 1803 to 1805, provides a description of Pensacola in his journal:

> The soil of the town is only fine sand, so yielding that it is difficult to walk in the streets. However, it is productive of fruits and vegetables. Orange trees grow well there and the fig trees are splendid. Their fruit is delicious.[8]

Florida was officially transferred from Spain to the United States at Pensacola on July 17, 1821, and Andrew Jackson became the

provisional governor. Jackson and his wife Rachel remained in Pensacola for only a short time, but her observations help illuminate the horticultural environment of West Florida then. On July 23, 1821, she wrote a letter to her friend in Nashville, Mrs. Eliza Kingsley. This letter, written from Pensacola, offers important details concerning the social, economic, and physical environment of the region:

> I will give you a faint description of the country and of this place; knowing that my dear friend will throw a veil over my errors and imperfections. 1. Pensacola is a perfect plain; the land nearly as white as flour, yet productive of fine peach trees, oranges in abundance, grapes, figs, pomegranates, etc., etc.[9]

The following year a cold wave struck the Pensacola area and dealt a severe blow to the citrus culture. But five years later, the trees had recovered and were beginning to produce fruit again. John Lee Williams described citrus cultivation in the Pensacola area around 1827:

> The sweet orange has been successfully cultivated, in and near Pensacola; but the cold season of 1822, killed all the trees; they are again beginning to bear fruit. This is a tender tree, and requires considerable care in the cultivation, especially in sheltering it from violent storms and extreme frosts. They usually bear in six or seven years from the time of planting the seeds...; when arrived at maturity, they will, on an average, produce one thousand oranges per year.[10]

During this same time Judge Henry Marie Brackenridge began the development of what is now the Naval Live Oak Reservation in present-day Gulf Breeze. Brackenridge, aside from his interest in live oak culture, was also engaged in the planting of lemon, peach, and orange trees. He was especially fond of his orangery and even hoped that the approximately fifty trees could support him financially. Unfortunately, Brackenridge eventually encountered political and personal problems, sold his land to the government, and left Pensacola in 1832.[11]

In February 1835 a disastrous cold wave struck Florida killing the citrus trees in the northwestern portion of the territory. Water

froze in the St. Johns River several feet offshore, and the saltwater along the edge of Pensacola Bay froze. The temperature in Pensacola dipped down to eight degrees Fahrenheit.[12] As a result the cultivation of oranges lost some momentum in the western and central sections of Florida.[13] Nevertheless, citrus fruit continued to be grown in the Pensacola area throughout the antebellum period.[14]

Citrus expansion occurred throughout Florida during the 1870s, especially after the financial panic of 1873 caused many entrepreneurs to take advantage of the commercial value of citrus fruit.[15] An incentive for such production was the fact that two million dollars worth of oranges were imported into the United States each year from abroad.[16] This period marked the first large-scale cultivation of citrus fruit in the state and in West Florida. By 1877 approximately seven thousand orange trees were growing in the Pensacola area. Two thousand of these trees were located in the vicinity of the Naval Live Oak Reservation. Another thousand trees were located at Innerarity Point, an undetermined number at Garcon Point, and some four thousand trees were being grown near Gull Point and along the Escambia Bay bluffs.[17] Despite these examples, agricultural authorities still expressed hesitation and skepticism at deeming West Florida a suitable location for traditional oranges.[18]

Because of the threat of cold waves, growers sought new and hardier forms of citrus. The satsuma orange of Japan was introduced into Florida in the late 1870s, and because of its greater resistance to cold it became cultivated along the Gulf Coast from Florida to Texas. The satsuma orange belongs to the mandarin family of oranges and is closely related to the tangerine. Satsumas are marked by a peel with very little flesh. The term "kid glove orange" was applied to satsumas at one time because it was said that a woman wearing kid gloves could eat one without getting her gloves wet. The satsumas were largely successful in West Florida and other Gulf Coast areas because they were grafted upon trifoliata stock, a cold-hardy form of citrus that is small in stature and covered profusely with large thorns.[19] It was this development of cold-hardy citrus fruits, especially following the devastating freezes that crippled the state's citrus industry in 1894-95, which provided the opportunity for West Florida to become a viable citrus growing region.[20] Replacing

the traditional sweet orange, the satsuma became the hope of many panhandle farmers and horticulturists.

Satsumas and other semitropical fruit appeared in West Florida around the turn of the century. The moderate temperatures of the region and the exotic fruit being grown were extolled by various growers and companies in an effort to induce immigration to this section of the Gulf Coast. The Louisville & Nashville and other railroads were especially interested in persuading northerners to travel south and buy portions of their extensive land holdings. Companies produced numerous publicity pamphlets and promotional magazines to lure investors, and such efforts intensified with the Florida land boom of the 1920s. These publications especially emphasized West Florida as a fruit-growing region. Ponderosa lemon trees were being cultivated at Defuniak Springs by 1907, and bananas were being grown successfully in such areas as Chipley, Cottage Hill, and Pensacola.[21] Two years later satsuma oranges, grapefruit, and kumquats were firmly established in the Pensacola area. One six-year-old satsuma grove belonging to builder S. F. Fulghum–containing one hundred trees–produced nearly nine thousand oranges. Fulghum continued to experiment and successfully raised grapefruit, kumquats, Japanese persimmons, quinces, peaches, pecans, figs, and pears.[22]

Such early success stories sparked an increased interest in satsuma cultivation which spread to "satsuma fever" by the early 1920s. Timber resources, which had earlier played such an important role in the region's economy, were greatly depleted by this time. The cutover pine lands of the region offered the perfect opportunity for horticultural entrepreneurs to transform useless lands into bountiful groves and orchards. The "passing of the pine," as it was termed, ushered in a new era. Corporate and community promoters touted West Florida as "the Last Great West," an area ripe for investment, especially investment in horticulture and agriculture.[23]

Satsumas were the catalyst to this increased optimism and were viewed as a cure-all for the region's economic woes. "Gold fever" raged as farmers throughout the area succumbed to the lure of golden satsumas.[24] Fueling such hopes were local promoters who believed that "West Florida, the adopted home of the Satsuma orange tree, is going to blossom into the fairyland of all Florida." The *Pensacola Journal* predicted that thousands would come to West Florida to look

"for an El Dorado among Satsuma orange grove sites." Pensacola's promoters were euphoric–"all hail Satsumaland, the greatest section of all Florida in potential wealth." And of course, Pensacola would be the unrivaled metropolis and trade capital of Satsumaland.[25]

There was genuine potential for a promising satsuma industry. Satsuma oranges did not grow well in central and south Florida, and because of their cold-hardiness they were the ideal citrus crop for the northwestern section of the state. Satsumas also ripened earlier than the traditional round or sweet oranges in Central and South Florida, and citrus growers in West Florida would be able to beat their southern competitors to the northern markets.[26] Adding to these factors highway and road construction increased dramatically in West Florida during the early 1920s, providing easier and speedier transportation from rural groves and farms to the ports and railroad lines of the region.[27] Citrus entrepreneurs saw this as another indication of the potential profitability of the satsuma market.

"Satsumaland" was the name often given to that western portion of Florida stretching from the Perdido River to the Apalachicola. Extensive cultivation of satsumas sparked enthusiasm throughout the region, and real estate developers quickly featured the satsuma phenomenon in their many promotional efforts.[28] Optimism was dampened slightly during the winters of 1923 and 1924 when heavy freezes struck the area and spoiled the year's crop. Growers learned valuable lessons; and their hopes revived when they learned that properly tended and cultivated trees recovered in a year's time.[29] In fact, a large number of the region's grove owners formed marketing associations to aid in growing, shipping, and marketing their crop.[30] The Gulf Coast Citrus Exchange, based in south Alabama, became the leading satsuma promoter and was responsible for grading, handling, and marketing approximately 75 percent of the crop. One of the satsuma items was Satsumade, a "delicious" drink made from green satsumas that was merchandised throughout West Florida with "considerable success."[31]

The early to mid 1920s witnessed a tremendous increase in the cultivation of satsuma oranges throughout West Florida. From 1920 to 1925 there was over a 1,100 percent increase in the number of satsuma trees in the region. In November 1925 there were 254,217

young trees and 16,362 bearing trees.[32] The total was distributed throughout the panhandle counties as follows:

Escambia	63,802
Santa Rosa	29,569
Okaloosa	13,900
Walton	26,241
Washington	10,028
Bay	62,416
Jackson	41,429
Calhoun	24,194

Over half of the bearing trees at this time were located in Escambia County. Most of the trees–both bearing and nonbearing–were located in small, individually owned groves; but three corporations owned larger tracts in the region: Dekle Land Company at Round Lake, Jackson County; Seminole Plantation Company at West Bay, Bay County; and Ringling & White, Okaloosa and Santa Rosa counties.[33]

Some six months later approximately four hundred thousand new orange trees were planted–and there were plans to add a million more within the next two years. Carload shipments of satsuma oranges soon rolled to northern markets from Escambia, Jackson, and other West Florida counties. The first carload of satsumas pulled out as early as the fall of 1923 from Cottage Hill, Escambia County. Chicago and New York were popular destinations, but by the early to mid 1930s forty-five cities in the United States were markets for Satsumaland, with an average of one thousand carloads departing each year. Refrigerated steamers from Mobile, Gulfport, and Pensacola eventually took satsumas to Europe, particularly London.[34]

Oranges were not the only popular fruit in the region. In 1926 around 750,000 blueberry bushes and approximately 500,000 grapevines were planted in the area as well.[35] Farmers of the region envisaged Rabbit Eye blueberries, Carmen grapes, and West Florida watermelons as potentially lucrative crops. Bunch grapes in West Florida ripened much earlier than grapes in the North and California,

and agricultural entrepreneurs saw promise in locally grown grapes reaching the major markets with no competition. It appeared that all of West Florida would soon be covered with profitable groves, orchards, and vineyards.[36]

"Satsumaland" became a reality in the 1920s. From the Texas Gulf Coast to the Suwanee River, satsumas were planted enthusiastically. The Gulf Coast regions of Alabama and Mississippi mirrored the "fruit fever" of West Florida. As early as 1921 Baldwin County, Alabama, had six thousand acres of satsumas. In 1923 growers there shipped out over one million dollars worth of satsumas to northern markets. Grapefruit, kumquats, and lemons were also grown in the area. Eventually Picayune, Mississippi, became a center of satsuma production for that state. Evidence of this era along the Gulf Coast is still reflected in the names of small communities–Citronelle, Orange Beach, Orange Grove, and Satsuma.[37]

On the eastern edge of Satsumaland, Jackson County became one of the most important centers for satsuma cultivation. One eight-hundred-acre satsuma grove in the county gave an average gross income of one thousand dollars per acre.[38] The community of Round Lake was the heart of the satsuma industry in Jackson County. Aside from numerous orange groves and a packing house, Round Lake was also the headquarters of the Satsumaland Fruit Growers Association, an important local organization devoted to the development of the citrus industry.[39] Neighboring counties indulged in satsuma and fruit cultivation as well. A branch of the Glen St. Mary Nurseries was established at Chipley (Washington County) to deal in citrus stock. Numerous satsuma groves were planted in Bay County. Round oranges, tangerines, grapefruit, and bananas were also grown in the Panama City and Lynn Haven areas.[40]

Jackson County's enthusiasm with the citrus industry led to the Marianna Satsuma Orange Festival in 1928. Marianna merchants decorated their storefronts with satsuma displays as exhibits from West Florida counties arrived for the judging. Fifteen thousand visitors, including state dignitaries, came to the festival which culminated in a "Satsuma Ball" at the Chipola Hotel–where Miss Lucy Daffin was crowned as the Satsuma Queen.[41] Reflective of Marianna's preoccupation with satsumas during the 1920s are the Marianna Satsuma Shrine Club, the Satsuma Drug Store, and the

Satsuma Fruit Store. The success of the 1928 Satsuma Festival inspired more. The 1929 festival was even larger; it attracted thirty-five thousand people, included a mile-long Satsuma Parade, offered "pyrotechnic novelties," "free acts of extraordinary character," and a "balloon ascension," and featured John Martin, former governor of Florida, as the key speaker. Though the Great Depression soon followed, Jackson County remained optimistic. Carloads of satsumas continued to be shipped out in the early 1920s, but Jackson County's citrus groves were devastated in December 1935 when a severe freeze struck the region.[42]

Another key area of Satsumaland was Santa Rosa County. Popular fruits in Santa Rosa County were satsumas, grapes, grapefruit, and kumquats. In 1919 the county had only 5,162 orange trees; by 1924 the total jumped to 29,569. Two years later the season's planting was estimated to be 150,000 new orange trees. It was understandable that the *Milton Gazette* quipped "satisfying sweet Santa Rosa satsumas surely sell."[43] Viticulture was also widespread in the county. James Ouzoonian, a vineyardist from California, purchased twenty-four hundred acres on which to grow grapes, and there were even plans for an additional six thousand acres on which Ouzoonian would settle other California grape growers.[44] More typical of local planters was the seventy-acre farm of J.W. Krentzman of Milton. Satsumas occupied seven acres, sand pears twenty-five, pecans twenty, blueberries twelve, while plums and other fruit comprised the remaining six.[45]

One especially noteworthy enterprise associated with the citrus industry in this area of Satsumaland was the development of Floridale from 1925 to 1928. Floridale was going to be an idealistic rural city–a community of small farms, orchards, and homes. Located near the Santa Rosa/Okaloosa county line, Floridale was developed by the Ringling & White Company. Richard T. Ringling, a member of the corporation, was also part owner of the Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus. The promoters made grandiose designs for this fifty-thousand-acre site, and satsuma growers were some of the first to become involved.[46] One thousand acres of satsumas were planted at Floridale, and vineyards and blueberry orchards were also begun.[47] Truck farms, fruit orchards, and poultry farms were planned as well,

destruction, but even groves not heavily damaged suffered harvest losses of 75 percent. Satsumaland came to an abrupt end in the cold Depression winter of 1935-36.[58]

Many of the vast boom-created satsuma groves were subsequently abandoned. The devastating freeze contributed largely to this, but there were other reasons as well. The great profits in satsuma oranges never materialized in the long-term marketplace, and growers discovered they had overestimated the demand for this particular citrus fruit. The Great Depression also created economic difficulties for the region's farmers, horticulturists, and developers. Despite these circumstances the cultivation of citrus fruit was not completely extinguished. In 1937 satsumas, kumquats, limequats, loquats, and Japanese persimmons were still being grown. At the same time though, most authorities conceded that the region had not become "a great producing and profit returning section for semi tropical fruits."[59]

The blow that sealed the fate of the region's citrus industry came in January 1940 when the temperature went below freezing for seventeen days out of the month.[60] Though failing to kill every citrus tree, this bitter cold wave marked the practical end of large-scale citrus culture in West Florida. Numerous trees and small groves survived in the area into the 1940s, but these were neglected or abandoned. They eventually succumbed due to lack of care and subsequent harsh winters. Farmers–learning from their mistakes–turned from citrus and other fruits as the promise of the future and instead concentrated on more traditional crops.[61]

Although West Florida has a long legacy of citrus culture, this cultivation has been severely hampered by climatic changes and economic misfortunes. This region of Florida often experienced several decades of warm, moderate weather which induced agricultural entrepreneurs to grow citrus fruit. In a cyclic fashion the citrus industry grew successfully only to be wiped out by a succession of freezes. The industry in the rest of Florida has also been subject to these periods of warm and cold weather, but these fluctuations have been particularly crippling to the panhandle.[62]

During the first quarter of this century West Florida experienced a climate, both physical and economic, which resulted in a tremendous growth in citrus and fruit cultivation. The hopes of developers and farmers centered especially around the promising

satsuma orange. Expectations were high, fueled by encouraging harvests and economic activity. Satsumaland became a reality, albeit a short-lived one. A combination of factors brought an end to this era of intense horticultural activity–the collapse of the Florida land boom, the advent of the Great Depression, the absence of a large satsuma market, and the destructive freezes of 1935-36. After World War II, West Florida's farmers never returned to the hazardous and risky cultivation of oranges, recognizing the existence of a cooler, less stable climate. Other than protected dooryard trees, citrus cultivation is unknown in the region today. In the future, with favorable climatic changes, West Florida's farmers may once again be lured into an adventurous plan to transform their region into "Satsumaland." A study of the past, however, shows the risks of such a course. Satsumaland was a dream that failed, but it does provide lessons for the future.

Notes

[1]T. Frederick Davis, "Early Orange Culture in Florida and the Epocal Cold of 1835," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 15 (April 1937): 232.

[2]Charlton W. Tebeau, *A History of Florida* (Coral Gables, 1971), 25-27.

[3]Davis, "Early Orange Culture," 232.

[4]Lauren C. Post, "The Domestic Animals and Plants of French Louisiana As Mentioned in the Literature with Reference To Sources, Varieties and Uses," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 16 (October 1933): 561, 582-83. Other fruits included apples, pears, olives, figs, peaches, and pomegranates.

[5]Davis, "Early Orange Culture," 232-34.

[6]C.N. Howard, "Some Economic Aspects of British West Florida, 1763-1768," *Journal of Southern History* 6 (1940): 217. Other West Florida exports included indigo, deer skins, lumber, cattle, corn, tallow, bear's oil, rice, tobacco, salted fish, pecans, and sassafras.

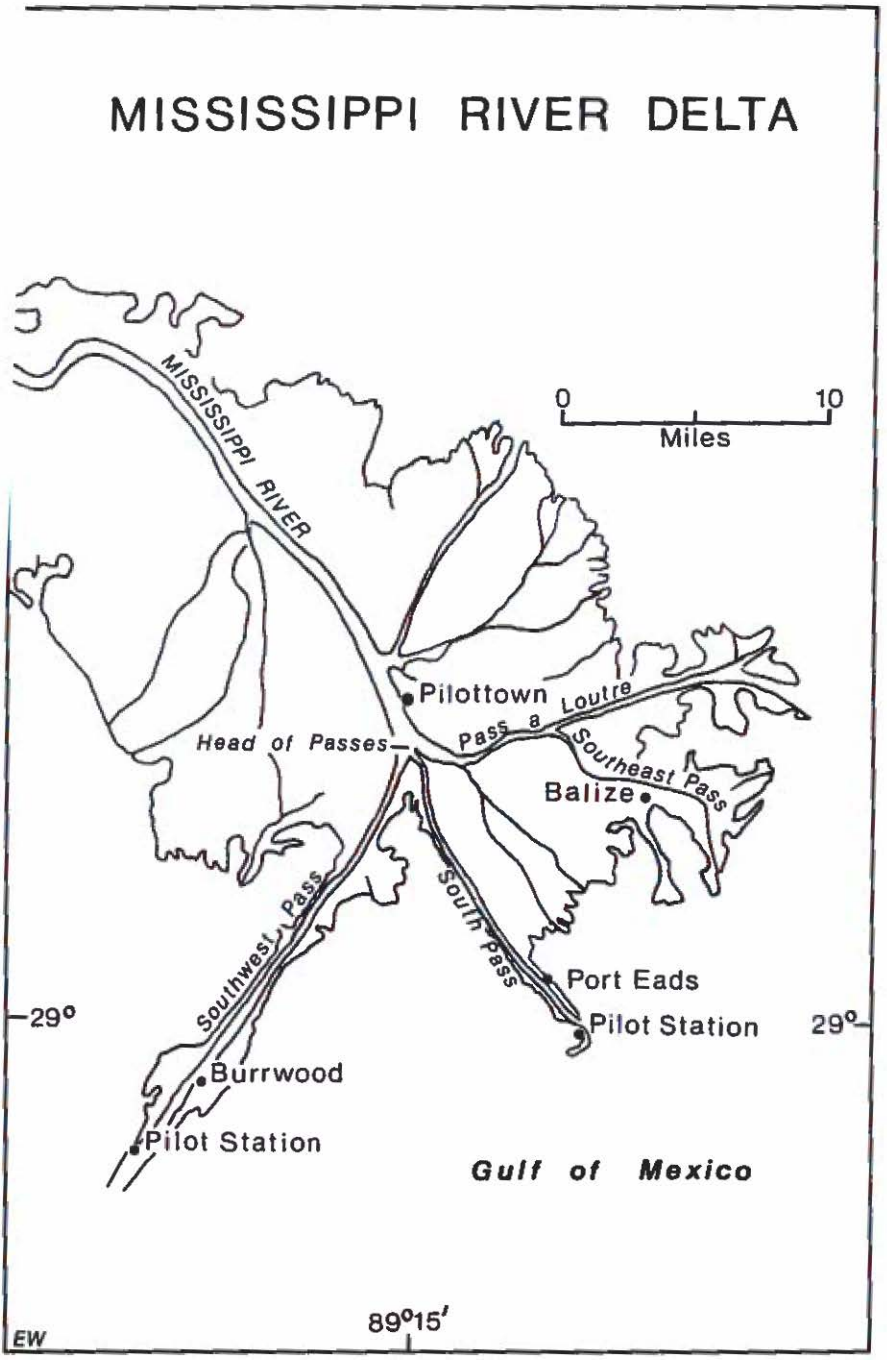
[7]Davis, "Early Orange Culture," 234-35.

[8]C.C. Robin, *Voyage to Louisiana* (1803-1805; abridged translation, New Orleans, 1966), Chapter 28, p. 2.

[9]James Parton, *Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York, 1861), 2: 603, 605.

[10]John Lee Williams, *A View of West Florida* (Philadelphia, 1827), 67.

[11]Ernest F. Dibble, Introduction to *Letter on the Culture of Live Oak*, by Henry Marie Brackenridge (Pensacola, 1980), *v-ix*.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Loutre
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Pilot Station
29°
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Burrwood
Pilot Station
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Changing Patterns of Trade and Transportation at the Mouth of the Mississippi

Roman S. Heleniak and Charles A. Dranguet, Jr.

This paper represents one chapter of a book in progress on the history of the bar pilots, those who guide ships into the Mississippi River from the open sea. They are called bar pilots because the Mississippi is a delta-forming river, one that deposits silt and sand at its mouth. These bars or shoals can reduce the depth of the water over the bar to less than ten feet. Before Captain James Eads invented a jetty system to deepen the channel, a major responsibility of the pilot was to guide ships across the bar.

Guiding ships in and out of the river was only part of the bar pilot's concern. Safe navigation in that portion of the river south of Head of Passes (the beginning of the delta) equally concerned pilots. The Mississippi can change suddenly; bars and debris piles can and do appear overnight. That is why pilots were indispensable; they studied river conditions every day. The pilots have been on the lower Mississippi since France colonized Louisiana and continue to practice their craft to this day.

The current contingent of pilots are members of the Associated Branch Pilots of the Port of New Orleans, chartered in 1879, a privately owned company licensed by the state and subject to state regulation. Much of the information in this paper comes from the official minute books of the Association, a valuable source, since the purchases of equipment, improvements to Association property, and the hiring of additional pilots are direct results of changing business conditions and/or physical changes to the main channel of the Mississippi.

The last point is important. Previously, mention was made as to how the river could change in a short period of time, even in as little time as a few hours. There is another trend, one that has been evolving over the centuries: the river's main channel is shifting to the west. In the early eighteenth century, the entrances to the main passes were on the eastern side of the delta and, eventually, these passes led to Pass a Loutre (Otter Pass), one of the three main branches of the

Mississippi which mark the start of the delta at Head of Passes. Even before the colonial period in Louisiana came to an end, some ships were using South Pass to enter and leave the river. By the mid-nineteenth century the eastern passes had silted up to the point that even small vessels could no longer use them.

In the late nineteenth century the great engineer, James Eads, deepened South Pass to twenty-five feet, and all shipping used this entrance to the river. However, the Father of Waters surrenders to no engineer, even a great one, and the mighty Mississippi continued its inexorable shift to the west. Work began on deepening the channel in Southwest Pass before the turn of the century, and the channel work was finished in 1908, but navigational aids were not installed until 1923. Until then some ships used the unimproved Southwest Pass, but the lack of navigational aids made this hazardous. In the twenties both passes were used, but the silting problems in South Pass pointed to the day when it would no longer be used by shippers. The physical changes on the river were only a part of the changes taking place during the Roaring Twenties, to use the apt nickname for the decade. The labeling of decades is more often than not a handy contrivance used by historians, journalists, and other writers; rarely does the beginning of a decade signify a change in society, but this one is different. The beginning of the decade ushered in national Prohibition which put the roar in the Roaring Twenties. The same year a conservative pro-business Republican Party captured the White House. Now the GOP controlled the legislative and administrative branches of the government. Expansion, growth, consolidation, profits, and high tariffs fueled a decade-long scramble for wealth. The party ended in the last weeks of 1929 when the Great Bull Market took a nose dive.

The lower reaches of the river did not escape the impact of the growth of the national economy, or other national events and trends for that matter. Because of the reputation of New Orleans as a two-fisted drinking town, its location on the central Gulf of Mexico, and the myriad of cuts, canals, and small inlets in the delta which made it almost impossible to stop smuggling, bootleggers set up a "Rum Row" in international waters near the mouth of the Mississippi. This was not the kind of business sought by the nation's second busiest port.[1]

Of course, legitimate port business increased in the decades. Some of the increase was caused by the postwar boom, some of it by other developments such as the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914. New Orleans, as the closest major United States port to the canal, anticipated an upsurge in business. The prognosis was correct but the type of trade caused alarm in New Orleans. In 1915 the *Times-Picayune* noted that the United States was importing far more from Latin America than it was exporting. The Latin American nations bought their manufactured goods from Europeans, especially the Germans.[2] The trade gap with Latin America posed no disaster for the bar pilots; they earned pilotage fees from vessels either entering or leaving the Mississippi.

Port activity increased in the 1920s as can be seen in the annual reports of the Chief of the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1920 the tonnage of imports and exports at the Port of New Orleans totalled over 10,500,000 tons.[3] The next year, however, the port saw an almost fifty percent increase in tonnage with 15,100,000 tons moving in and out of the port.[4] In 1923 tonnage figures showed a decline to 12,345,000 but the following year it increased again, and the 1927 totals surpassed those of 1921. For the rest of the decade tonnage figures averaged between fifteen and sixteen million per year. Reflecting the downturn of business following the market collapse in 1929 tonnage in and out of the port plummeted to 12,700,000 tons.[5]

The Corps of Engineers' reports reveal many noteworthy changes in the types of ships using the passes of the river. The Roaring Twenties witnessed the last days of commercial sailing vessels entering and leaving the river, the closing chapter of a colorful history that began two hundred years earlier. The number of ships using the passes varied from year to year and the total ranged from a low of 5,468 in 1923 to a high of 6,290 in 1925. Those figures included very few sailing vessels; fifty-three in 1921, fifteen in 1923, only two in 1927, and none in 1928.[6] Historically, sailing ships had a difficult time using the Port of New Orleans because it is more than one hundred miles up the winding Mississippi from the passes. Given unfavorable winds and a strong current it could take sailing vessels one week to reach New Orleans from the passes. Furthermore, because sailing vessels lacked the power of steamships, the bars at the mouth of the river could cause these ships to wait for

weeks for favorable conditions to cross the bar. The introduction of steam tows in the early nineteenth century brought great improvements, as these powerful little boats pulled sailing vessels across the bar and upriver to New Orleans in a much shorter time.[7]

The United States Army Corps of Engineers' annual reports in the 1920s reveal that there was an increase in the number of larger vessels with deeper drafts using the passes. South Pass had sufficient depth most of the year to accommodate ships drawing thirty-two feet of water. One feature that did not change appreciably during the decade was the draft of vessels entering and leaving the passes. At maximum South Pass had thirty-two feet of water, but this could drop to as low as thirty feet. Southwest Pass, on the other hand, could accommodate ships with a draft of thirty-five feet. And following completion of the installation of navigational aids in 1923, more and more vessels used Southwest Pass.[8]

The statistics on ships moving through the passes in 1923 compared with those at the end of the decade illustrate the trend to larger vessels. In the 1924 (figures are always of the previous year) report, of the 5,468 ships moving through the passes, only 1,333 had a draft of more than eighteen feet, and only twenty-two drew between thirty and thirty-two feet of water. In 1928, of the 6,228 ships using the passes 112 drew between thirty and thirty-two feet of water and more than half required at least eighteen feet.[9]

Perhaps the most important non-change in trade was that New Orleans retained its reputation as a shipper and importer of bulk cargo. The protectionist gains caused by the Fordney-McCumber Act came at other ports. The new tariff increased the value of manufactured exports. When the decade began, the three leading export items were first, cotton, second, wheat and wheat flour, and third, petroleum and products. Ten years later machinery replaced cotton as the leading export; petroleum held onto third, but wheat and flour dropped out of the top three.[10]

The Fordney-McCumber Tariff supposedly provided the United States with a flexible tariff. The president on the advice of the Tariff Commission could raise or lower the duty on imports as much as fifty percent. However, in the pro-business, Republican-dominated government of the United States in the 1920s, the tariff schedule became more protectionist every year.[11]

The Port of New Orleans played a minor role in the export of machinery, because petroleum, lumber, and vegetable food products were the leading exports. Even with the passage of Fordney-McCumber this did not change. Goods manufactured in the Midwest were shipped by rail to eastern seaports for export, and this did not change in the 1920s. In fact, the best year of the decade for the export of machinery and vehicles was 1920 when the tonnage of these exports was almost ninety thousand tons and the value reached $15,321,811. The port did not even get close to these figures again during the decade. In the next best year, 1929, the port exported 54,250 tons. The tonnage and value of imported machinery and vehicles was even less impressive. No figures for 1920 are provided in the Chief Engineer's report for 1921, but in 1923, imports totalled over five hundred tons, and by 1929 just topped one thousand tons.[12] Obviously, the Port of New Orleans continued in its role as a port that both imported and exported bulk goods, only in greater volume.

Earlier in the paper it was noted that the number of vessels moving through the passes increased in number and in size. The bar pilots made the necessary adjustments to provide adequate service for shippers. They added to the number and power of the pilot boats, they commissioned additional pilots, and they built a new pilot house on Southwest Pass to service the increased traffic at this entrance of the river.[13]

When the war ended in 1918, the bar pilots were one pilot boat short of their prewar number. The United States Navy had expropriated the pilot boat, *Underwriter*, and renamed her the USS *Adirondack*, and one of the pilots' remaining vessels, the *Kiva*, needed a new power plant. Regarding the latter, at the April 5, 1921, meeting of the board of directors, the superintendent, Captain Ben Michell, Sr. appointed a committee to determine the cost of equipping the *Kiva* with new engines.[14] At the committee's recommendation the pilots purchased two New Jersey Standard Engines, gasoline powered, between sixty-five and seventy-five horsepower. Earlier in May 1920 the pilots debated buying a "large powerful steam pilot boat." The Board of Directors ordered the superintendent to seek bids from local shipbuilders for this boat.[15]

thousand dollars each, and power boat *Assistant* at twenty-five thousand dollars.[19]

As boat hobbyists well know, buying the vessel is only the beginning of the costs. Money has to be spent maintaining boats, as shown by the purchase of new engines for the *Kiva*, and throughout the decade the pilots had to come up with money to make major repairs on boats. In July 1923 for example, the members voted to borrow money and to assess themselves thirty dollars a month to pay for repairs made to the *Jennie Wilson* by the Algiers Iron Works.[20]

The purchase of new boats and motors represents only one aspect of the capital investments of the pilots. They also had to maintain a business office in New Orleans where the business agent of the pilots conducted financial affairs; a pilot house at Port Eads on South Pass; the major pilot house at Head of Passes; a machine shop and tools; furniture for all offices and houses; wharves at Head of Passes and Port Eads; and a coal yard. Depending on the year, the valuation of assets ranged from a low of $118,758.00 in 1920 to a high of $238,000 in January of 1923.[21]

During the decade the bar pilots paid for several major building ventures at the passes. In 1922 the pilots had to do something to the run-down pilot house at Head of Passes. Some of the pilots preferred individual houses over a community house, but a majority voted for the latter. The house was torn down, the lumber sold to members of the association, and a new house was constructed.[22]

After installation of navigational devices at the deeper Southwest Pass, more and more ships began using that entrance into the river. Standard Fruit and Steamship Company informed the pilots by letter in July 1925, that more of their ships would be using Southwest Pass. The pilots had no choice but to meet the demands of Standard Fruit and other shippers. At their May meeting in 1925 the Association voted to build a new pilot house on the west bank of Southwest Pass just below the small town of Burrwood. On March 16, 1926, the work was completed.[23]

The quickness of the Association's response to the demands of shippers is easily understood. The state of Louisiana granted the Association, a private association, a legal monopoly to pilot ships into and out of the Mississippi River. On seagoing ships the pilots boarded at Head of Passes; on incoming vessels they boarded a mile

beyond the sea buoy in open water. At most, depending on whether South Pass or the longer Southwest Pass was used, the pilot guided the ship no more than twenty-four miles. Another pilot group operated between New Orleans and Head of Passes (Pilottown). However, there was nothing in the state constitution that granted any pilot association a monopoly. What the state gives the state could take away. The Association could ill-afford a swarm of angry shippers raising a controversy about the pilots in Baton Rouge. Furthermore the legislature established piloting fees, a process that involved both the pilots and the shippers arguing their case before the legislature. Once set, pilotage fees could remain unchanged for a number of years.[24]

The pilots certainly knew the importance of maintaining close ties with area politicians and the state legislature. At a special meeting of the Board of Directors in July 1928, the directors hired Judge Leander Perez as their special attorney.[25] This is the same Judge Perez who would win national notoriety as a spokesman for ardent segregationists thirty years later. Even before Perez came aboard, the pilots knew their way around Baton Rouge. On March 9,1921, the Board of Directors voted to send Superintendent Captain Ben Michell, Sr. to "visit Baton Rouge in the interests of the pilots."[26]

Lobbying the legislature in the 1920s cost money; that has not changed, but that cost represents only a small portion of the operating expenses of the Association. In addition to capital outlay, the Association had many fixed expenses: fuel, insurance, maintenance, and salaries of boatmen, cooks, engineers, carpenters, bookkeepers and attorneys.

The Association earned additional revenue by salvaging boats and by freeing vessels grounded in the river. For this service the Association received one hundred dollars for the first hour and twenty-five dollars an hour after the first. Added fees included one hundred dollars for towing disabled ships across the bar at South Pass to the South Pass station at Port Eads. Towing a ship from Pilottown to the sea cost $275.[27]

Regular piloting fees, however, were by far the most important source of revenue. Shippers paid a fee of $3.50 for each foot of draft.[28] Therefore, the trend to larger vessels in the 1920s worked to the best interests of the pilots.[29] Pilots who had the skill to guide

Notes

[1]*New Orleans Times-Picayune*, September 1, 1915.

[2]Ibid., September 1, 1914.

[3]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1921* (Washington, DC, 1921) 2: 802.

[4]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1922* (Washington, DC, 1922), 1302.

[5]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1931* (Washington, DC, 1931), 1046.

[6]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1922*, 1302; *Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1924* (Washington, DC, 1924), 1515; *Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1928* (Washington, DC, 1928), 1006; *Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1929* (Washington, DC, 1929), 993.

[7]Walter M. Lowrey, "Navigational Problems at the Mouth of the Mississippi River, 1698-1880" (Ph.D., diss., Vanderbilt University, 1956), 116.

[8]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1931*, 1046.

[9]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1929*, 993.

[10]U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition* (Washington, 1975) 2: 898.

[11]John Hicks, *Republican Ascendancy* (New York, 1960), 55-59.

[12]See various editions of *Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1921-31*.

[13]*Minute Book of the Associated Branch Pilots, 1920-1945*, in possession of the authors. See November 24, 1925, 122; November 20, 1928, 168; October 27, 1925, 113.

[14]Ibid., April 5, 1921, 18.

[15]Ibid., May 10, 1920, 4.

[16]Ibid., June 2, 1920, 5.

[17]Ibid., May 30, 1922, 44-45.

[18]Ibid., June 14, 1922, 45.

[19]Ibid., July 11, 1922, 48.

[20]Ibid., July 24, 1923, 74.

[21]Ibid., July 13, 1920, 7; January 1923, 52.

[22]Ibid., March 21, 1922, 38.

[23]Ibid., July 21, 1925, 111; May 12, 1925, 103; March 16, 1926, 117.

[24]Louisiana, Supplementary to the several Acts relative to the harbor master, wardens and pilots of the Port of Orleans, and for other purposes, *Acts* (1837), 101-3. The rate of $3.50 per foot of draft was set by this Act, and the rate was still in effect in 1908 under Louisiana Act No. 55, Senate Bill No. 79.

[25]*Minute Books of the Associated Branch Pilots, 1920-1945*, July 17, 1928, 163.

[26]Ibid., March 7, 1921, 15.

[27]Ibid., May 29, 1923, 65.

[28]Louisiana, An Act to amend and re-enact ..., *Acts* (1908), 60.

[29]*Minute Books of the Associated Branch Pilots, 1920-1945*, May 15, 1923, 62.

[30]Ibid., April 23, 1929, 178.

[31]Louisiana, An Act relative to Pilots, *Acts* (1864), 164-66.

[32]Louisiana, *Report, Official Journal of the House of Representatives* (1846), 96.

[33]*Minute Books of the Associated Branch Pilots, 1920-1945*, April 23, 1929, 174-79.

[34]Ibid., Oct. 2, 1923, 78.

[35]Ibid., July 5, 1927, 143.

[36]*Report of the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, 1919* (Washington, DC, 1919), 2656.

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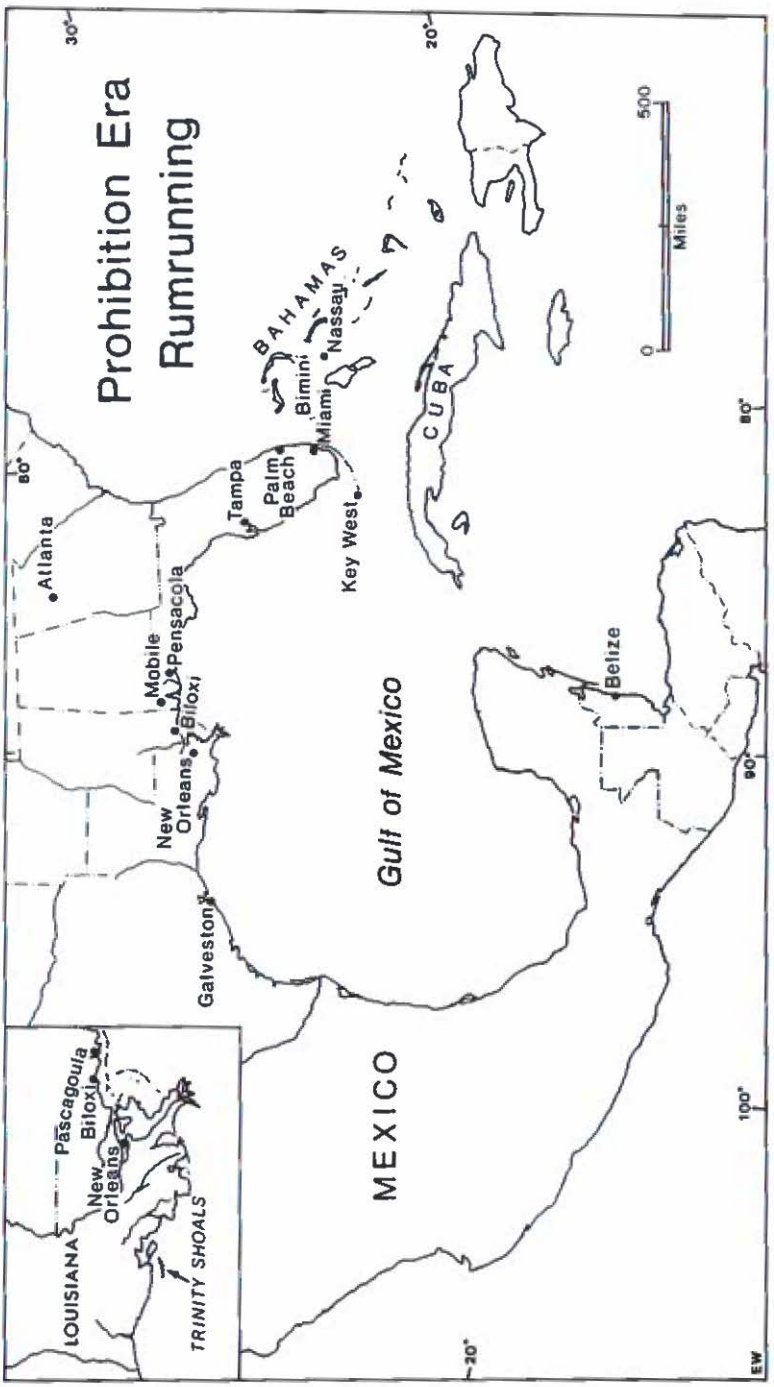
Prohibition Era
Rumrunning
Atlanta
Mobile
Pensacola
Biloxi
New Orleans
Galveston
Tampa
Palm Beach
Miami
Key West
BAHAMAS
Bimini
Nassau
CUBA
Belize
Gulf of Mexico
MEXICO
LOUISIANA
Pascagoula
Biloxi
New Orleans
TRINITY SHOALS
0
500
Miles
30°
20°
80°
90°
100°

Delivering Demon Rum: Prohibition Era Rumrunning in the Gulf of Mexico

Randy Sanders

'Tis easy and free for us boys out at sea
Way-o, whiskey and gin!
Pigs will fly when the country goes dry
Give us the word, we'll run the rum in.
–Joseph Chase Allen, "The Smuggler's Chanty," 1921[1]

The United States has never been defeated in any enterprise she has undertaken, and under the providence of God, in the face of the devil and the rum-runners, she is not going to be defeated in this fight.
–Federal Judge H. D. Clayton,
New Orleans, 1925[2]

Mrs. Archie Gordon, active member in good standing of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, could not believe her luck. News of the seizure of a rumrunner in Biloxi circulated quickly among those who aligned themselves with "dry" forces. Mrs. Gordon made her way to the sheriff's office just in time to join federal and county officials on their way to smash fifty thousand dollars worth of contraband liquor seized in the capture of the smuggling vessel. Mrs. Gordon took her turn eagerly with the men swinging axes and hammers. Destroying demon rum constituted her "life's greatest experience," Mrs. Gordon said in a state of near ecstasy as the alcoholic spray soaked her face, hair, and dress.[3]

Not everyone along the Gulf Coast shared Mrs. Gordon's delight in thwarting those who delivered demon rum. In fact many residents regarded rumrunners as admirable figures and discussed their thrilling exploits over drinks. Rumrunners served not only as couriers of liquor, but as a vital link with the outside world in a sequestered America. Even Prohibition officials, who responded repeatedly to the success of rumrunners with ever increasing resources and more aggressive tactics, became more internationally minded. National Prohibition began as an isolationist effort to quarantine America from

the evils of liquor, but the practical difficulties of trying to halt rumrunners pointed to the futility of these isolating tendencies.

Gulf Coast residents seemed to enjoy drinking all the more after it became illegal. In 1926 one survey, based on reports of social workers nationwide, cited New Orleans as America's wettest city with bootlegging and general disregard of the law evident throughout the city. According to another national survey made by the United States Attorney General's Office in 1924, south Louisiana remained ninety percent "wet." The report also revealed that Florida had a seventy-five percent non-enforcement rate, and that coastal zones generally exhibited only meager support for Prohibition. Indeed the successful arrival of a blockade runner aroused admiring comment from Galveston to Miami. A reporter from New Orleans, writing for the *New York Times* noted that the successes of rumrunners produced smiles in New Orleans. "Mobile begins to beam pleasantly and to talk a little thickly. Gulfport appears in high spirits. Pensacola, Key West, and Palm Beach are mirthful."[4]

Gulf Coast state authorities not only displayed particular apathy when it came to enforcement, some even broke the law themselves. When the mayor of Atlanta asked Governor Huey P. Long of Louisiana what he was doing to enforce Prohibition Long replied, "not a damn thing." In 1920 the Mississippi legislature voted down a bill to aid federal authorities in running down bootleggers. Declaring that liquor was being sold openly to members of the state legislature, the Federal Prohibition Commissioner for Mississippi, pleaded with lawmakers to reveal the source of their supply. In Texas so many saloons crowded coastal Galveston that one prominent law officer thought it best to consider the town "outside the United States." In Alabama Prohibition authorities raided a fishing camp and found the state's governor with his suitcase full of smuggled whiskey. A state senator from Florida even supplemented his income by owning a rumrunning vessel.[5]

The low price of booze in the Gulf served as evidence of the smugglers' success. When a Prohibition official claimed that bootleggers sold real, that is distillery not homemade, whiskey in New Orleans at sixty dollars a quart, the *New Orleans Item* called that estimate "insidious propaganda." No Louisiana gentleman would pay such a price the paper trumpeted. In fact the cost of smuggled liquor

in New Orleans and Miami was considerably less than in New York. Good Scotch for example brought about six dollars a quart in Gulf Coast cities while in New York that same bottle cost between thirteen and twenty dollars.[6]

This price difference did not escape the attention of federal Prohibition authorities. Nor did the flagrant liquor sales. New Orleans was judged "as wet as in the old days." Ships brought liquor freely, the city sold drinks openly, and residents drank excessively. "We fail to see why New Orleans should close up like a clam," said one local. Speaking before the Law Enforcement League, Major Roy Haynes, United States Prohibition Enforcement Commissioner, indicated that New Orleans was one of the biggest centers for the illegal importation of liquor into the United States with hundreds of vessels anchored at any given time just outside the three-mile limit of United States territorial waters. In Miami bellhops took liquor orders from guests as they carried their bags to their rooms. "I never thought it possible for smugglers to get so much liquor into the South," said one observer after traveling the Gulf Coast from New Orleans to Miami.[7]

In May 1922 Colonel L. G. Nutt, Acting Federal Prohibition Director, expressed surprise at the ease with which the illegal market operated in Florida. Prohibition investigators had no difficulty locating bootleggers. When asked, locals nonchalantly directed them as if to a popular tourist attraction. When contacted, bootleggers discussed transactions like bankers. Indeed several of them gave bankers as references, and some, after closing negotiations, had bankers hold the purchase price in trust and witness the contracts. "We will contract for all the liquor you want," one brazen smuggler stated matter-of-factly. "We will go and fetch it in twenty-four hours and deliver it wherever you say."[8]

Prohibition forces repeatedly took aim at the South. For example, in the winter of 1925 the Coast Guard instituted a Gulf Coast blockade. Federal authorities had discovered a major smuggling ring operating out of New Orleans and initiated an undercover operation. The sting was a marked success. Local liquor syndicates agreed quickly to pay undercover agents who were posing as crooked government officials, for information and protection. One undercover agent received ten thousand dollars to be delivered to the regional

Unloading a captured rumrunner, Mobile. Erik Overbey Collection, University of South Alabama Archives.

Prohibition director as a bribe. Other agents "sold" information on Coast Guard movements and in some cases, actually helped unload cases of liquor from rumrunning vessels. The Grand Jury indicted thirty-four bootleggers and crooked officials including the controller of the New Orleans customs district, the sheriff of neighboring St. Bernard Parish, and a captain on the New Orleans police force.[9]

Again in 1928 the Coast Guard targeted the Gulf. That year they surrounded Florida with the largest blockade ever initiated in the area. The liquor runners saw what was happening and decided to "watch the proceedings from shore." But the success was short lived. The next month when a United States representative from Florida called his state as "dry as the Sahara Desert," the resulting explosion of laughter that ripped through the House forced the congressman to retreat to his seat.[10]

During the early days of Prohibition federal enforcement efforts concentrated on domestic alcohol supplies. As whiskey, rum, and gin supplies within the country began to decline, bootleggers began to provide substitutes. They added brown coloring and tap water to industrial alcohol, and sold the concoction as whiskey. This

homemade booze killed some imbibers, while others sobered up to blindness, or blackened teeth. In the South another elixir called Jamaica ginger became the intoxicant of choice. Nicknamed "jake", the drink blistered lips and burned throats. "It was liquid fire," remembered one who tried jake in Texas, "the wildest, most horrible drink you can imagine... It stoned you into a weird type of intoxication, a violent, brawling, broad-chasing insanity." Even worse, the drink left many with "jake foot," a malady that caused the dragging of one foot and often led to total paralysis. Faced with such dangers, drinking Americans began to demand "the real stuff." Hence, the rumrunners.[11]

Rumrunning involved many different types of vessels: ocean freighters, schooners, skiffs, speedboats, fishing boats, and tugboats. Huge liquor syndicates operated as well as local fishermen hauling in a few cases. All these different types of vessels operated throughout Prohibition, but as enforcement became more effective, smuggling became much more organized and specialized.

Rumrunning always operated on two tiers. Larger vessels could withstand rough open seas impossible for small boats and could carry thousands of bottles. In the early days of Prohibition rum freighters would gather at the edge of the three-mile limit in the shipping lanes of Gulf Coast cities such as Tampa, Mobile, New Orleans, and Galveston. Where these liquor ships gathered came to be called "rum row." Large profits resulted with little risk, as long as the ships remained outside the three-mile limit of territorial waters.

Americans owned most of the rum ships registered under foreign papers. But the promise of easy money also tempted foreigners. One British gentleman, Sir Broderick Hartwell, advertised in the *London Times* guaranteeing a twenty percent return every sixty days for investors. Sir Broderick sold ten thousand cases of Scotch per month to American liquor syndicates who provided gold bonds as security for later cash exchanges. His ships stayed well out to sea, operating as an international liquor shop. The liquor syndicates used their own smaller vessels to transport the huge shipments the rest of the way into shore, often having bribed local enforcement officials to insure unhindered passage.[12]

Most buyers, however, did not have the millions required for transactions such as those carried on by Sir Broderick. More often

schooners of various sizes filled their holds to capacity in foreign ports and sold their loads piecemeal. Some might carry six hundred cases, others five thousand. These rum schooners would gather at rum row and hang hand-lettered signs from their riggings advertising the prices and types of liquor they had on board. To maximize profits these rumrunners abandoned bulky liquor cases in favor of what came to be called "hams." These consisted of straw-padded triangles of six bottles stacked three on the bottom, then two in the middle, then one on top, and sewn tightly inside a burlap covering. "Hams" took up less space than the cases, weighed less, and could withstand rougher treatment. Often rum ships would run close to selected reefs and drop their "hams" overboard, marking them with buoys.[13]

Later, small boats with grappling hooks would pick up the cargo and transport it to shore. Nobel Laureate, William Faulkner, lived in New Orleans in the early 1920s and was employed by a bootlegger in a similar manner. Faulkner would take the bootlegger's launch from Lake Ponchartrain into the Gulf to an island where rum from Cuba had been buried. Faulkner would dig up the rum and bring it back to New Orleans.[14]

Those who consumed the contraband began to look for mud on the label of the bottles, and the best bars along the Gulf coast served only bottles with labels bearing evidence of having been in the sea. Many rumrunners who picked up booze directly from rum row made a ritual of dunking the contraband in the water before they loaded it ashore so that the salt water stains gave it a "right off the boat" look.[15]

The other level of rumrunning involved the smaller craft that transported liquor ashore. Smaller boats of every description would come alongside the mother ships to check the price lists on the rigging. Then they would yell out what brands and how many cases they wanted, throw a roll of bills up on deck, and load up. On their return trips to shore, the smugglers ran only at night completely blacked out. Even on the foggiest nights they rang no bells, sounded no horns. The stress was enormous, but the promise of profits lured many to take the risk.[16]

The few scattered Coast Guard boats patrolling the vast shoreline of the Gulf Coast during the first years of Prohibition posed little threat to these seamen. If a revenue cutter happened upon one of

them, the crew could easily drop their small loads over the side. Bringing liquor ashore offered many meager-living fishermen, shrimpers, spongers, and tug-boat operators an opportunity for what seemed to them a great deal of money.

The participation of amateurs often lent an atmosphere of burlesque to the smuggling scene. Some schemed to transport liquor in coconut shells and hollowed out animal bones. The navy court martialed two naval reserve pilots charged with transporting liquor from Bimini to Key West in the seaplane they flew. In another instance two Florida fishermen making a liquor run from Cuba ran out of both gasoline and food. These would-be smugglers survived eleven days on their contraband beer until rescued by a steamer.[17]

But after a few years this high-seas humor turned grim, for amateur rumrunners faced increasing chances of capture by a stepped-up Coast Guard enforcement. As the dry navy became more determined, many working seamen hauling contraband as a sideline decided against the risk and gave up the practice.

Another threat to smugglers arose from competition. Smugglers often betrayed their rivals by tipping off federal agents when and where competing liquor ships would arrive. The informers benefited in two ways. The contraband they hauled would increase in value as a result of the shortage created by the seizure of competitors' goods. Also for at least a night or two enforcement attention would be diverted away from the informers' own runs.[18]

The riches that attracted the novice also revived an ancient threat to seamen. Rum pirates arose to steal both liquor and cash from smugglers. After the theft the pirates might leave the crew of a rumrunner tied up, with no food or water, no compass and no charts, their wheel smashed, sails slashed, and engine disabled. Often rum ships drifted ashore with no sign of liquor or crew. Rumrunners began to arm themselves in response to these threats. And once armed, smugglers became more likely to defend their cargo even against representatives of the law.[19]

Rum pirates also threatened Prohibition officers. A Florida man known as the "Gulf Stream pirate" killed a Secret Service agent and two Coast Guard captives after they refused to walk the plank. In another incident off the Florida coast two captured rum pirates broke

loose and killed the skipper of a Coast Guard patrol boat along with two of his crew.[20]

Frustrated by the enormity of the enforcement problems, federal agents and coastguardsmen began to implement more drastic measures, quickening their use of deadly force. Revenue boats began to fire on yachts that ignored their warnings. The Miami Chamber of Commerce protested to the United States Treasury Secretary after an enforcement boat fired on *Cocoon*, the yacht of a visiting New York silk tycoon. In another instance a Coast Guard cutter chased a yacht into the Miami River with guns blazing, sending innocent civilians scrambling for cover and afterward howling in protest. Two smugglers from Galveston, Texas shot back after federal forces fired warning shots at them. The ensuing gun battle left one rumrunner dead and another wounded. And in the most celebrated Prohibition incident of high seas interdiction, the Coast Guard sank a three-masted rumrunning schooner two hundred miles out in the Gulf after a two day chase.[21]

With the Tariff Act of 1922 United States officials began searching foreign vessels suspected of violating Prohibition laws if they were within four leagues (twelve miles) of shore. At the same time the United States began to seek the help of Great Britain. The British flag flew over the majority of the large rumrunning ships. Now the United States called on the United Kingdom to recognize extension of the three-mile to a twelve-mile territorial limit. In May 1924 the long-sought treaty was signed. The Anglo-American liquor treaty did not extend the distance United States officials could search suspected vessels flying the Union Jack to twelve miles, but specified that they could board and search vessels at a distance of up to one hour's sailing time from shore. But the vagueness of the language caused problems. There was no reliable way of determining the exact sailing time of suspected vessels. Hence, the Coast Guard could never be certain if its seizures were legal or not. In one of the first seizures after the treaty, the Coast Guard had no record speed or time for the captured rumrunner, so they held a test run at sea. When the one-hour sailing time of the vessel failed to put it at the distance from shore at which the Coast Guard had seized it, federal officials had to order its release. Even so, the new enthusiasm in enforcement efforts raised the stakes for smugglers. Ships began staying much further out to sea to avoid Coast Guard harassment.[22]

Enforcement officials also began to base seizures on the doctrine of "constructive presence." This concept, never accepted by the British government, held that even smugglers way out at sea were, "by construction," present in territorial waters through their connection to the delivery boats that clearly traversed territorial waters. The Coast Guard began to board and search mother vessels if they suspected a connection to small delivery boats.[23]

The Coast Guard's efforts sought to push rum row farther and farther out into the ocean. The farther out the row was, the farther the distance the delivery boats had to run, and the more difficult their task. It worked. An observer noted the results during the Christmas season of 1924.

> Rum running has altered almost unbelievably in a year. The holiday aspect is gone. The rules are changed. The amateur is no more. Bargain days along Rum Row have ended. Instead of waiting three miles off shore the nearest whiskey ships are thirty miles out, and some vessels are even fifty. There is danger in every foot of water. The Coast Guard shoots promptly, though the rum runners say it shoots badly. According to their notion, they have a greater peril to fear. The hijacker is abroad on the water in numbers never before equaled. The man who stirs from the coast...is likely to have his craft sunk by a chance shot or to lose his movable wealth at the point of a pirate's pistol.... Of all the easy money in the world rum-running money is the hardest to earn.[24]

Rumrunning had indeed changed, methods of payment and delivery had altered. No longer did fishing rigs pull alongside mother ships to pick up five or ten cases. The few ships that still sold to all comers usually set minimum orders of twenty-five cases or more to discourage amateurs. Because of pirates, cash no longer changed hands at sea. Liquor syndicates took orders and received payment on shore. At sea only receipts were presented by pick-up boats to mother ships. Even those were not receipts that could be used as courtroom evidence, but simply halves of dollar bills or playing cards torn in two–halves that had to match the other halves which had been forwarded to the mother ship's captain by the onshore syndicate. Each bill or card once pieced together represented a pre-determined number of cases.[25]

If as a result of the Anglo-American treaty rumrunning became better organized, the enforcement also became better organized. In March 1925 under a plan of reorganization, Prohibition enforcemnt efforts, heretofore scattered among Customs, Justice, the Coast Guard, and the Treasury Prohibition Unit, became centralized under the command of Lincoln C. Andrews, a former World War I general. Hundreds of faster, more effective vessels were also added to the enforcement fleet: destroyers, patrol boats, launches, sub-chasers, and gunboats fashioned a sturdier embargo against smuggling. Congress appropriated twelve million dollars for the new fleet and authorized a force of four thousand officers and men to operate it.[26]

Some of the new equipment was not state of the art. Twenty World War I destroyers moved from mothballs to the Coast Guard's blockade force. The vessels had high superstructures and narrow hulls that made them ride rough in the calmest waters. They burned coal in an age of oil, trailed billows of smoke from four stacks, and at night spit out sparks that rumrunners could spot for miles. But the badly outnumbered Coast Guard was glad to have them none the less.[27]

In response to the new Prohibition navy, smugglers' delivery boats also changed. In the early days of Prohibition, simple work boats served the needs of smugglers. In New Orleans a shipyard owner, Andrew Higgins, developed a highly maneuverable shallow-draft lugger called the Eureka. Oystermen and loggers in particular liked the ability of the Eureka to work through grass-choked swamps without snarling its propeller. They also valued the boat's ability to maintain a speed of fifteen miles an hour even when fully loaded. Rumrunners also soon realized that this lugger would be very useful to them, and they began ordering boats from Higgins in increasing numbers. Then the Coast Guard, having seized one of the luggers, saw that it would also serve their purposes, and they asked Higgins to build the same boat, but with more speed. Higgins accommodated the Coast Guard, only to have rumrunners return and request the same up-graded vessel. Thus developed a sort of miniature navy-building race between the Coast Guard and the smugglers.[28]

Early smugglers had also used fishing boats. The bootleggers would buy slow-moving fishing boats, equipped and ready to use, no improvements requested, and bring cargoes from the mother ships

hidden among nets, traps, and fish. Some rumrunners now tried speedboats. But speedboats were designed for inland use, and did not handle well when loaded down in rough seas. So the smugglers designed their own. Boatbuilders took the basic design of the fishing boat, built sturdy yet light, widened the stern, and dropped in Pierce-Arrow truck engines or World War I Liberty airplane engines. This sea skiff became the new standard for smugglers.[29]

Most effective were the special rumrunning vessels which shipyards built to individual specifications. These specials had the hull slung low so that the liquor rode below the water line and kept the boat close to the horizon, making it hard to see and almost impossible for Coast Guard guns to hit. Standard equipment consisted of two 150-horsepower engines–huge engines for such small craft. Every bit of wood and metal had to be meticulously weighed so as to barely counterbalance the engines. Calculations always included the weight of two-hundred cases of liquor. These thirty-foot-long boats could move at thirty-five miles an hour fully loaded. When underway, one bootlegger observed, "you can't see nothing but flying water." Typically the cost ran about five thousand dollars, a large sum for the 1920s. But three successful runs paid for the boat and left a bit of profit.[30]

These new fast boats spurred a new Prohibition industry. Transport fees were ten dollars a case, or two thousand dollars for a night of danger. The men who ran these fast delivery boats considered themselves specialists. They disdained the term bootlegger which implied buying and selling booze. Instead they identified themselves as rumrunners, a name that had a romantic appeal, for it connoted danger and nocturnal adventure.[31]

In the war between the Coast Guard and the smugglers, both sides employed informers. Few large cargoes could leave liquor supply centers in the Bahamas, Cuba, Belize, or Mexico without word reaching the Coast Guard. Conversely, smugglers' sentinels reported any sign of activity by the dry navy. And both sides knew and kept tabs on the other's major vessels. Coast Guard ships watched smugglers' ships, and smugglers' ships watched Coast Guard ships. Each side waited for its opportunity or tried to outfox the other.[32]

Smugglers' scout ships roamed between rum row and the shore searching for an area of relaxed coverage. When they discovered a

soft spot, they radioed the syndicate which then diverted its runners through the safe areas. When no soft spot could be found runners worked in teams. Three boats would set out together. If revenue cutters gave chase, one of the three, hauling only empty cases, would lag behind until caught while the other two boats went merrily on their way. Smugglers also used airplanes, occasionally to drop off small loads of liquor, but mostly to observe and report on Coast Guard movements.[33]

Although the enhanced Prohibition forces seized hundreds of rumrunners along the Gulf Coast, the Coast Guard realized that such piecemeal interdiction could never halt the flow of liquor that poured into the country. In 1926 the federal Prohibition chief estimated that his forces intercepted barely five percent of the liquor. If his estimate was correct, between five and ten million gallons of liquor entered the United States each year. The Department of Commerce made a "low estimate" of the value of smuggled liquor at forty million dollars a year.[34]

Once again the United States shed its isolationist mantle and asked Great Britain for help. The two countries agreed to hold talks in London in 1926. The Anglo-American liquor treaty of 1924 had a particularly glaring weakness: the Bahamas. British registry ships involved in rumrunning used the British colony of the Bahamas as a safe refuge. In the London conference Great Britain agreed to allow Coast Guard patrols inside Bahamian waters and to share information with the United States concerning suspicious vessels. In addition vessels owned or controlled by Americans would lose their British registration if they were found making false cargo or clearance declarations.[35]

With British cooperation the Coast Guard began concentrating on the mother ships rather than on delivery boats. But when the Coast Guard challenged these behemoths other problems arose. The case of the *Przemysl* represented the difficulties. In September 1927 the German schooner *Przemysl* set sail from Hamburg, bound for Vancouver, via the Panama Canal. The *Przemysl*'s cargo of liquor was valued at half a million dollars. Shipping liquor to a Canadian port such as Vancouver was perfectly legal. But the captain and first mate of the *Przemysl* had other plans. Before their departure from Hamburg, they got in touch with the American consul there and

procured from him a letter asking the United States officials at the Panama Canal to arrange the surrender of the ship in return for a fifty thousand dollars reward for the captain and first mate. After authorities took charge of the *Przemysl,* a federal judge in New Orleans ruled that the seizure was illegal. The debacle cost the captain and first mate their mariners' licenses.[36]

The success of the London accords had all but shut down smuggling in the Bahamas by 1929, forcing the liquor trade northward. From 1926 to 1928 British liquor exports to Canada more than quadrupled, reaching over half a million gallons a year. Once again the United States sought anti-smuggling cooperation from another nation. Following discussions at Ottawa in January 1929 Canada agreed to clamp down on liquor smuggling from Canada to the United States.[37]

But the sealing off of Canada simply shifted still more rumrunning to the Gulf of Mexico. The *I'm Alone* incident, which occurred a few months after the Ottawa Conference, furnishes one example not only of the shift of traffic but of the continuing difficulties with international maritime law. The *Washington Post* called the sinking of the rum schooner the most sensational episode "to arise in this country's efforts to keep out foreign liquor." Built in Nova Scotia in the summer of 1923 for the express purpose of smuggling liquor, the three-masted schooner was named *I'm Alone* by her owner because he had gone into business for himself. Although law enforcement officials observed the *I'm Alone* breaking United States Prohibition laws dozens of times, the vessel, which employed a 200-horsepower auxiliary motor, had always proven too fast for capture. In 1928 in an effort to elude the constant surveillance of the Coast Guard, the *I'm Alone* transferred her homeport, though not her Canadian registry, from Nova Scotia to Belize in British Honduras.[38]

In November 1928 the *I'm Alone* took on fourteen hundred cases of assorted liquors on the Caribbean island of St. Pierre. A representative of the Great West Wine Company, which was shipping the liquor, gave the captain of the ship twelve or fifteen halves of numbered United States one-dollar bills, along with instructions to deliver his cargo to the person who presented to him the other half of the numbered dollar bills after he reached a point thirty miles south of Trinity Shoals on the Louisiana coast.[39]

As the *I'm Alone* arrived at the appointed position the Coast Guard cutter *Wolcott* spotted her and began following her. After forty-eight hours or so, unable to shake the Coast Guard cutter, the schooner left the area and returned to Belize still carrying her cargo. After a day or two the vessel cleared port again, this time with Nassau listed as her destination. But the *I'm Alone* returned to the same position thirty miles south of the Louisiana coast, found the buyer and delivered her cargo as planned.[40]

The rum schooner then returned to Belize for another load. On March 12, 1929, the *I'm Alone* cleared her homeport officially bound for Hamilton, Bermuda, carrying a cargo of over twenty-eight hundred cases of whiskey and rum, and one case of cherry brandy. But when the *I'm Alone* returned to the waters off Louisiana, the Coast Guard cutter *Wolcott* once again appeared and headed in her direction. The *I'm Alone* took a south by southwest course. After about half an hour the Coast Guard cutter caught up and ordered the schooner to stop.[41]

A former British naval officer several times decorated for bravery during World War I, John T. Randall, commanded the *I'm Alone*. Captain Randall replied: "You have no jurisdiction over me. I am on the high seas outside treaty waters. I cannot and will not heave to." The *Wolcott* responded with its four pound cannon, sending a blast through the sails and riggings. When the *I'm Alone* still refused to stop the cutter began to fire with machine guns. Suddenly the cutter's gun jammed and she called for help. A second cutter, the *Dexter*, from Pascagoula, Mississippi, soon arrived with orders to stop the Canadian rum ship at all cost. For the next day and a half the two cutters followed the liquor ship. On the morning of March 22 they had reached an area called Sigsbee Deep approximately 215 miles from the Louisiana coast. The *Dexter* approached the schooner and signaled to "Heave to or I'll fire at you."[42]

Captain Randall refused and the *Dexter* commenced firing. After about twenty shells had been fired the captain of the Coast Guard cutter called to the *I'm Alone*: "Now will you heave to?" Captain Randall again refused. The cutter again opened fire. After sending several dozen shells into the ship, the cutter again called: "Will you heave to?" Captain Randall still refused. Once more the *Dexter* showered shell and shot on the rumrunner, smashing her mast and firing broadside blasts as her crew huddled aft. Miraculously only

splinters hit the crew members. When the engineer reported that water was over the engine room floor Captain Randall ordered the crew to lower the lifeboats. But before the boats could be lowered, the front deck had sunk below the water level and the stern was rising. The captain ordered the men to throw anything that might float overboard and to abandon ship. All the crew members, swimming or hanging onto floating objects, made their way to the *Dexter*, except one French crewman drawn down by the suction of the sinking vessel. Once aboard the *Dexter* the crew of the *I'm Alone* were placed in irons and taken to New Orleans.[43]

The sinking of the rumrunner strained United States diplomatic relations with several foreign powers. Early headlines in England announced "British Seamen in Manacles" and "British Flag Fired Upon by American Coast Guard." British diplomats expressed dismay. The Anglo-American liquor treaty had made provisions for boarding and searching suspected British rumrunners. Nowhere had that treaty mentioned firing on, much less sinking, such ships. The British government emphasized that it had never recognized more than a three-mile territorial limit and that the *I'm Alone* had not violated the three-mile limit even by "construction," for it had no contact with the shore through small boats during the trip that ended with its sinking.[44]

Other governments followed suit. Canadian newspapers howled even louder than those in England. The *Toronto Daily Mail and Empire* called the United States the "bully of the high seas." The *Montreal Daily Star* saw the sinking as a "grave incident" humiliating to Canada. France became involved because a French national drowned in the incident. And in Belize, the homeport of the *I'm Alone*, hostility ran so high that the United States consul there felt compelled to ask the local police for protection.[45]

The secretary of the treasury defended the Coast Guard and tried to justify their actions by asserting that the *I'm Alone* had been engaged in smuggling for nearly five years. But the sinking of an unarmed boat drew criticism even in the American press. Rather than defend United States actions several papers called on the government to submit the case to the World Court or to arbitration. The *New Republic* urged the government not to attempt to defend "so shaky a position." The *New York Times* condemned the Coast Guard for

exercising the "combined functions of the President, the Congress, the Departments of State and Treasury, and armed forces of the United States, and shell and sink an unarmed foreign merchantman, suspected smuggler though she be, 200 miles beyond the normal jurisdiction limits of the nation." Albert W. Fox, in the *Washington Post*, saw the matter as a question of national affront. Fox wondered if it was America's intention "to claim the right under any circumstances to sink British ships by gun-fire on the high seas, put leg-irons on the officer and manacles on the crew, and carry them for trial to an American port 200 miles distant." And the New York *World* asked, "why should our Prohibition fanatics use shot and shell on this floating saloon to provoke mixed grins and wrath in the outer world?"[46]

The destruction of the Canadian rumrunner was a terrible embarrassment to newly elected President Herbert Hoover who had been in office only three weeks. The hostile reaction stirred up the wet-dry controversy that had plagued his 1928 campaign and forced him to rein in enforcement efforts. He instructed the Treasury Department to halt its violent tactics and quickly submitted the *I'm Alone* affair to an arbitration commission. There it was debated quietly for the next six years. In the end, the commission ruled that the sinking was unjustified and that the United States should apologize to the Canadian government and pay the owners of the ship and crew members a sum of twenty-five thousand dollars. During those years hundreds of bottles from the cargo of the *I'm Alone* washed ashore along the Louisiana coast.[47]

The Coast Guard continued to maintain an ocean blockade with a force that had grown to twelve thousand officers and men and five hundred ships of various kinds operating out of three hundred shore stations. In 1930 federal Prohibition enforcement appropriations reached their highest level at nearly fifteen million dollars.[48]

But the next year federal agents uncovered a gigantic liquor syndicate operating out of New Orleans with a network extending from Vancouver on the Pacific Coast across Canada and down through the United States to a rum fleet in the Gulf of Mexico. The smuggling ring maintained a short wave radio station to keep in touch with mother ships and intermediaries and dispatched airplanes to keep track of Coast Guard cutters. Federal authorities estimated

that at any given time the syndicate controlled at least a hundred vessels in the Gulf. New Orleans and other Gulf Coast cities served as ports of entry for shipments of liquor worth millions of dollars bound for Chicago, New York, and other inland cities.[49]

The Gulf Coast presented an especially attractive rumrunning location for several reasons. Caribbean rum was cheap, plentiful, and available at several locations in the Gulf of Mexico. Imported liquors such as Scotch, gin, brandy, wine, and champagne were also available. British colonies of the Bahamas and Belize operated as a sort of wholesale warehouse for European liquors. British shipments of liquor to Caribbean islands which supplied the Gulf Coast increased dramatically. In 1918 liquor exported to the Bahamas had totaled only 944 gallons. Four years later British booze flowing into the Bahamas reached 386,000 gallons. The simple registry procedures for ships to sail under the flag of the British empire encouraged Gulf Coast rumrunners to homeport in British Caribbean colonies and allowed them to operate freely up to the edge of United States territorial waters.[50]

In the 1932 presidential campaign Franklin Roosevelt promised to push for repeal of Prohibition. On December 5, 1933, for the first time in its history, the United States rescinded an amendment to the Constitution. Despite the best efforts of the federal government and the zeal of anti-saloon league crusaders like Mrs. Archie Gordon, Gulf Coast smugglers never stopped running the rum in. The contraband that flowed into the Gulf Coast throughout Prohibition pointed to the difficulties of trying to set up an embargo in an area with a long-standing tradition of smuggling and piracy. Gulf Coast residents demanded liquor and the shoreline invited smugglers. Prohibition enforcement forces invested massive sums of money to become increasingly efficient and organized, yet Gulf Coast rumrunning continued to flourish. During the course of Prohibition federal forces virtually eliminated the rum rows along the Atlantic Coast, shut down the flow of liquor out of the Bahamas, and sealed the border with Canada, but not the Gulf Coast.

Enforcement forces became more determined and assertive in their battles with rumrunners. But rather than producing success these efforts led to legal difficulties, international tensions, and criticism both at home and abroad. American demand and the smugglers'

continued success led to major changes in America's isolationist thinking. Efforts to thwart rumrunners at every step contradicted the isolationist rationale which had spurred Prohibition. Ironically, efforts to isolate America led to pleas for international cooperation. Government officials sought assistance from Great Britain with the Anglo-American Liquor treaty of 1924, again at the London Conference in 1926, and from Canada at the Ottawa Conference in 1929. The success of the rumrunners coupled with enforcement failures, such as the sinking of the *I'm Alone* in the Gulf, destroyed the illusion that America could hide behind the facade of isolationism.

Notes

[1]Everett S. Allen, *The Black Ships: Rumrunners of Prohibition* (Boston, 1979), xx.

[2]*New York Times*, August 28, 1925.

3"W.C.T.U. Worker Aids in Smashing $50,000 of Booze," *Times Picayune* (New Orleans), March 8, 1925. The literature on rumrunning in the Gulf of Mexico is scarce. Books on rumrunning abound but they concentrate on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, the Canadian border along the Great Lakes, and the liquor trade around the Bahamas. Although there is no standard work on rumrunning along the Gulf Coast, several general works on rumrunning mention incidents that occur in the Gulf of Mexico such as Coast Guard Commander Malcolm F. Willoughby's *Rum War at Sea* (Washington, 1964). Willoughby concentrates on the overall enforcement efforts of the Coast Guard and includes a chapter on "southern waters." Other works include Robert Carse's *Rum Row* (New York, 1959), which recounts how rumrunners operated, primarily out of the Bahamas, and Everett Allen's *Black Ships*, which serves as a visual guide to the types of vessels that operated as rumrunners.

[4]Martha Bensley Bruere, *Does Prohibition Work? A Study of the Operation of the Eighteenth Amendment Made by the National Federation of Settlements, Assisted by Social Workers in Different Parts of the United States* (New York, 1927); Jack O'Donnell, "Wet Around the Edges," *Collier's Weekly*, January 26, 1924, 5; Robert Hartsell Russell, "New Orleans and Nation-Wide Prohibition as Reflected in the *Times-Picayune*, 1918-1920," (Master's thesis, Louisiana State University, 1956), 52; Robert Mayer, "Bootlegger Heirs of the Buccaneers of Barataria," *New York Times*,October23, 1921, sec. 3.

[5]*New York Times*, October 1, 1931; Ibid., March 20, 1920; Andrew Sinclair, *Era of Excess: A Social History of the Prohibition Movement* (New York, 1964), 195; *New York Times*, November 24, 1926; Ibid., April 10, 1926.

[6]*New Orleans Item*, July 30, 1920; *New York Times*, March 5, 1922, sec. 2.

[7]"Scoffing at Dry Laws in the City of New Orleans," *New York Times*, November12, 1922, sec. 9; Ibid., December 5, 1922; Ibid., March 5, 1922, sec. 2.

[8]Ibid., May 21, 1922.

[9]Ibid., August 31, 1925; "Another 'Battle of New Orleans,'" *Times-Picayune*, August 12, 1925; *New York Times*, October 2, 1925, 24. For a thorough discussion of the undercover operation in New Orleans, including interviews with one of the undercover agents, see Joy Jackson, *Louisiana History* (Summer 1978): 261-84. See also *Times Picayune*, August 12, 1925; Ibid., December 10, 1925; *Times Picayune*, December 11, 1925.

[10]*New York Times*, January 13, 1928; Ibid., February 15, 1928.

[11]Carse, *Rum Row*, 27; John Kobler, *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York, 1973), 310-13.

[12]Lawrence Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy: The United States, Great Britain, and Prohibition* (Wilmington, DE, 1989), 3; "Fourth Bootleg Cruise by a Knight," *Times* (London), February 1, 1924; Roy A. Haynes, U.S. Prohibition Commissioner, "Real Sea Wolves Prey on Rum Ships," *New York Times*, August 1, 1923; Ibid., January 17, 1924.

[13]Carse, *Rum Row*, 67-8; Ibid., 25; James C. Young, "Where Rum Ships Play Hide and Seek," *New York Times*, April 21, 1929, sec. 5.

[14]John Hershey, *The Writer's Craft* (New York, 1974), 43.

[15]Young, "Where Rum Ships Play Hide and Seek"; Claude F. Blancq, Sr., retired deputy collector in charge of the Customs Marine Division in New Orleans, Louisiana, (n.d.), typewritten manuscript of recollections on Prohibition, in Louisiana Collection, New Orleans Public Library; Geoffrey Perrett, *America in the Twenties* (New York, 1982), 174.

[16]Carse, *Rum Row*, 68; Ibid., 64.

[17]*New York Times*, June 26, 1926; Ibid., April 17, 1929; Ibid., May 14, 1920; Ibid., July 13, 1920; Ibid., July 15, 1920; Ibid., January 24, 1923.

[18]Ibid., May 18, 1922.

[19]Carse, 126-30; *New York Times*, April 7, 1922.

[20]*Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), August 17, 1929; Carse, *Rum Row*, 126-30.

[21]*New York Times*, November 23, 1924; Ibid., June 17, 1926; Ibid., June 20, 1926, sec. 2; Ibid., August 27, 1923.

[22]Carse, *Rum Row*, 27, 135; Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy*, chapters 5-6.

[23]Carse, *Rum Row*, 135; Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy*, chapter 6.

[24]James C. Young, "Christmas Rum Meets Stiffer Blockade," *New York Times*, December 14, 1924, sec. 9.

[25]A.H. Ulm, "New Dry and Wet Fleets Mobilize For War," *New York Times*, March 29, 1925, sec. 9.

[26]Ibid., April 2, 1925; Ibid., May 14, 1924; Ibid., May 25, 1924, sec. 2; Ulm, "New Dry."

[27]Carse, *Rum Row*, 134-40.

[28]Lucille B. Schwab, "Andrew Jackson Higgins, Boatbuilder," *Southeast Louisiana Historical Association: Papers* (1980), 7: 52-3.

[29]*New York Times Magazine*, July 19, 1931, sec. 9; *New York Times*, September 24, 1922, sec. 2.

[30]Ulm, "New Dry"; Young, "Christmas Rum."

[31]Young, "Christmas Rum."

[32]Young, "Where Rum Ships Play."

[33]Ibid.; Howard Mingos, "Rum-Runners Laugh at 12-Mile Treaty," *New York Times*, 11 May 1924, sec. 9.

[34]Ibid., April 7, 1926; Sinclair, *Era of Excess*, 198.

[35]Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy*, 107-26.

[36]*New York Times*, November 19, 1927; Ibid., April 15, 1928; *Times-Picayune*, April 26, 1928.

[37]Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy*, 129.

[38]Ibid.,; *Washington Post*, May 27, 1931; M. Paul Holsinger, "The *I'm Alone* Controversy, 1929-1935," *Mid-America* 50 (1968):305. The *I'm Alone* incident generated news coverage in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* from March 24-31, 1929. For the British perspective see the *Times* (London), March 24-9, 1929.

[39]*New York Times*, March 25, 1929.

[40]Ibid., 22.

[41]Holsinger, "I'm Alone Controversy," 306.

[42]*New York Times*, March 25, 1929.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Ibid., March 24, 1929; Ibid., March 26, 1929; the *Times* (London), March 25, 1929; Ibid., March 28, 1929.

[45]Holsinger, "*I'm Alone* Controversy," 306-7; *New York Times*, March 27, 1929; Ibid., March 28, 1929.

[46]*New York Times*, March 26, 1929; Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy*, 133; *New Republic*, April 3, 1929, 1; Ibid., April 10, 1929, 213-14; *New York Times*, March 31, 1929, sec. 3; *Literary Digest*, April 6, 1929, 5.

[47]Spinelli, *Dry Diplomacy*, 132-3; Holsinger, "*I'm Alone* Controversy," 311; *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), April 12, 1931.

[48]Oliver McKee, Jr., "Rum Row Gone, But the 'War' at Sea Goes On," *New York Times*, March 31, 1929, sec. 9; Ibid., February 21, 1933.

[49]*Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), April 12, 1931; *New York Times*, April 12, 1931.

[50]David E. Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition* (Chicago, 1979), 21.

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Betty Soule, 1923. Author's Collection.

My Mother Was a Flapper and Other Tales

Mary Merritt Dawkins

The flapper was the effervescent character who marked the unique decade of the 1920s. She defied tradition with her rising hemlines and falling waists, she bobbed her hair and shed her corset and layer upon layer of undergarments. She smoked tobacco and learned to drink in a dry age. She shocked and worried her parents as she defied the manners and morals expected of her. She made for herself an unheard-of freedom. The typical flapper had prosperous parents, and in Pensacola she probably lived in North Hill or on the Bayshore. The privacy of the new closed-in cars made her the first generation of young women to be alone and unchaperoned with a young man. Her world was defined by the clothes she wore, by long rides in her boyfriend's flivver, the advent of jazz and dancing the Charleston, and defying the new law outlawing alcohol.

For those of us who grew up in the shadow of the flapper, this study has a certain familiarity to it, while at the same time we gained insight into attitudes of those who were outside the realm of the flapper phenomenon. The flapper was a young woman from a particular time and social strata, and according to F. Scott Fitzgerald, she was "lovely and expensive and about 19."[1] Her world has come to be called the Roaring Twenties, but in reality it was the decade from war to depression–November 1918 to November 1929. The flapper was fascinating because in breaking with tradition, she flaunted respectability and defied unwritten rules. It was a short and closely defined period, she soon married and joined the "older" crowd, and the stock market crash brought an abrupt end to the flapper era.[2]

Those who knew her later believe that Betty Soule probably took Pensacola by storm when she arrived with her family in June 1921.[3] Just graduated from a large Chicago high school, seventeen-year-old Betty had all of the traits that defined the flapper: urban, prosperous, and delighted in snubbing tradition. Flappers lived in the city, were seldom found in the evangelical hinterlands, and, according to Elizabeth Stevenson, the "unprosperous folks" had neither the time nor money to be a flapper.[4]

In breaking out of the Victorian mode and becoming more independent, the flapper was distinctly modern. And it was precisely her modernity that appalled many of her detractors. She demanded more freedom–the same as that experienced by the men she knew. She was loath to continue to be thought of as a masculine possession, as a love object. By the end of the 1920s "she had come a long way" towards meeting that goal.[5] Modern conveniences had come to households, giving postwar women more time for themselves than ever before.[6] They had a taste of working for pay during the war when they held down a variety of jobs. In Pensacola, the two oldest Merritt sisters went to work as secretaries for their father, but elsewhere young women also ran elevators, made ammunition, collected streetcar fares, and held any number of other jobs. In time many of these women returned to the office, and by 1930 more than ten million American women had jobs outside the home.[7] Women no longer "modeled themselves on their mothers, whose experience seemed unstable in the 1920s."[8] They simply would not be sent back to the sometimes empty lives of their mothers and grandmothers.

The most visible change in the postwar woman was the clothes she wore. These new clothes were shocking to her parents, who nonetheless gave thanks that the revolution taking place in America was at home, rather than in publications and on soap boxes.[9] It is her dress, her bathing suit in particular, that distinguishes the 1920s flapper. She discarded the long slim skirts her mother wore in suffragist marches, making hers nine inches above her ankle instead of six. Skirts continued to rise, and by the end of the decade some hems brushed the top of the knee. The flapper exchanged her mother's dark cotton stockings for flesh colored silk hose. The more daring young woman rolled her stockings below the knee, showing naked flesh between her skirt and her hose for the "first time since the fall of Rome," wrote Kenneth A. Yellis.[10]

In the early 1920s fashion writers predicted that women had lifted their hems far beyond modest limitations and that they would drop again by next year. Instead, skirts climbed a few "scandalous" inches higher.[11] The women, however, wanted knee-length no matter what the designers said, and skirts remained at the knee until the decade ended.[12] The short skirts with the waist dropped to the hip,

and the bosom being flattened and inconspicuous gave the young woman a "boyish" silhouette. Women abandoned their corsets, no more long, heavy-boned undergarments. They told their mothers that boys wouldn't dance with them if they wore corsets![13]

For more convenience and to carry their "boyish" appearance even further, they bobbed their hair, often outraging parents. In 1923 Betty Soule bobbed her hair while visiting grandparents in Michigan, and as was the custom, had a "switch" made from her discarded hair. On her return home, she used her "switch" to disguise the short hair, and when she stepped from the train her hair was in an up-swept style, thus postponing the inevitable furor at home. A year later Anna Lamar bobbed her hair shortly before her wedding, exasperating her father.[14]

The most popular way to wear short hair was in soft waves close to the head, giving a profile similar to long hair "done-up." In fact the close cropped waved hairdo is a familiar look of the 1920s. The most popular hat worn during the mid-to-late twenties was the close fitting "cloche," sometimes called a mushroom style.[15] In May 1922 one hairdresser predicted that short hair would be popular through the summer, at least. By 1924 the newspapers were featuring short hairstyles in their pages.[16] As it turned out, short hair remained popular throughout the decade. Bobbed hair became almost universal for girls in their twenties; very common among those women in their thirties and forties, and "by no means rare" among women of sixty. For a brief time, hair was not only bobbed, but often shingled in back with a style similar to that worn by men.[17]

The bobbed hair was not without its critics. Barbers challenged the hairdressers' right to cut women's hair. Naturally, it was understood that the women, preferring the hairdresser, didn't want to go to the barbershops. The barbers, however, contended that the professional hairdresser should not cut hair unless they were licensed as barbers. And "all the American womanhood appeared to insist upon was the best possible shingle."[18]

The popularity of the cloche hastened the decline of a number of depressed industries. In addition to the American milliners, other trades feeling the crunch brought on by the new fashions included those who made hairnets and hairpins, textile manufacturers, and

corset makers. Meanwhile, cosmetics businesses and beauty shops were doing a land-office business.[19]

What once would have been considered immoral–the use of face paint–became usual in the postwar decade. The increased use of lipstick and rouge by the flapper soon became commonplace and the cosmetic business flourished. It was not just the flapper who used the color, but women well into their sixties were known to add color to their cheeks and lips. Across the nation, with the growing use of cosmetics, beauty shops sprang up on almost every street corner. They gave facials, plucked and colored the eyebrows, and dyed the hair. In 1917 there were only two persons paying federal income tax as hairdressers or beauty shop operators. Ten years later in 1927, some eighteen thousand firms and individuals claimed to be in the beauty business when they filed their tax returns. Pensacola had only two two hairdressers in 1919 and ten years later, the 1927-28 City Directory listed six hairdressers or beauty shops.[20] The beautician had arrived! Across the country women bought a pound of face powder and eight compacts of rouge each year.[21] One writer noted in 1931 that if all of the lipsticks purchased that year were placed end to end, they would have reached from New York City to Reno.[22]

The more masculine their attire became, the more women painted their faces. Some dabbed little circles of rouge on their cheeks and found "kiss-proof" color for the lips. A flapper applied a seductive scent behind her ear before going out on an evening drive with her beau.[23] There is no evidence that Betty applied her "paint" in such a visible hue, but rather she learned to add color artfully, searching for a "natural" look. In fact there is nothing to suggest that any of the flappers of our acquaintance wore heavy vivid "face paint." To them cosmetics were used to enhance their looks, and the heavy-handed application of lipstick and rouge was left to those of lesser stature.

Betty was much more daring when it came to her beach attire. She said she never wore "those long suits seen in old pictures," but instead borrowed one from her brother. She did not recall what she wore to the required high school swimming class.[24] On the other hand the somewhat older Merritt sisters wore the familiar bathing suits of that period–tunics and bloomers, worn with long black cotton stockings. In photographs they have a scarf on their heads to keep

their hair in place. The young men who accompanied them to the beach wore short-sleeved knit tunics and long knit shorts.[25] Atlantic City had a "beach patrol" and girls appearing on the beach in a man's suit were given a ticket![26] The law was suspended briefly for the first Miss America pageant in the fall of 1921. In keeping with the tradition that continues to this day, preliminary contests were held locally around the country. In 1925 Lucie Davis Yonge, a young woman with deep Pensacola roots, was named Miss Pensacola and took the second highest honor in the Atlantic City contest. Named the inter-city beauty, her picture appeared on the front page of the *Pensacola Journal* on September 12, 1925.[27]

It was not just cosmetics and beauty shops that prospered and grew during the 1920s, the tobacco industry had its own growth. The sale of cigarettes more than doubled from 1920 to 1930, not all of it attributed to young women. By this time manufacturers were selling cigarettes in packs, and there was no longer a need to roll your own, so men bought more cigarettes. Some men did continue to roll their smokes for some time.[28] Judging from the Pensacola experience, we estimate that fully eighty percent of the young women of the 1920s smoked, for a time at least. Some quit smoking while still young women, as in the case of Betty whose serious illness at age twenty-eight brought her habit to a sudden stop. On the other hand, her sister-in-law smoked until her death at age seventy-eight. The young women of the twenties, now in their nineties, were probably the generation with the highest incidence of smoking America has ever known. Their daughters' generation also had a high incidence of smokers.[29]

As could be assumed, when some began to smoke they attempted to hide it from their parents. Take the case of Em Merritt who had been smoking for some time when she took a trip with her parents. "We know you smoke, Em," her mother told her adding that the trip would be too long if she tried to hide her smoking.[30] Smoking in public places was not accepted uniformly, we have learned. We had expected that a woman would smoke in restaurants, and she may have in other cities. However, it seems that the B&B Restaurant may have been the only one in Pensacola to allow women to smoke.[31] Most, if not all, of the women smoking during that period used a cigarette holder. After a time the cigarette holder was

no longer fashionable and is seldom seen today. The growth in the advertising industry may account for some of the universal smoking among young women. Advertisers would use popular, well known actresses to sell a product, as in a 1927 Lucky Strike ad. It portrays an actress who contends that a Lucky Strike not only gives her pleasure but "protects my voice."[32] Although a "lady" never smoked on the city streets, by the end of the decade, women were smoking almost anywhere else without shocking anyone.

Growing out of the idealism and sacrifice brought on by World War I, the Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment prohibiting the possession and sale of alcohol. It was quickly ratified, and just as quickly regretted. Many protested it almost from its inception. In northwest Florida, Escambia was one of four Florida counties to exercise the local option and liquor was sold in the county until the law became effective in January 1919. Also in Pensacola, attorney Philip Beall contested the constitutionality of the new law, while in Boston, "Back Bay" socialites were also challenging the law.[33] Although it cannot be said that booze was readily available, throughout Prohibition anyone who really wanted liquor could usually find some.

"Pensacola May Say It's Dry, But Beer Wets Many Kitchens," screamed a September 1928 front page headline. It may be dry on Sunday or when the preacher visits, the writer claimed, but on weekdays the kitchen is wet and getting wetter, it continued. This news article plotted the home brew story, including how to obtain the malt and continuing with the process of brewing and finally bottling and capping the finished product. The same morning that this story appeared, an interim minister at First Baptist Church declared Prohibition a moral law and an economic boon to the country, and said it was here to stay.[34] Away from the churches and newspapers, others not only called Prohibition a mistake, they actively sought to prove the law was almost worthless.

The Volstead Act, the enabling regulation for the Eighteenth Amendment, allowed a mix of half of one percent alcohol, or what was called "near beer."[35] In Pensacola the Lewis Bear Company began selling "BEVO," a non-alcoholic beer supplied by the Anheuser-Busch company of St. Louis, Missouri.[36] Uncle Sam released 240 million quarts of alcohol to be used for toilet water, hair tonic, and other

legitimate commercial purposes. About ten percent of this alcohol found its way into the hands of bootleggers, who turned it into moonshine.

Meanwhile, at homes throughout northwest Florida, families made their own brew in basements and bathrooms.[37] Pensacola may have been one of the most receptive cities in the country to the purchase of moonshine. There was a strong navy tradition and the young aviators were imbued with a certain amount of daring as they flew the flimsy new flying machines. In addition, the European culture of the old seacoast town remained a strong force. Another influence may have been Pensacola's proximity to Cuba. A close family friend who was in the boating business used his fast seaworthy launch in the rumrunning trade. In later years, our family borrowed this rumrunner for Sunday afternoon swimming trips to Santa Rosa Island.[38]

Men and women were drinking together, and while women had never entered the saloon, they frequented the new speakeasy which had replaced the tavern. "Among the well-to-do people," wrote Frederick Lewis Allen in 1931, "the serving of cocktails before dinner became almost socially obligatory."[39] Soon, the late-day cocktail party became an American custom and in time replaced the afternoon tea-party.[40] While Prohibition hardly slowed liquor's flow to a trickle in the general population, drinking was down on the college campuses. This fact surprised and delighted parents at home.[41]

In other American cities, the flapper's beau may have been Joe College, but in Pensacola she preferred the young navy flight student. In fact rare was the graduating class that left Pensacola without at least one marriage to go along with the shiny new gold wings. All three of the Merritt sisters married naval officers during this period, and two of them were fliers. By 1930 Pensacola had earned the title of "mother-in-law" of the navy![42] For years Pensacola's social life had been influenced by the navy, and it was never more true than after the local navy's conversion to aviation and the arrival of the young flight students. The navy-civilian social calendar included weekly dinner dances at the San Carlos, twice monthly dances at the Country Club on the Bayshore, and parties at private clubs around town. At all of these affairs booze was prevalent.[43] Most of the men had flasks which fit neatly into their hip pockets, and sometimes the hosts would have liquor on hand. One writer said that before skirts went

up, a girl could keep a flask in her garter. Being illegal may have multiplied the pleasure of the drinks.[44]

As the use of strong liquor and tobacco became more customary, the use of language usually considered unfit for a "lady" was soon a habit among these "daughters of ladies." The use of "hell" and "damn" in ordinary conversations was the usual vocabulary of these women of the twenties.[45] The flappers of our acquaintance were no exception seasoning their daily speech with "hell" and "damn." In fact at least two of them probably had a vocabulary including much stronger language which we do not recall. In company with other young women of the time, they considered themselves unshockable. Bridge table talk soon included what once were barroom anecdotes, and led the way to more frankness in books and theater. These changes in everyday language also helped bring about changes found in manners and morals.[46]

The Roaring Twenties made the world of the flappers, where every aspect of the decade fit together to form their lives. As the first generation of modern women to smoke tobacco and drink hard liquor, they moved away from the mores of another time and place and into their own customs. Ownership of the new closed-in cars almost doubled in the decade before 1930, and the flapper enjoyed the privacy these afforded. When her world is considered, it should come as no surprise that the flapper became the "Grandmother" of the sixties!

It was a decade when America went dry and liquor flowed across the land faster than ever. A flask became as much a part of men's attire as the wrist watch, and families were split over their daughters' use of cigarettes, gin, and all-night auto rides. In Pensacola, airplane crashes from time to time gave the young aviator a "devil may care" attitude and a motto to "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you may die." These were exciting years that no one will ever forget and no sane person would ever want to repeat.

Notes

[1]Quoted in William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago, 1958), 172.

[2]Elizabeth Stevenson, *Babbitts and Bohemians: The American* 1920s (New York, 1967), 143-44; Henry F. May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920s," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (December 1956):409.

[3]Mary Oliver Soule, Betty's sister-in-law, met her in 1936, this conclusion was made by Mrs. Soule and the writer, Betty's daughter. Of particular interest is the great population difference between Pensacola and Chicago in 1921, in addition to the fact that Betty was "a Yankee." In late 1923, Betty Soule married Jack Merritt and became the sister-in-law of the Merritt sisters mentioned here. In all cases I have used the maiden names for those in the text, their names in 1920.

[4]Stevenson, *Bobbitts and Bohemians*, 142.

[5]Luechtenburg, *Perils*, 159; Kenneth A. Yellis, "Prosperity's Child: Some Thoughts on the Flapper," *American Quarterly* 21 (Spring 1969):45.

[6]Ibid.; May, *Shifting Perspectives*, 409 and James R. McGovern, "The American Woman's Pre-World War I Freedom in Manners and Morals," *Journal of American History* 55 (1968): 321.

[7]Leuchtenburg, *Perils*, 159; The Merritt sisters were my aunts and this information was shared by them, their father was John A. Merritt.

[8]Leuchtenburg, *Perils*, 173.

[9]The Russian Revolution had taken place not much earlier and in America there was a "Red Scare" fearing the revolution would spread to these shores. Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday: an Informal History of the 1920s* (New York, 1931), 84, 88.

[10]Yellis, "Prosperity's Child," 46.

[11]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 89.

[12]Ibid., 104.

[13]Ibid., 90.

[14]Betty Soule (Merritt) and Anna Lamar (Switzer) to the writer.

[15]This style hat is seen in most pictures of the period.

[16]*Pensacola Journal*, November 28, and December 1, 1922; October 8, 1928; March 11, 1923, magazine section.

[17]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 106; *Pensacola Journal*, November 5, 1926.

[18]Ibid., 105.

[19]Ibid., 106.

[20]Ibid., 107; Survey of several Pensacola city directories.

[21]*Pensacola Journal*, July 8, 1921.

[22]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 106.

[23]Leuchtenburg, *Perils*, 173.

[24]Betty Soule to writer.

[25]Survey of Em Turner Merritt's (Nickinson) photo album, in the possession of her son Ted Nickinson.

[26]*Journal*, July 8, 1921.

[27]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 80; *Pensacola Journal*, September 12, 1925; beauty pageant, August 29, 1931.

[28]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 109-10.

[29]The author reached this conclusion based on a small list of former flappers; it may not be accurate when used with a larger cross section of people.

[30]This story was told to the writer by Em Merritt's daughter, Betty Nickinson Chitty.

[31]As related by Virginia Parks from her mother.

[32]*Pensacola Journal*, March 21, 1927.

[33]James R. McGovern, *The Emergence of A City in the Modern South: Pensacola, 1900-1945*, (DeLeon Springs, FL, 1976), 110; *Pensacola Journal*, March 30, 1923; February 23, 1920.

[34]Ibid., September 2, 3, 1928.

[35]*Time-Life* editors, *This Fabulous Century, 1920-1930* (New York, 1960), 165.

[36]Bobby Kahn, short history of Lewis Bear Co., 1995, included in a spring news release in the writer's possession.

[37]The author recalls that Fayette Soule made his own brew, which he continued to do for at least ten years after the end of prohibition. Betty Soule Merritt says family friend Capt. Pete Hyer made "Beer in his basement."

[38]See McGovern's *Modern City*, 110-13; the *Avis* was owned by Pete Hyer during Prohibition and used in the rumrunning trade, Betty Merritt and Adm. John T. Haywood told this writer.

[39]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 110.

[40]Ibid.; We observed this practice in our family and its friends.

[41]*Pensacola Journal*, March 10, 1923; report on an editorial survey sponsored by the *Ladies Home Journal*.

[42]This information is from personal observations.

[43]*Pensacola Journal*, March 1 and December 10, 1923.

[44]We recall our father's flask; *Fabulous Century*, 159.

[45]Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 112; we recall our mother's generation and their rough language.

[46]Ibid. 113-15.

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Cotillion Club, Florida State College for Women. Pensacola Historical Society.

Ruth Elder, 1927. Hampton Dunn Collection.

Ruth Elder, All-American Girl of the Jazz Age

Hampton Dunn

The year 1927 has been dubbed The Year the World Went MAD. In fact, free-lance writer and editor Allen Churchill wrote a book with that title about the exciting times that climaxed the decade of the Roaring Twenties.[1]

The blurb on the dust jacket flap explained: "1927–peak of the Age of Wonderful Nonsense, era of Prohibition and Peepholes, jazz babies and ukuleles, Clara Bow and Ramon Navarro, tabloids and portable victrolas...." Want more? Try the Year of the Big Shrick. Or, would you believe, the Whoopee Era, the Lawless Decade, the Age of Hoopla, and on and on?[2]

Think not that Florida escaped being "touched" by this hurricane of madness. Actually, the multi-million-dollar boom in local swampland had burst unhappily the year before–but the speculators, the opportunists, and the fat cats just didn't realize it. America–and the world–was in a daredevilish, record-setting mode. Indeed, that was the year Charles "Lucky Lindy" Lindbergh courageously pioneered and flew–alone–from New York across the Atlantic Ocean and landed in Paris.[3]

And then the world went MAD, trying to set new records in the air; attempting to be "first" in this or that. Raymond Orteig, a St. Louis businessman, had started the non-stop trans-Atlantic steeplechase, and set the entire aeronautical world in a tizzy back in 1919, when he posted a $25,000 (a large sum in those days, and not bad even today) prize for the first nonstop flight from New York to Paris. In Jacksonville a hotel operator sweetened the pot by adding another $1,000 to the prize.

In obscure little Lakeland a true pioneer in the business of flying, a man named George Haldeman, caught the fever and itched to become that first flier to cross the ocean in a "flying machine." On a visit to Daytona Beach he had seen the first Pitcairn airplane equipped with the new Wright J-5 engine. Ervie Ballough, who was piloting the aircraft, made the prophetic statement, in Haldeman's presence, that the first man who could have an airplane built around that engine and get off the ground with four hundred gallons of

gasoline would be able to make a nonstop flight from New York to Paris and collect Orteig's prize. That prediction was made several years prior to 1927.[4] Even then George Haldeman was making plans to reach for the plum. Ballough's estimate of what it would take to fly the Atlantic was made long before Lindbergh accomplished his world famous feat on May 20-21, 1927, in a Ryan monoplane equipped with...you guessed it: a Wright J-5 engine and carrying between three and four hundred gallons of fuel! "Lucky Lindy" did this before George had been able to complete his own plans, to say nothing of raising funds for the trip. So, Haldeman put his dream on the back burner.

At this point a pretty young lass named Ruth Elder entered the picture. She was a one-time dental assistant and beauty contest winner. She also was a student pilot of Haldeman. One day she came to her instructor with a novel idea: She wanted to be the first woman to fly the Atlantic! Her name began appearing in headlines all over the world. Ruth became an overnight, international celebrity. The headline writers had a field day. She was called the "Flapper Flier," a "Flamboyant beauty," "The All-American Girl," "Miss America of the Air," also, "Miss America of Aviation." Author Allen Churchill even dubbed her "a nifty jane." And the staid, ever-so-proper *New York Times* got familiar enough with the charming Florida lady that it dared to break its own rules–and unprecedentedly referred to the plucky Lakeland miss simply as "Ruth" in its stories! The Stinson monoplane she made famous was named *American Girl.*

Ruth Elder "migrated" to Lakeland from Anniston, Alabama. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Elder, later followed. Hers was a large family. She had two sisters and five brothers. Allen Churchill recorded that the prim *New York Times* was "smitten" by the good-looking gal from Alabam'. The author wrote that the newspaper "reported in warm detail that she was smaller than her photographs made her seem and that she spoke with a soft Alabama drawl." Churchill added this description of Ruth: "With her wide smile, she looked exactly like the Pepsodent ads in contemporary magazines.[5]

Haldeman himself became as enthusiastic about the daring adventure as his beautiful understudy was. Before his death in 1982, this author interviewed him while researching the book, *Yesterday's Lakeland.* There was one glitch: Ruth was married. Her husband, Lyle

Womack, had departed for Panama on business. He thought he had persuaded his glamorous wife not to attempt the flight. When Ruth first approached George with her idea, he told her to forget the thought of going alone. "I shook my head and shot back at her, 'No, no, Ruth, you can't do that–you have only 100 or 150 hours in the air, and I will not let you go alone.'" Whereupon, she begged for him to go as pilot and she as co-pilot. "Ruth was applying for a divorce at the time," George continued. "I insisted I would not fly her across the ocean until she got her divorce. She got it, and we moved fast to begin the flight."[6]

Others also objected. "Even if she succeeds, what will she have accomplished for the common good?" asked an eminent woman sociologist of the day.[7] Other women joined in the chorus and newspapers like the *New York World* suggested editorially that the twenty-three-year-old flapper be officially restrained. There were reports that Ruth's mother back in Alabama opposed the risky adventure. But on the day the fliers took off from New York for Paris, the United Press in a dispatch printed in *The Anniston Star* quoted Ruth as saying, "her mother had given her approval to the flight." The UP news story stated that Ruth took a Bible sent by her mother with her.

In her new role as America's heartthrob, the aviation-struck Miss Elder found herself as the style-setter for the young ladies of the nation. The possessor of one of the first boyish bobs, she decided to let her hair grow back into a full bob. While this happened, she wound a scarf around her head gypsy fashion, and soon girls all across the country were doing the same. And the Lakeland lady also wore plus fours and golf socks "in the Clarence Chamberlin manner." Altogether she added up to the image of an attractive, intrepid aviatrix–which she surely was.[8] The Elder-Haldeman odyssey started like this according to George: "We left from old Drew Field in Tampa (the Lakeland airport was not finished at the time). Congressman Herbert J. Drane came over to Tampa to tell us goodbye and to wish us luck."[9] They stopped in Wheeling, West Virginia to greet some business men who were backing the flight. Then it was on to New York to await ideal weather which came on

The "American Girl" ready for take-off at Roosevelt Field, New York, October 1927. Hampton Dunn Collection.

October 11, 1927. The plane was at Roosevelt Field perched on a ramp to help the craft, heavily laden with gasoline, get off the ground.

Well-wishers put a "care" package, a hamper of food aboard. Included were a vacuum bottle of hot bouillon, three turkey sandwiches, two bottles of coffee, one of tea, a gallon of water, and some sweet chocolates. Ruth commented: "At first we were going to take a whole lot of stuff to eat. But we'll be in Paris soon, and they have plenty of food there." Besides, Ruth had had a hearty breakfast: a slice of honeydew melon, two soft boiled eggs and toast, and two cups of coffee.[10]

The American Girl took off at 5:04 P.M., and back in Anniston the afternoon paper put out an "EXTRA" to announce the news to the folks in Ruth's hometown, with a "streamer" in boxcar letters shouting: RUTH ELDER OFF TO PARIS. Thus the American Girl added another roar to the Roaring Twenties.

The wire story mentioned that Miss Elder's costume for the flight consisted of gray knickers, a plaid sweater and a white, starched sport shirtwaist under her flying suit. Under the flying helmet she wore, the United Press reported, the scarlet bandanna "which has become as much a part of her as Helen Will's eye shade." The UP also reported that "in the pocket of her flying suit, [Ruth] admitted, she was carrying a complete vanity case, with lipstick, rouge, and all." The Lakeland lady was quoted as saying: "I want to get out of the plane at Le Bourget as cool and neat as I did at the start. Surely, I'll powder my nose whenever I feel like it–flying or not flying."[11] Spoken like the good-looking beauty queen that she was.

The flight would follow the "Lindbergh Trail" from New York, along the New England and Maine coast, over Old Orchard, Maine, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and across the Atlantic to Ireland, England, and France. The American Girl flew far south of the Great Circle Route, which one historian noted was "cold and hazardous in October." The southerly course would be near shipping lanes–which proved to be fortunate.

Allen Churchill added: "American Girl ran into heavy squalls several hundred miles after takeoff and flew straight into the teeth of them for eight terrifying hours. At one point the plane heaved so

dangerously that the comely Ruth Elder crept out on the tail to balance it. Other times she relieved Haldeman at the controls. At one danger point, Haldeman was forced to dump gasoline to help the plane in its fight against the storm. Next the oil pressure began to drop. 'Look for a ship,' Haldeman finally ordered. Five hours later Ruth spied the Dutch tanker *Barendrecht*."[12]

She dropped a note to the ship weighted by a spark plug, asking how far to land, and which way?[13] On deck, in large letters, the captain answered that the nearest land was Terceia, Azores, 360 miles away, or more than 500 miles from the coast of Portugal. Haldeman decided to ditch the plane, and brought it down into the choppy ocean. He and Ruth climbed out on the wing from which a lifeboat rescued them. For a moment the American Girl bobbed in the water, then gasoline ran over the steaming engine and caught fire. An explosion followed and the plane went down. In Paris a week later, Ruth said sadly, "It was like watching an old friend drown."[14]

Back home, the *Lakeland Evening Telegram* spread the good news in a streamer in boxcar letters: FLIERS RESCUED BY SHIP.[15] Next morning, the *Tampa Tribune* headlined RUTH ELDER SAFE ON SHIP. In Lakeland the populace was "electrified" by the happy word and Mayor William S. Rodgers issued a call for all citizens to celebrate in Munn Park. Ex-husband Lyle Womack turned up in the Panama Canal Zone, calling Ruth "the bravest girl in the world." *The New York Times* credited the plane flown by the Lakeland celebrities with "the longest flight over water ever made" until then–2,623 miles.[16]

The captain of the tanker was captivated by the real American girl, Ruth Elder, and told this story about her: "When she stepped on the deck of the ship, worn and wet and with her hair plastered to her head she very politely thanked me and then reached into a bag for a mirror and lipstick to repair some of the damage that had been done to her makeup."[17] The *Barendrecht* changed its course to drop off the aviator passengers in the Azores.[18]

There Ruth met an established Viennese actress who had flown over from Lisbon in a German Junkers flying boat. After resting a few days in the Azores, the Florida fliers then boarded a ship for Lisbon where they were met by the American minister. They were escorted by Portuguese officials to the government palace where

President Carmono congratulated them on their thrilling rescue. They were flown to Madrid by a military plane where they were greeted by the American ambassador. Then they made an overnight train trip to Bantiz and a commercial flight to Le Bourget Field in Paris, arriving there on October 28. If Ruth and George had arrived at Le Bourget when they were originally due, they would have been greeted by a crowd of twenty-five thousand persons who were anxiously awaiting the pair. In Paris the Lakelanders were wined and dined and some said their reception was probably greater than if they had successfully completed the trip."[19] At any rate France's top officials honored them at a reception at the swank Hotel de Ville.[20]

Although their flight was dubbed "a glorious failure,"[21] Elder and Haldeman were given hero status everywhere they went. On November 5 they left Cherbourg aboard the British liner, *Aquatania*, arriving in New York on November 11. On board, pretty Ruth whiled away the hours of the journey playing shuffleboard and walking the dogs a new-found friend in France had given her. (This writer was so dazzled by Ruth's fur coat, he failed to get the names of the pets.)

Rested up, Ruth and George were ready for New York and home soil, and the Big Apple was ready for them. They were met by Mayor Jimmy Walker's reception committee and escorted to city hall where the dapper His Honor himself added his greeting. And then they had one of those famous New York noontime ticker-tape parades up Broadway. However, it was reported the City of New York spent only $333.90 on greeting Ruth and her mentor, as compared with more than $1,000 for Charles A. Levine, $12,000 for the President of the Irish Free State, $26,000 for Admiral Byrd, and $71,000 for Lindbergh.[22]

Goodbye, New York, Hello, Washington! Haldeman and Elder were invited by President Calvin Coolidge to a luncheon on November 13, 1927, at the White House joining other airmen who had attempted to fly the Atlantic, including Charles A. Lindbergh, Clarence Chamberlin, and Richard E. Byrd.[23] Social note: Ruth was the only female at the luncheon–and she wore that warm and fuzzy coat! She posed for a picture, front row, center, standing between tall, lanky "Lucky Lindy" and the President.

Elder walking her dogs while coming home from France on the Aquatania. Hampton Dunn Collection.

After the noisy homecoming, Ruth signed up for a twenty-five-week tour at the rate of $5,000 a week. She was in vaudeville for six months, reputedly receiving more than $100,000 for personal appearances. She starred in two silent movies with Richard Dix and Hoot Gibson.[24] At one time her bank account stood at $250,000.

But easy come, easy go. Ruth blew her nest egg. "The money slipped through my fingers, and soon there was nothing," Miss Elder said in an interview years later.[25] She continued to "dabble" in aviation, even flew in the first National Women's Air Derby in 1929 and came in fourth.[26] For years, she lived in Honolulu, then moved to San Francisco where she died in 1977. Shortly before her death, this writer happened to be in San Francisco. He called up the former Floridian and made an appointment for an interview. She called my hotel and left a message, saying she didn't feel well and begged off the interview date.

In her obituary the Associated Press summed up her life after the flight: "In the half century after the flight...Miss Elder made movies, met a President, hobnobbed with royalty, married six times, made a lot of money–and spent it all." Her husbands included New York socialite Walter Camp, Jr. At one time there were rumors that Ruth Elder and Howard Hughes had a "relationship" going.[27] She was seventy-four when she died on October 9, 1977, almost fifty years after her aborted flight. Her husband of twenty-one years, Ralph King, seventy-nine, told reporters his flamboyant wife had been suffering from emphysema for several years.[28] She was bedridden for the last two weeks after complications from a broken hip. She was cremated and her ashes were scattered over San Francisco Bay. "She was a beautiful person, a real woman," said King. She had divorced her six husbands, including King, whom she remarried. King also was wed six times. When Ruth divorced King in 1953, she claimed he had called her a "gray-haired old bag."[29]

Haldeman continued in aviation to his dying day. Eighty-four when he died in Lakeland in 1982, Haldeman was a consultant on the controversial B-1 bomber at one time. This writer had the honor of being an honorary pallbearer at his funeral.

Notes

[1]Allen Churchill, *The Year the World Went MAD* (New York, 1960).

[2]Ibid.

[3]Charles A. Lindbergh, *We* (New York, 1927), 224.

[4]William C. Lazarus, *Wings in the Sun* (Orlando, FL, 1951), 93.

[5]Churchill, *MAD*, 246-47; *Philadelphia Record*, undated; *Lakeland Ledger*, October 10, 1977; *The Tampa Tribune*, October 11, 1977 (AP dispatch); Martha F. Sawyer, *Lakeland Ledger*, June 10, 1987.

[6]Hampton Dunn, *Lakeland: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk/Virginia Beach, VA, 1990), 41; Interview, Hampton Dunn and George Haldeman, Tampa, 1976.

[7]Churchill, *MAD*, 248.

[8]Ibid., 247.

[9]Hampton Dunn, *Yesterday's Lakeland* (Tampa, 1976), 48.

[10]Paul W. White, *The Anniston Star*, October 11, 1927.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Churchill, *MAD*, 248.

[13]Warren J. Brown, *Florida's Aviation History: The First One Hundred Years* (Largo, FL, 1980), 126.

[14]Churchill, *MAD*, 248.

[15]*Lakeland Evening Telegram*, October 13, 1927.

[16]Leland Hawes, *The Tampa Tribune*, April 18, 1993.

[17]Brown, *Florida's Aviation History*, 128.

[18]Leland Hawes, *The Tampa Tribune*, April 18, 1993.

[19]Brown, Warren J., *Florida's Aviation History*, 126, 130.

[20]Dunn, *Yesterday's Lakeland*, 132.

[21]Ibid., 49.

[22]Frederick Lewis Allen, *Since Yesterday* (New York and London, 1931), 223.

[23]Brown, *Florida's Aviation History*, 131.

[24]Ibid.

[25]*Miami Herald*, October 11, 1977.

[26]Brown, *Florida's Aviation History*, 131.

[27]Martha F. Sawyer, *Lakeland Ledger*, June 10, 1987.

[28]Associated Press dispatch from San Francisco, *The Tampa Tribune*, October 11, 1977.

[29]Martha F. Sawyer, *Lakeland Ledger*, March 1, 1987.

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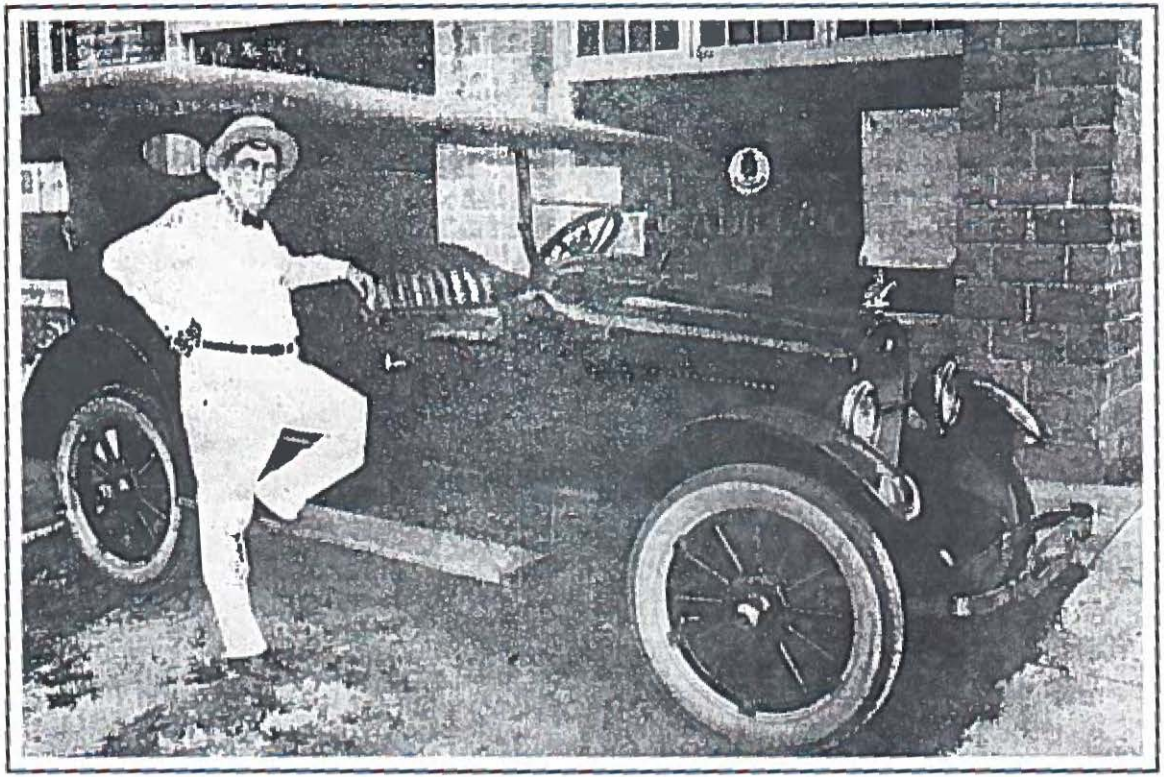

"The Snark on Dress Parade," Larkin Cleveland wearing his Organdy Shirt, 1922. Larkin Cleveland Papers, Special Collections, University of West Florida Library.

The Southern H. L. Mencken: Larkin Cleveland and the Temple of Truth

Dean DeBolt

The first amendment to the United States Constitution states, among other things, that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech or of the press.[1] This amendment laid the groundwork for the rapid spread of American newspapers and perhaps far greater freedom of comment than even Thomas Jefferson and the other framers had ever imagined. Newspaper editors in the 1780s filled columns with commentary, satire, character aspersions, and sharp political commentary that makes today's tabloid headlines seem mild in comparison.

In fact newspapers have become one of the most crucial primary sources for information on American history, especially state and regional history. In general two types of newspapers emerged in the journalistic field: the city daily and the rural weekly. The differences in the two arose because of environment, content, and production time. The city daily had to be written and published anew every twenty-four hours. This created an almost insatiable demand for information. The city daily would cover international, national, state, and local news interspersed with syndicated columns, features, reviews of books and films, and other information. In addition to comprehensive content and a large crew of reporters and stringers, the city daily newspapers used state-of-the-art printing presses and equipment. The printing equipment had to be fast, reliable, and able to withstand constant use.

The rural weekly was, however, quite different. While the city daily often emphasized crime and scandal, the rural weekly reported the "more kindly and matter-of-fact record of social events, community enterprises, crops, visiting sickness, births, weddings, and deaths."[2] Historians of journalism have reported that the number of these weekly newspapers published in America reached a peak just before the 1920s.[3] In Florida at the beginning of the 1920s there were roughly 141 weekly newspapers. Many of these would not survive the collapse of the Florida boom later in the decade and the

Depression of 1929. One of the exceptions was the *DeFuniak Herald* which was edited and published by Larkin Cleveland.

There is not a great deal known about Larkin Cleveland. The following has been pieced together from a variety of sources, drawing heavily on Larkin Cleveland's newspaper columns. He was born on March 11, 1873 in Alabama.[4] He came to Pensacola in March 1891, at age eighteen or nineteen where he became a compositor for the *Pensacola Journal*.[5] On April 28, 1891, he became one of the ten charter members of the Pensacola Printers Union. Writing about this event forty-five years later in a 1936 Labor Day editorial, he noted that he was the last living charter member, the others have been between twenty-five and forty-five years of age in 1891.[6]

He saw service during the Spanish-American War, mustering into the army at Mobile in 1898 and spending two months at camp.[7] It is unclear whether he returned to Pensacola or DeFuniak Springs after the war, but in 1908 he purchased the *DeFuniak Herald* newspaper. The first issue under his editorship and ownership was March 23, 1908, and it was sent to the paper's mailing list of thirty-three.[8]

The first ten years of editorship saw little change in the newspaper. This was probably due to the need for Larkin Cleveland to re-establish the paper, increase its circulation and advertising, and to insure stability that would enable the paper to pay its way, his salary, and the costs of acquisition. However, there were indications in the early years that Cleveland was no ordinary editor. As time wore on he began to establish a firm reputation as an outspoken observer of local culture who was possessed of a clever pen and a keen wit. For example by 1914 the masthead of the *DeFuniak Herald* read:

> Advertising and job printing rates furnished on application. No "get-rich-quick" "men only" or whiskey advertising taken at any prices.[9]

By 1917 the masthead now read "The DeFuniak Herald, liked by many, cussed by some, and read by everybody."[10] By the beginning of the 1920s Cleveland was printing front page headlines that were actually advertisements or teasers to issues he wanted to underscore. For example the headline on the front page of the January 8, 1920 issue read "Is there a Hell?" with a subtitle "What kind of place is

Hell?"–and in smaller type "to be answered in the sermon at the Baptist Church, Sunday Evening."[11]

In the early 1920s with the role of the paper as a fixture in the community secure, Cleveland turned to writing. He used the columns as a personal diatribe and soapbox to the world. Gradually over time these columns of stories and tales began to gain wider circulation. Eventually they were reprinted on a regular basis in newspapers in Pensacola and St. Augustine, and gradually to papers all over the South. Throughout the 1920s Cleveland turned a country newspaper into perhaps one of the most widely read rural newspapers in the Southeast. As the *Pensacola Journal* noted in 1929:

> Mr. Cleveland calls his office, "The Temple of Truth" and at the top of his editorial page has this to say to the world: The Herald has the largest circulation of any weekly newspaper published in the Herald office. Published every Thursday from the Temple of Truth, DeFuniak Springs, Florida. The Herald is as clean and wholesome as we know how to make it, and we publish as much of the truth as we possibly can–and stay out of trouble. We invite criticism to the end that we may make the paper more interesting, but we are not inviting anyone to run our business for us.[12]

Cleveland edited, wrote, and published the *DeFuniak Herald* from 1908 through 1938. Life for a rural newspaperman was not easy. As Cleveland recalled in 1935:

> When we acquired the blooming thing about twenty-seven years ago, something like half a dozen men had previously tackled the job of trying to make a go of it, but all of them for one reason or another, after wrestling with it for a season, gleefully wished it off on some other poor devil. All former editors of The Herald are dead now, and sometimes we don't feel any too well ourself.
>
> But, sick or well, we must go to bat every week and get out some sort of paper; for readers of a newspaper are not particularly interested in the state of the editor's health. During the twenty-seven years that we have stood at the helm of the confounded rag...there have been times when we have made money and other times that were so "hard" that a diamond drill wouldn't have scratched them. A fellow gets a taste of a

> little of everything, running a country newspaper for twenty-seven years. Even a taste of homemade sausage and chitlins once in a while.[13]

Cleveland's writings and stories became so famous in Florida and the South that by 1939 the Florida Press Association had dubbed him "the Will Rogers of the Florida Press."[14] Others called him the "H.L. Mencken of the South." But while many praised and reprinted his writings, only other newspaper editors in the state knew the whole truth. Cleveland operated a rural newspaper for thirty years without the benefit of a linotype or typewriter. All of his columns–indeed all of the newspaper–was written by hand-setting type. When he sold the newspaper to H. C. Storrs in 1938, the *Florida Newspaper News*–the publication of the Florida Press Association–had this to say:

> And in passing from the newspaper picture there also will pass the last hand set newspaper in the state, for ever since March 1908 Mr. and Mrs. Cleveland have "picked" every line that has gone into the paper, and only in a few instances has the copy been prepared in advance. The thoughts came to him as he picked the type, or strolled the streets looking for a three line pay local, an obituary, card of thanks or the thrilling story of little Johnny's birthday party or some prank carried on by the kids of the community.

In 1938 when Larkin Cleveland sold the *DeFuniak Herald* he was sixty-five years old. At the behest of the new owner he continued to write for the paper, loudly announcing that he had retired. His columns carried the title "From the padded cell; being the mumblings of a newspaperman out of a job and trespassing on the space of the *Herald*," by Larkin Cleveland.[15] From 1938 until 1946 he continued to write for the DeFuniak newspaper but on March 3, 1946, he began a new job as columnist for the *Pensacola News Journal*. He continued to contribute columns of opinions and stories, until his death in January 1953.

His legacy to West Florida and the South is vested in his columns and writings. The following is an example:

Villa Tasso

Last Saturday "Uncle Buddie" Cawthon, our lion-hearted photographer, T. Hope Cawthon, Master Randall Cawthon and the Herald insect went to Villa Tasso, going via Mossy Head and Carson's Still.[16] Except for the shooting of some buzzards at the old Titi still and the fact that Uncle Buddie drove nearly ten miles out of his way in order to show us where he killed a deer about thirty years ago, the trip was made without notable incident or accident. How Uncle Buddie managed to identify the spot where he had killed the deer so long ago passes our understanding. The spot looks identically like seven hundred and thirty-eight thousand similar spots anywhere between Mossy Head and the Bay. But he said he was sure of the location because of a certain tree and a hill. The tree and the hill are both there yet and can be seen by anyone who will take the trouble to go and look at them. It always affects us to a condition bordering on tears to look at a place where a deer was killed thirty years ago and there in the solemn stillness of the pine forest with no sound to break the graveyard calm save the measured "tick-tock" of the cattle tick and the gentle patter of our own perspiration as it fell upon the dry leaves, we vowed to live a different life and be an ornament to the community. Even Hope was strangely moved and suggested that we build there three tabernacles–one for the deer, one for Uncle Buddie, and one for the cattle tick.[17]

While Larkin Cleveland used his prerogative as editor to project his personal life and commentary onto the editorial pages, his essays provide insight into the ways that America was changing in the 1920s. For example, the coming of electricity and development of radio would bring profound changes in rural America. As Larkin says:

Coming of the Radio

Well, we know what it's like to sit up till after midnight four nights in succession with a houseful of neighbors,

listening to the static grunts and snorts and a whole lot of good stuff that comes in over the radio.

And believe us, it's great.

If we were thirty years younger, and could stand the loss of sleep–we'd own a radio before the sun goes down.

Mr. Florence, who sells the Majestic radio, brought one to our home last Thursday afternoon and let it stay until Monday in order that we might try it out and "demonstrate" it to our own satisfaction.

We kept the daggoned thing going every evening from six o'clock till midnight and most of the time had a houseful of our neighbors to enjoy it with.

The radio is all right at all hours, probably, and there are doubtless, many good things on the air at all hours of the day, but we are busy–awfully busy–during the daylight hours and could only try out our "machine" at night.

The evening program may be said to begin at six o'clock (our time) but they don't really begin to burn the wood and sift the ashes till about 8 o'clock p.m. From 6 to 8 o'clock there is a two-hour interval of soap advertisements and programs by musical fledglings worse than wasted on the erudite insect who types this dazzling editorial. Some talented laundress from station PDQ broadcasts the "Bonny, Bonny Banks of Loch Lomond," or a talented gink from station AEIOU and sometimes w and y "tells the cockeyed world" about Jimson Weed shaving soap, or somebody's old automobile tires. But he that endureth the end and can stand the infernal racket till 8 o'clock is rewarded by being permitted to listen to just about anything he wants to hear–real music, Sunday school lessons, lectures, or what-not.[18]

Larkin told of getting Spanish-speaking radio Havana, and WSM from Nashville. His final verdict on the radio was positive; for him personally, he decided to pass on purchasing one because he saw the radio schedule as interfering with his work and life. He also cited a disadvantage when listening to Sunday Night sermons.

A sermon is completely spoiled for us unless we can look into the face of the preacher doing the talking. It makes us mad enough to chew nails to get a seat in church behind some idiot who is continually shifting his position and dropping his head from side to side, thus compelling us to do the same thing in order to have an unobstructed view of the preacher. In listening to the preaching over the radio we felt that we were somewhat in the predicament of Saint Paul's companions on the road to Damascus–"hearing a voice, but seeing no man."[19]

Organdy Shirt

Last Saturday, being April 1st, the editor of this fearless and aggressive publication received a package through the post office ostensibly from "The Georgette Shirt Co.," of Scotsdale, Iowa.

Now, "the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him and delivereth them," and some unusually perspicacious reader will probably remark that "Satan takes care of his own." Well, let it go at that. Something kinder gave us a hunch that that there innocent looking package, wasn't altogether on the square. We hadn't ordered any shirts from "The Georgette Shirt Co.," nor from Sneers & Sawbuck. In fact, it's about all we can do to buy shirts at home, where we manage to keep our credit in tolerably good repair. But there wasn't any use trying to figure out the whereas nor the how fores of the proposition. We unwrapped the package and there appeared before our astonished gaze the doggonedest funniest looking shirt we ever saw. At first we thought it was a sort of toy affair, but we shook the thing out and found that it was a real life-size honest-to-goodness shirt. But, shades of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Its perspicuity was such that we could hardly say for certain we were looking at the postoffice door through the shirt or otherwise, and as our tottering intellectual faculties endeavored to grasp a vision of Apollyon form enveloped in that filmy phantom of a shirt

we blushed the first blush we have known since that day long time ago when our sister caught us scraping at an incipient moustache with our father's razor. My, my, my, how thin that shirt is! Why, it's almost a fog. A spider's web is like sheet iron by comparison. Why the whole blooming shirt isn't heavier than a pocket handkerchief. We have often twitted the ladies about the intangible waists they wear sometimes, but we admired them just the same, and many a time at church on a hot Sunday we have envied their deliciously cool draperies, the while we sweltered in the unsightly and uncomfortable garb which an idiotic custom has prescribed for all men, fat and lean alike. More than once we have expressed our determination to fling stupid conventionality to the four winds of purgatory where it belongs, and dike ourself out in clothing suitable for a civilized man in a latitude where we have nine months of good old summertime. We have an idea that some of our good lady friends, having heard us express a desire for an organdy shirt for hot weather wear, concocted this vile plot, laid a snare for us on April 1st and are now waiting to see if we have the nerve to wear it.

Will we wear that shirt?

You just bet we will; not right away, to be sure, for an organdy shirt doesn't bloom in its full perfection till hot weather comes; besides, we must devote a season to preparation, meditation and purification before thrusting our old alligator frame into the shimmering folds of that imaginary shirt. The matter of "preparation" is not small contract in itself, for we have discovered that the wearing of an organdy shirt presupposes the wearing of a whole thundering lot of wadding between us and the shirt. We tried to put the shirt on over our old hunting coat, but the general effect of the combination was not all that could have been desired. A good lady who knows all about organdy and its utter worthless as a garment for polar exploration has offered the suggestion that we wear a chevrolet in the front of it. A chevrolet, by the way, is a cute little dingbat made of pink, blue and flame-colored

something-or-other and looms up through the organdy like a rainbow or the aurora borealis. And, now we come to think of it, the name of the thing isn't "chevrolet" at all, but camisole. That's it. We've got to have a camisole. As soon as our camisole is finished we are going to don that combination....Just wait for hot weather and be patient.

We have the only organdy shirt in captivity, and we're going to wear it or bust. Due notice will be given in these columns as to the time when our debut, so that the children may be kept off the streets and protected from the baleful influence of the deadly organdy shirt.[20]

Our Organdy

We've put it off as long as we can. We've got to wear our organdy shirt. It's a matter of business. Beard Brothers told us pointedly the first of the week that if we didn't wear that shirt they'd be doggoned if they wouldn't send off to Sears & Roebuck for their literature and advertising. They say they believe we are trying to crawfish and get out of wearing it at all. We have long wondered where the dickens this blooming shirt and the other accessories came from, and now that Beard Brothers are so mighty interested and anxious for the show to start, we have our suspicions.

Next Saturday afternoon, June 24th, we will don that shirt and walk forth in all the majesty of a free-born American citizen, half white and full of prunes.

From three to five o'clock we will be on exhibition anywhere between King & Co's store and Walden's garage, and as Moses was warned not to approach the burning bush, we warn our friends not to get too close to us. Small children and flappers should be kept off the street while we are on exhibition, and even older people would do well to wear eel-skin garters to keep off the cramps. If the weather is bad the shirt will be postponed. There isn't any use wearing organdy on a cloudy day.[21]

We wore our organdy shirt last Saturday night, as per schedule, and like the original Julius Caesar, who was run over by a log wagon and killed while serving a term as mayor of Crestview, we can say: "Veni, vidi, vici." This is Choctaw and, being interpreted, means "A bird in the hand beats a bob-tailed flush."

Say! Organdy shirts are the thing for fat men in hot weather. We looked upon our organdy shirt simply as a joke, and as a pretty doggoned flimsy sort of joke at that, till we put it on and gave it a try-out. Now we have seen the light and are permanently converted by our shirt. No wonder the ladies look so sweet and cool and frisky in their organdy dresses. Why, thunderation! They feel so nice and "comfy" that they just can't help looking as sweet as they feel. The ladies and girls (God bless 'em.) have known what was nice to wear for a long time, and just to think that the miserable bone-headed editor of The Herald didn't have any better sense than to criticise 'em for it! Go as far now as you like, ladies, and if you find anything thinner than organdy, just let us know and we will immediately have a shirt made of it.

We didn't wear out our camisole. You see, Mrs. Cleveland was away and we tore the doggoned thing up trying to put it on. That is to say, we tore the puckering string out of the lower end of it and had to leave it off. Glenn Bludworth told us later that we could have taken a hair pin and fixed the string back again all right.

It's just a little queer to us how in the mischief Glenn happens to know so much about camisoles and how to fix one of the things when it gets out of repair. But Glenn says that is the way, "and Brutus is an honorable man." This shows how far the younger generation is ahead of the days when we were a youngster. When we were the age of Glenn we didn't know the difference between a camisole and the ace of trumps, and now Glenn can tell us more about a camisole than Solomon with all of his wisdom ever knew. Ah, well! The Scriptures speak of a time when men shall become wiser and weaker. This is probably the time.

A few years hence all men will wear organdy and chiffon shirts in hot weather. Not right away, of course, for men have not now and never have had as much sense as women. When a new something or other in the way of cloth is invented or discovered, the ladies immediately get busy and figure out a way of making themselves more comfortable or more attractive in it. They succeed, too, and don't you forget it.

It is not so with a man. He, (poor simpleton,) goes right along year after year, and generation after generation, wearing the same fool clothes that his daddy, his granddaddy and his great-granddaddy wore ahead of him. The average man hasn't any more brains than a sheep. Now, a small boy has plenty of sense. He enjoys comfort, and for that reason goes barefoot and doesn't wear a stitch of clothing that he can possibly get along without. But mark you; As soon as his voice begins to change and his moustache commences to grow, he goes as crazy as his daddy before him, jams himself into a suit of hot unsightly clothing and is thenceforth hopelessly insane as long as he lives.[22]

Notes

[1]Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism, a History: 1690-1960* (New York, 1965), 145.

[2]Ibid., 589.

[3]Ibid. Mott reports 14,500 weekly newspapers in 1914-15. J. Pendleton Gaines, Jr. in *A Century in Florida Journalism* (p. 104) notes the figure of 141 weekly newspapers and twenty-six dailies in 1915. He later notes that weekly newspapers declined considerably in the 1914-1922 period, but does not cite figures. (p. 111).

[4]The date of birth is ascertained by the following. His birth date cited in various columns is March 11. The 1910 U.S. census of DeFuniak Springs (April 21, 1910) gives his age as thirty-six, hence he would have been born in 1873. The obituary notice from the *Pensacola News Journal* of January 10, 1953 gives his age as eighty (which would point to 1872 as the birth year!). The *DeFuniak Herald* obituary of January 1953 claims his age as seventy-eight (this would point to 1874). The writer believes the 1873 date is accurate.

[5]Larkin Cleveland, "Uncle Cleve," *Pensacola Journal*, March 18, 1946. Column reminiscences on how his first job was as a compositor for the Pensacola paper when he came to Pensacola on March 17, 1891.

[6]Larkin Cleveland, "Labor Day," *Pensacola News*, September 5, 1936.

[7]Larkin Cleveland, "Visited Mobile," *DeFuniak Herald*, April 12, 1934. He frequently alludes to his Spanish-American War experience in editorials dealing with Memorial Day or Armistice Day. Some verification of formal military service in the absence of other immediate evidence can be shown that he was a patient at a Montgomery, Alabama Veterans Hospital upon his death in 1953.

[8]*DeFuniak Herald*, March 23, 1938.

[9]Ibid., March 12, 1914.

[10]Ibid., March 29, 1917.

[11]Ibid., January 8, 1920.

[12]*Pensacola Journal*, July 23, 1929.

[13]*DeFuniak Herald*, undated clipping (probably 1935), Larkin Cleveland Papers, Box 1, Scrapbook 5.

[14]*Florida Newspaper News*, September 1939 (v. 23, no. 9).

[15]*DeFuniak Herald*, September 21, 1939.

[16]The "Herald insect" was Cleveland's own nom de plume.

[17]*DeFuniak Herald*, July 8, 1920.

[18]"Coming of the Radio," *DeFuniak Herald*, n.d.

[19]Ibid.

[20]*DeFuniak Herald*, April 6, 1922.

[21]*DeFuniak Herald*, June 22, 1922.

[22]*DeFuniak Herald*, June 29, 1922.

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Theatre Along the Gulf Coast in the 1920s

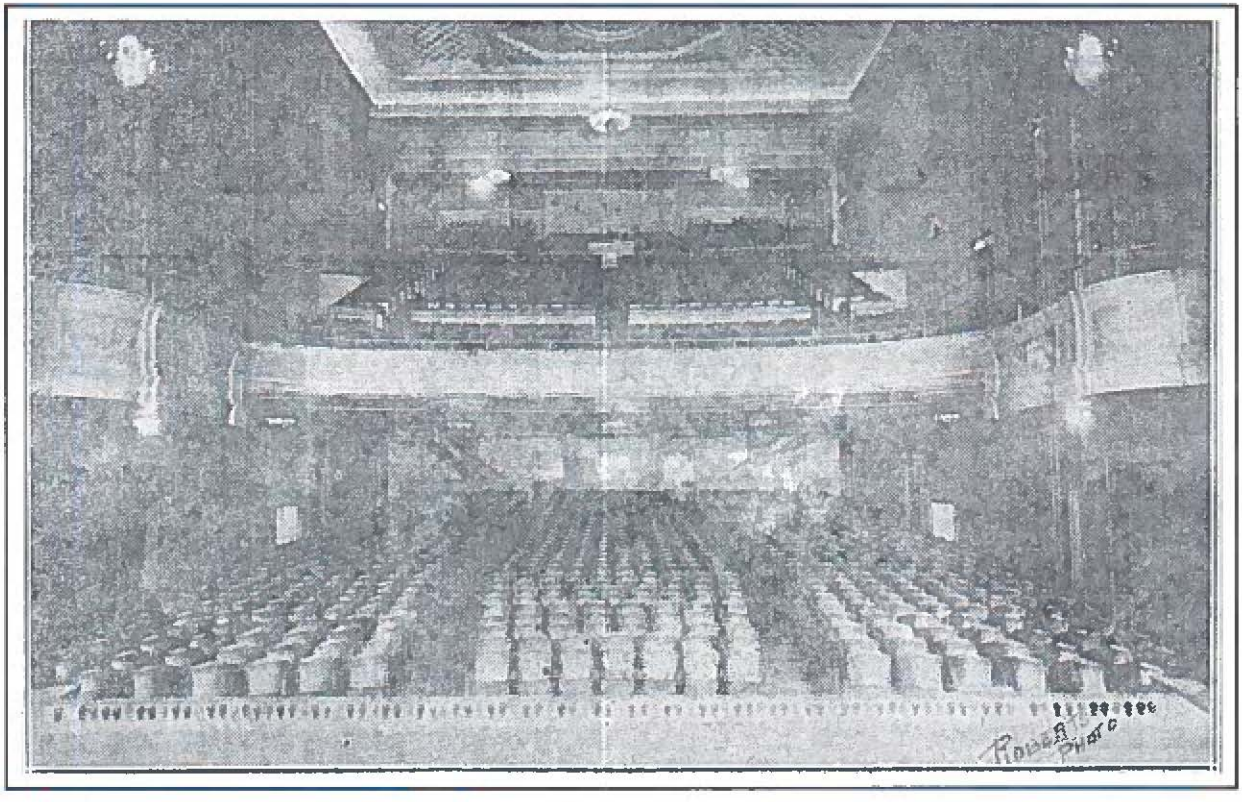
B. J. Miller

It is tempting to begin this brief history with the 1880s or before when treading the boards was a grubby but honorable profession; when small traveling troupes withstood the arduous train rides–or stagecoach rides–the cheapest hotels and food of questionable vintage when they could find it at all. These were the folks who hoped to end up in New York or Chicago or San Francisco in the great fancy theatres. Later the vaudeville troupes did the same thing as they followed the minstrel shows. If you were lucky enough to be in one of those big cities, or were in a town big enough to have a theatre to accommodate the top theatre performers of those days, you might have seen, even at the Pensacola Opera House, the great Sarah Bernhardt, all the Barrymores at one time or another, Madame Modjeska, George M. Cohan, Anna Pavlova, the prima ballerina of her era, Victor Herbert, and John Philip Sousa. Lew Docksteder and other famous minstrel shows played the old Opera House, featuring names that many people would not even recognize today.

But significant changes in the world of theatre followed closely on the changes in scientific and mechanical progress. In addition to the new equipment introduced into the entertainment industry bringing motion pictures to the multitudes, the twenties brought affluence, glitz and glitter, whoopee and ballyhoo, to New York, Chicago, and Hollywood. Along the Gulf Coast from Biloxi to Apalachicola, the era brought a checkerboard of luxury and poverty.

In Biloxi the shrimp beds died off and the shrimpers took to rumrunning. Its theatre heyday was about over when the Dukete Theatre, built on the site of the old Opera House, was sold and eventually became a bank building. Other theatres in Biloxi quickly booked the silent movies with Buster Keaton, Mary Pickford, Harold Lloyd, Charlie Chaplin, and the Keystone Cops. *The Great Train Robbery* was the first gripping story in silent films to hold audiences breathless. It has become a classic, and is occasionally seen today on television.

Then came the glamour girls, the flappers of the twenties. But it was immediately apparent to perspicacious directors such as D. W.



Interior of the Pensacola Saenger Theatre. Special Collections, University of West Florida Library.

Griffith, who groveled with the rest in a hot little flick called *The Idol Dance*, that movies had a powerful potential, and by the end of the decade, cinema was king of entertainment.

Biloxi's Saenger Theatre opened in 1927 showing movies, some vaudeville and the last of the minstrels. It was a fifteen hundred-seat house, a $200,000 elegant "entertainment palace" that suffered the ravages of time as her sisters did, but was refurbished by a diverse group of Mississippi coast residents and re-opened as The Saenger Theatre for the Performing Arts on May 4, 1984, with a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe*. The magnificent Wurlitzer organ which someone said "whistled like a bird" is gone, but Biloxi has a playhouse.

Moving to the East, Apalachicola boasted a peak population of four thousand in the flush days of the cotton period, the timber boom, and the shrimp industry. However, in the twenties, when the economy fell off, many people moved away to find jobs. Those who stayed had little money, but they had theatre. A local minstrel company, with the skill and confidence of a professional troupe performed at the Dixie Theatre, and other community players entertained as well. Chatauqua went everywhere, of course, but that wasn't necessarily theatre. At the end of the decade the Dixie was closed for remodeling and installation of new equipment. It eventually reopened with the movie, *The Broadway Melody*, to an excited capacity crowd. It was the first talking picture they had seen.

In Apalachicola, like Biloxi, rumrunning became a major source of income and the traffic was heavy. It was not until much later that oyster beds were discovered, and in the twenties the town was poor. In the Garrie Museum, facing the historic original refrigerator, Mr. George L. Chapel, president of the Apalachicola Historical Society told me sadly, "the old Dixie is now, literally, a hole in the ground."

To the west Mobile, a city which was spared the economic crisis felt in other coastal areas, saw the same deterioration of quality in theatre. The kind of theatre that some of us still refer to pedantically as "legitimate theatre" was a serious victim. As far back as the early Greek theatres, cultural-minded citizens have hungered for the performing arts, and the Lyric Theatre, built in Mobile in 1906, welcomed many prominent actors, minstrels, vaudevillians, and road

shows. Hardly theatre, perhaps, but Woodrow Wilson spoke there while he was President of the United States.

The old Mobile Theatre on Royal Street, built in the nineteenth century, saw Shakespeare's heroes popularized and his villains mortified for decades before it, too, became a victim of progress. In 1940 it was re-opened as a Sears, Roebuck store.

The Saenger Theatres in Biloxi, Mobile, and Pensacola were all under construction in the period between 1925 and 1929. The Mobile Saenger was finished in 1927 and like the others suffered natural deterioration. The University of South Alabama eventually acquired it and has extensively restored the theatre to its stunning elegance of visual drama augmented by the still-beautiful original furnishings and a gigantic, crystal chandelier with ten thousand sparkling parts. The six hundred-pipe organ has now been moved to a church and reworked into an electric marvel, but "the largest theatre in the Deep South" is, at last report, still standing and in use.

Not much has been written here about vaudeville shows. They were single acts, many of them transposed from old minstrel skits. Usually they were booked by a circuit such as R.K.O. or Orpheum, and six and eight acts would travel together from town to town all on the same bill. Sometimes it would be for a six week run, but mostly a week was as long as they stayed in one town doing upwards of five shows a day. Many patrons suffered through a full-length movie just to see a favorite act. Tumblers, jugglers, singers, dancers, and comics had followings and fans just as the theatre people did. Unfortunately, in the depression, theatres could no longer afford the circuit bookings and another great show biz era ended.

When the decade of the twenties dawned, depression had already gripped much of the lower South. In addition to the loss of cotton and shrimp crops, the piney woods were depleted, the lumber and shipbuilding yards were closed, and there was little or no cargo for the ships. Farm crops were scarce and hunger and malnutrition stalked this part of the nation.

Fortunately movies were cheap. Five or ten cents would buy more than an hour's worth of escape in the flippant flappery of Clara Bow, the "It" girl, or *What a Widow* blatantly inviting audiences to see Gloria Swanson, the merry widow, winking her way through this "gay glittering revelry, with gorgeous women and handsome men."

Indeed, in spite of the loftier efforts of D. W. Griffith and other directors, the quality of cultural entertainment failed before the banks did, and the Hayes office of restraint eventually was created.

Pensacola played these sleazy movies, too, but better fare was also available. In the early twenties, cowboy stars like Hoot Gibson were favorites, along with Pearl White in the *Perils of Pauline*, serial every Saturday afternoon–cliffhangers for the youngsters.

In Pensacola the Saenger did not debut until 1925, but the Bonita and the Isis, both of which promised romance, thrills, suspense, and action were open. However, as the twenties progressed to the devastating downfall of 1929, the movies got better, deeper, gutsier, and by the time the country was in general chaos, great movies were produced that still live, even now on television. Pensacola also had the Belmont Theatre in that period of segregation, where black patrons saw probably the best of the black performers and all-girl shows such as one called the *Cotton Blossom.*

Every community had its own version of the Music Study Club, organized in Pensacola in 1919. The Elvie Demarko dancers and community theatre made up some of the programs. On May 23, 1928 the Little Theatre Guild performed its initial production at Pensacola High School. In 1929, Vera Lawbaugh appeared, again at PHS in a Booth Tarkington play, *The Trysting Place.* In the thirties the word "guild" was omitted and the Pensacola Little Theatre opened in 1936 at PHS. Now over sixty years old, it is the longest continuous-running community theatre in the South.

Although the Biloxi and Mobile Saenger theatres were similar, the Pensacola Saenger, when it was built in the twenties, was designed to be "Florida's Greatest Show Place." It was $500,000 worth of "rococo style in a Spanish motif for the make-believe world of theatre, with almost two thousand seats, mock columns by the windows, and real columns decorated with vines and vases on each side of the stage beneath the proscenium. Gods and goddesses and gold scallops and medallions decorated the ceiling and other spaces in the auditorium and lounge." Two things set the Pensacola Saenger apart from the others. First, the balcony railing which once graced the Opera House was saved and moved to the new theatre, and its graceful simplicity brought a tempering effect to the ornate style so beloved in those days. The second difference was the organ. All the

theatres had organs and the one in Pensacola was eventually dismantled when the theatre was refurbished. After many months of work it was reborn at the newly opened Saenger in a nostalgic, breath-taking presentation which brought lumps to the throat and tears to many eyes when it rose slowly from the band pit with a white spotlight making its new white and gold paint fairly sparkle. As the organ and player rose into full view, déjà vu gripped the old-timers, and the crowd exploded with applause.

Looking back, the twenties was a decade of crime and debauchery. Unions became obtrusive. Farmers and sharecroppers took barely enough out of the ground to keep alive. The most lucrative work along the Gulf Coast was bootlegging. In New York, Chicago, and Hollywood, lurid sex scandals and wild parties became juicy gossip. Across the country college boys wore raccoon coats and carried hip flasks, and the girls raised their skirts and bobbed their hair.

In the metropolitan East depravity ruled in the speakeasies–booze and raucous horseplay in the cabarets, booze and blues, booze and whoopee, booze and anything. Much of all the corruption remained fortunately in the larger cities where the economy was booming and fortunes–often in Florida real estate–boomed and then went bust.

During this decade, many in Gulf towns from Biloxi to Apalachicola mourned their loss of real theatre while at the same time embracing the new world of cinema.

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Erik Overbey Collection, University of South Alabama Archives.

"59th Street Bridge," oil on canvas, Mary Janice Thornton. Artist's Collection.

Pensacola: Visual Arts in the 1920s

Carol Malt

The scope and goals of this paper are first to set the stage with an overview of the state of the arts–the climate and the achievements of the art world at the turn of the century, then to review the cultural opportunities of our area during the decade of the 1920s, and finally to highlight not only the visual arts professions, clubs, and opportunities of that period, but also focus on six of the most important practicing artists in Pensacola.

Painting and sculpture in the early twentieth century was both part of the natural cycle of construction and deconstruction–and a continuation of neoclassicism, romanticism, impressionism, realism, post-impressionism, and symbolism, as well as a reaction to these nineteenth-century styles and philosophies. That's a lot of 'isms' and probably sounds like an art critic's gobbledygook.

H. J. Janson, in his *History of Art*, tells us about these 'isms': "There are many more to be found in twentieth-century art–so many, in fact, that nobody has made an exact count. Actually, we can disregard all but the most important 'isms', like the terms we have used for the styles of earlier periods, they are merely labels to help us put things in their proper place." Instead, Janson continues, "We can distinguish three main currents, each comprising a number of 'isms', ...Expression, Abstraction and Fantasy."[1]

These comments were made in the context of the explosion of creative artistic production coming out of Europe after the turn of the century. It would take artists in the United States longer to absorb, accept, and adopt the fragments of this explosion but when they finally did, they took a leadership role in the creation of modern art.

As in Europe after the First World War, artists in America began a slow return to nature for inspiration. That's not an oxymoron, for 'modern art' was still marching forward. Major collections began to take shape which included the moderns along with more traditional artists. Connoisseurs such as Duncan Phillips, Chester Dale, Conger Goodyear, Mrs. J. D. Rockefeller, Albert Barnes, and Mrs. Lillie Bliss began to amass important collections for themselves and for our museums. But the period of the Roaring Twenties was an ambivalent

one for artists here. On the one hand, the economy was booming, art was a serious and popular business–but it wasn't the American artist who was enjoying this recognition or success. It was the European artist who was being collected and appreciated.

There was, of course, some reaction to this. Alfred Stieglitz, when he opened his Park Avenue Gallery in 1925, which he called the Intimate Place, showed only American artists–and when he moved in 1929 to Madison Avenue, he renamed his new gallery An American Place. The camera was to play an important role everywhere in the art world–including Pensacola in the twenties. In addition to the support which Stieglitz gave in his galleries, artists such as Charles Sheeler specialized in photographs of architecture and machinery taken at odd angles, as did Paul Strand, Niles Spencer, Stefan Hirsch, and George Ault.

American artists were disappointed with their lack of success in the art market, and this led many to select subject matter of the American scene. This development of America as a theme for artistic expression assumed prominence toward the end of the 1920s. It influenced both new painters and older established ones. "It provided a background...for new academic trends", but also apparently "degenerated into photographic realism and provincial chauvinism"[2] It set the stage for regionalism and social realism of the artists of the WPA projects and the muralists of the 1930s.

One source describes the period 1920-1929 in America with the following lengthy sound bite:

> Easy credit, technological ingenuity and war-related industrial decline in Europe caused a long economic boom, in which ownership of new products–autos, phones, radios–became democratized. Prosperity, an increase in women workers, women's suffrage (1920) and drastic change in fashion (flappers, mannish bob for women, clean-shaven men), created a perception of social change.

Turning to the arts, it continues, "Nearly all bounds of subject matter, style, and attitude were broken in the arts of the period."[3]

Unfortunately, Pensacola, like the other smaller cities and towns in America, didn't speak the same language. Actually,

> "The immense political and social upheavals which followed the First World War had only a marginal effect on the development of art. For in art the basic revolution had already taken place. The post War world offered art and artists a more favorable climate, that's all. Not as traditional as their predecessors, the new ruling classes were far more amenable to modern art. Almost everywhere 'modern art' came to be recognized–with enthusiasm or distaste–as the legitimate stylistic expression of the day...."[4]

Other generalizations about the period, while perhaps valid elsewhere are not accurate for Pensacola. One example reads: "In the second decade of the century all the numerous trends in modern painting...had veered toward abstraction."[5] We will see with specific illustrations that even among those Pensacola artists trained in New York City and well traveled, that this generalization was not true. For it is realism and regionalism that were being taught and produced in Pensacola in the 1920s.

What was going on in schools in the art capital of America, New York City, that was relevant to Pensacola? Robert Henri had opened his own art school and had taken over a class at the Art Students League. This same school was to be influential in the lives of several Pensacola artists as two of our most prominent people studied there and others were certainly familiar with it. Henri's group became known as the Ash Can School and their new style of painting contained post-impressionist ideas and a realist-impressionist format.

William A. Fagaly, in his 1983 essay for the exhibition "Southern Fictions," describes some of the common elements of inspiration for Gulf Coast artists:

> ...a strong sense of place and obsession with the earth; a volatile society given to strong expression and vibrant color; uncontrolled emotional release resulting in violence and tragedy; the mix of cultures–African, English and Latin; indulgent appetites for indigenous foods and music; a penchant for storytelling and for social interchange; and also a persistent inferiority complex.[6]

He does concede that these influences may have had more impact on writers and musicians than on the production of the visual arts.

Jessie Poesch comments on Greater Pensacola in "Arts and Crafts of the Gulf Coast, 1870-1940," that "there was very little 'culture' in this area as relatively few great libraries or other cultural institutions had developed...."[7]

According to historian Earle Bowden, Pensacola was called the "Yellow Pine Capital of the World" and the "Snapper Capital of the World"[8] in the late nineteenth century. But it had far to go before it might be called the "artistic capital" or even an artistic center in the 1920s.

Bowden comments: "With repeated and devastating hurricane damage, and the long scar of denuded West Florida forests, Pensacolians find their timber bonanza ending by 1910. Foreign port trade dwindles, and financial disasters signal the long economic depression leading to World War I."[9] By the end of this War, Pensacola's economy was based on the Naval Air Station, and the United States Government was its largest employer.[10] This situation would continue for many decades. But Pensacola eventually revived itself: "The development of the railroads...played an important role in the creation of a new way of taking advantage of the climate.... This cognizance of the special qualities of the area...was also a factor in the changing nature of both the minor and fine arts of the area."[11] The cultural climate expanded with the economic climate, for growth and prosperity of Pensacola in the 1920s was brought about by the general land boom which the state was experiencing, by a construction and lumber boom, and by the pervasive optimistic spirit the twenties brought in the country.

Rebounding from cuts in the navy and the Newport Company's closing of 1921, early 1922 saw the port recovering from the wartime economic slump and bridges being built across Escambia Bay, Perdido Bay, and Pensacola Bay. Society was becoming mobile, cars were more common, there was renewed interest in the arts. Movies were popular at the Saenger, Isis, and Bonita theaters.

Pensacola, however, did not have the established businesses, artists, or the skilled craftsmen to emulate the significant design advances of other cities in the United States. Poesch concedes:

"Insofar as I can judge, in the South, including the Gulf Coast, a high proportion of the objects and materials used in the homes or found in the interior environments were manufactured elsewhere."[12]

Frederick Glaeser, in his graduate thesis, "WPA and the Arts in Northwest Florida," writes:

> Following Opera House destruction by hurricanes in 1916 and 1917, the cultural activities were limited to small independent groups meeting to share a common interest in some area of the arts. The existence of these activities provides evidence of a basic, but low key, cultural interest within the Pensacola population at this time.[13]

Such clubs and artists' associations played a significant role in the development of the visual arts on the Gulf Coast. The opportunity for membership, camaraderie, and the sale of works in these organizations was available to our local artists. One of the earliest and most important was the Southern States Art League founded in 1921. It was originally chartered in Charleston, but by 1923 its headquarters had moved to New Orleans. Ellsworth Woodward, then chairman of the Newcomb College School of Art at Tulane University, was a founder.

The League had several goals. It wished to further art education in the South so that the public could better understand and appreciate art, to advocate the development of art education programs in institutions of higher learning, and to hold conferences annually. It determined to deal with art issues and to be politically active, thereby influencing Congress on behalf of artists, and to raise the artist's status by providing increased patronage and sales by the exhibition of members' works. The League lasted until 1950, and some fifty or sixty regional organizations were members. From 1922 to 1940, it exhibited the work of more than six hundred artists.[14]

There were other regional arts organizations to which Pensacola artists might have belonged including the New Orleans Arts & Crafts Club and the Gulf Coast Art Association which was founded in Biloxi in 1927. Its first President was William Woodward. It was, however, the Pensacola Art Club that mobilized interest here in the visual arts and gave opportunity to local artists. Organized on December 11, 1919 by Mrs. J. S. Garrason, a "weatherman's wife,

who came from Charleston, South Carolina where she had been a member of a club there." The first regular meeting was held on New Year's Day 1920 in the Blount Building in downtown Pensacola, and shortly thereafter its constitution and bylaws were drawn up. Although professional artists belonged, most of the members of the club were laymen interested in art. A Sketchers Club was organized in 1920 for active members and in June the club affiliated with the American Federation of Arts. By July 1921 a Builders Fund was begun but by 1938 it had only managed to attract one hundred dollars. There was also talk of an island being donated for an artists' colony but this never came to fruition. While members could participate in club shows, there were also other types of exhibits. In 1921 a drawing contest was held for school children and in 1928 a junior department was organized. For a long time the club remained a popular and important artistic, social, and educational institution for the community.[15] Its demise was recorded by Edna Hable, one of the founders of the Pensacola Museum of Art, at a meeting in 1949 when Manuel Runyan, "a charming, delightful old man who did mostly watercolors and was quite deaf, suddenly announced in the rather loud voice deaf people use, 'This is a rotten club!'" We were all convulsed," Habel noted, "because we knew it was indeed a rotten club."[16]

The visual arts took many other forms besides oil painting and watercolors. Professional artists were in demand as sign and billboard painters, photographers, designers, and art educators. The *Pensacola City Directory* is a good resource for investigating professionals in business during the 1920s. In the 1921-22 edition there were three listings in the business section under the category of 'artist': Miss Emma Chandler, Violet Gonzalez, and the Pensacola Art School. There were no listings for photographers.[17] In the 1924 edition the Pensacola Art Club is listed and several photographers are included: H. L. Bell, A. L. Brazil, Chas Charach, C. T. Cottrell, Knox A. McEntire, and G. W. Turton. There were also two sign painters: W.J. Pierce and A. A. Wrighton, but no listing under artists.[18] The final publication of the decade, the 1927-28 edition, lists five photographers: H. L. Bell, Chas T. Cottrell, the Photo Shop, Knox A. McEntire, and Geo. W. Turton.[19] Again, there were no listings under the category of artist. Contrary to the implication of the city

directory's listing, there were artists working in Pensacola, and the following six were among the best known during the 1920s:

Emma Chandler (1860-1940)

Emma Chandler came to Pensacola from Tennessee with her family when she was a teenager. Later she left to study art in Philadelphia and at the Art Students League in New York City where her teacher was Rhoda Holmes Nichols. She returned to Pensacola in 1884 and opened a studio in the Ditmar's Building on the west side of Palafox Street. She taught there for two or three years giving instruction in watercolors, oil painting, and china painting. Then she returned to New York for more training and while there also worked at newspaper illustrating. She came back to Pensacola in 1893 and set up studios for painting and teaching. She also designed invitations, costumes, and floats for the local Mardi Gras carnivals.[20] She was the most noted of Pensacola's artists in the 1920s. "Miss Emma," as she was called by her students, taught art in Escambia County's grammar schools for twenty years, setting a precedent that was followed by many of her prominent students.

Manuel Gonzalez Runyan (1872-1954)

Manuel Runyan was born in Geneva, Alabama, in 1872. His father, a native Pensacolian, moved his family back to that city around 1880. In the fall of 1884 or 1885 he began to study drawing and painting with Emma Chandler who had returned recently from her studies in New York. His studies with Miss Chandler lasted about two years, and included drawing in charcoal and painting in watercolor. Runyan also received some instruction from an artist named Hill who had come from New Orleans and claimed to have studied abroad. It was from him that he took lessons in oil painting and learned the rules of perspective.[21]

Later studies included a month of classes at the Art Students League in New York City and almost a year thereafter at the William Merritt Chase School in New York. When this School closed at the end of the term, he received a letter from William Merritt Chase which said: "To whom it may concern–Manuel G. Runyan, my pupil is fully competent to teach the art of Drawing and Painting,–Very sincerely William M. Chase, N.Y. June 3rd 1898."[22]

In 1899 he began teaching classes in oils, watercolor, crayon and charcoal drawing at the Mobile Art League; taught in the Pensacola public schools, and began taking students at his studio in Pensacola. In the 1920s, he was teaching oils, watercolor, pastel, charcoal, pen and ink, and pencil. He was well-known for his landscapes and seascapes of the area. A list of the titles of some of his paintings done in the 1920s includes: "Old Tarpon Warehouse," "Ft. Barrancas Grounds," "De Luna Street," "Little Bayou," "Pensacola Shipyard," "Slip between Palafox and Balen," and "What's Left of (W)right's Mill."[23]

Runyan was known as a man of unusual character who took daily excursions with nature, collected old art magazines, and amassed an impressive library. He was instrumental in founding the Pensacola Art Club which held annual exhibits of his work for many years. He was its first president in 1920. He also took advertisements in the newspaper encouraging others interested in exhibiting their work to contact him.[24]

Ada Buchere Wilson (1884-1978)

Arriving with her parents from Bay City, Michigan in 1886, Ada Wilson spent most of the rest of her life in Pensacola. She was a member of the Pensacola Art Club, the Pensacola Chapter of the National League of American Pen Women, and the New Orleans Arts & Crafts Club.

As an artist she was an accomplished watercolorist, muralist, and painter. She studied under Emma Chandler in the 1890s and later at the Art Institute of Chicago. Her early works are pen and ink and pencil sketches. Later she made watercolors of Pensacola, and later still she began painting miniatures and portraits. She became famous in the area for her miniature paintings, thought at the time to be the smallest in the world.

Mrs. Wilson was an activist concerned with the beautification of Pensacola, participating in a campaign to regulate billboards (advertising posters) in Pensacola. An article entitled "Art in Pensacola" ran in the March 3, 1921, *Pensacola Journal*. It recommended that the city comply with the three regulations set by the Poster Advertising Association in 1920. Specifically they were to

"protect beauty spots; second, to avoid high class residence district; third to avoid public buildings, parks, boulevards, etc."[25]

She developed a fascination for Chief Geronimo, painting him often. This grew from an initial encounter when she was five when her grandmother took her to Ft. Pickens where the chief was incarcerated. In a newspaper article later, she recalled her grandmother telling her to go shake hands with the chief who was wearing an ankle chain attached to a large cannon ball so that when she grew up she could say: "I shook hands with Chief Geronimo."[26]

Edna Adkinson

Edna Adkinson, another of Miss Chandler's students, was also one of the first members of the Pensacola Art Club. Originally from Newport News, she graduated from Pensacola High School in 1921. When she was in the fourth grade, she was discovered by Miss Chandler who encouraged her to pursue art. Thereafter she won several awards locally including first prize at the Escambia County Fair when she was twelve with a two-story furnished doll house. Her later training was by correspondence with several national schools and she also received credits from the art department of the University of Florida in Gainesville. She obtained a special certificate to teach art in the Florida public schools.

Her talents were wide as she painted fans, did china painting, and made lamp shades. She also taught private classes in drawing, conducted a monthly vocational class for ladies, and taught members at the art club how to make useful gifts from odds and ends found in their homes.[27]

John A. Destin (1897-1982)

Although "Captain John" was a resident of Destin, he is included in this research because he painted in Pensacola. Captain John was the grandson of Leonard A. Destin, who came from New London, Connecticut, in the 1830s to found Destin. He was the son of George and Emma Marler and was born in Destin where he lived all his life, except for two years of military service during the First World War. By the 1920s he was established as a boatbuilder, fisherman, and artist. He regularly sailed to Pensacola, delivering fish from Destin and returning with supplies for his community. While on those trips,

he observed the sailing 'smacks' in the Pensacola harbor and they became the subject of many of his paintings. One of those paintings, "The Barcelona," now hangs in the Destin Community Center.

John Destin was a prolific painter who was proud of the fact that he never sold a painting. He gave his works to relatives and friends. This was such a point of honor with him that even today there is an unwritten rule among his family and friends that selling one of his paintings is just not done.

His work is in the naive style, and often called primitive. For his early paintings he used wood panels or anything he could find for a canvas and his paints were house paint or whatever was available. He also created scale models of sailboats complete with rigging. His last paintings were done in the 1970s, painted on canvas with oil paints. He donated them to raise funds for the Destin Community Center and the Fishing Rodeo.[28]

Mary Janice Thornton

Born in Alabama, schooled in Alabama, Florida, New York City, and abroad, Mary Janice Thornton was painting in the Pensacola area in the 1920s and remains one of the city's most important painters today. She began her studies at the age of six with the encouragement of her mother. In the 1920s her family lived in Bagdad, Florida where her father built her a studio above their garage so that she could pursue her interests.

Her formal schooling came from private art lessons with the president of the Art Department of the University of Alabama, studying with him for six years. She also studied at Judson College, Florida State College for two years, the Metropolitan Art School, and the Arthur Schweider Art School in New York where her instructors were Col. Jacobs and Arthur Schweider.[29] Living and painting in New York she would certainly have been aware of the Art Students League and its influence on American contemporary art.

Mrs. Thornton traveled to Europe with Col. Jacobs in 1930 along with eight of his other students. It was an experience which forever shaped her artistic development–as she met well-known artists and saw modern art first hand.[30]

After her return to the United States, she lived and worked in New York and in Destin for many years and now resides in

Pensacola. She will have a retrospective exhibition of her works at the Pensacola Museum of Art in 1996.

"Thornton's choice of subject matter has remained basic throughout her career–people, landscapes, and still life works." Her painting style, however, has undergone several distinct stages, beginning with traditional realism in the 1920s, a Fauvistic or color fluid period, then a very personal stage of what this author calls 'Striatism' and presently a return to more traditional realism.[31]

With this overview of the fine arts in the Pensacola area, we have seen some of the influences, opportunities, and practicing artists of the 1920s. In the years to come there is much more research on the visual arts of our area to be done so that a resource for future historians dealing with the long history of the visual arts in our area will emerge.

Notes

Piecing together the Pensacola art scene of the 1920s was an experience achieved with the support of several people and organizations and I am most appreciative. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Pensacola Historical Society, the University of West Florida Library and the Escambia Public Library as well as Lorna Williams and Jenny Davenport.

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[2]Werner Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1972), 1:298.

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[4]Haftmann, *Painting in the Twentieth Century*, 1:207.

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[6]Charles Reagan Wilson and William Ferris, eds., *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill, 1989), 58.

[7]Jessie J. Poesch, "Arts and Crafts on the Gulf Coast, 1870-1940," *The Cultural Legacy of the Gulf Coast, 1870-1940*, ed. Lucius and Linda V. Ellsworth, (Pensacola, Gulf Coast History and Humanities Conference, 1976), 103.

[8]J. Earle Bowden, "Pensacola's Port, a Harbor of History," *Pensacola News Journal*, Sept. 10, 1995.

[9]Jesse Earle Bowden, Norman Simons, and Sandra Johnson, *Pensacola, Florida's First Place City* (Norfolk, 1989), 98.

[10]James R. McGovern, *The Emergence of a City in the Modern South: Pensacola 1900-1945* (De Leon Springs, FL, n.d.), 81.

[11]Poesch, "Arts and Crafts," 104.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Frederick W. Glaeser, "The WPA in West Florida," *Pensacola News Journal*, January 3, 1978.

[14]Gail McKenney, "Visual Arts inthe Gulf Coast, 1860-1993" (Unpublished paper, 1995), 6.

[15]Manuel Runyan, Family Vertical File, Pensacola Historical Society.

[16]Dorene Angeles, *Pensacola News Journal*, October 1979.

[17]*Polks Pensacola City Directory* (Jacksonville, 1924), 615.

[18]Ibid., 25.

[19]The glass collection of H. Lee Bell, which includes portraits, is in the Special Collections Department of the University of West Florida library; *Polks Pensacola City Directory* (Jacksonville, 1928), 8:x.

[20]June Dyches, "Emma Chandler's paintings are presented to Museum," *Pensacola News Journal*, January 22, 1961.

[21]Runyan, Vertical File, Pensacola Historical Society.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Pensacola Artists, Vertical File, Escambia Public Library.

[24]Runyan, Vertical File, Pensacola Historical Society.

[25]*Pensacola News Journal*, July 27, 1961.

[26]Thomas Morrow, "By the Way," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 29, 1957.

[27]Adkinson, Family Vertical File, Pensacola Historical Society.

[28]Personal correspondence from Lorna Williams, 1995.

[29]*The World Who's Who of Women* (Cambridge, England, 1965), 721.

[30]Personal Interview with Mary Janice Thornton, April 1995.

[31]Mary Takach, Introduction to exhibition catalogue, "Mary Janice Thornton a Retrospective," 1986.

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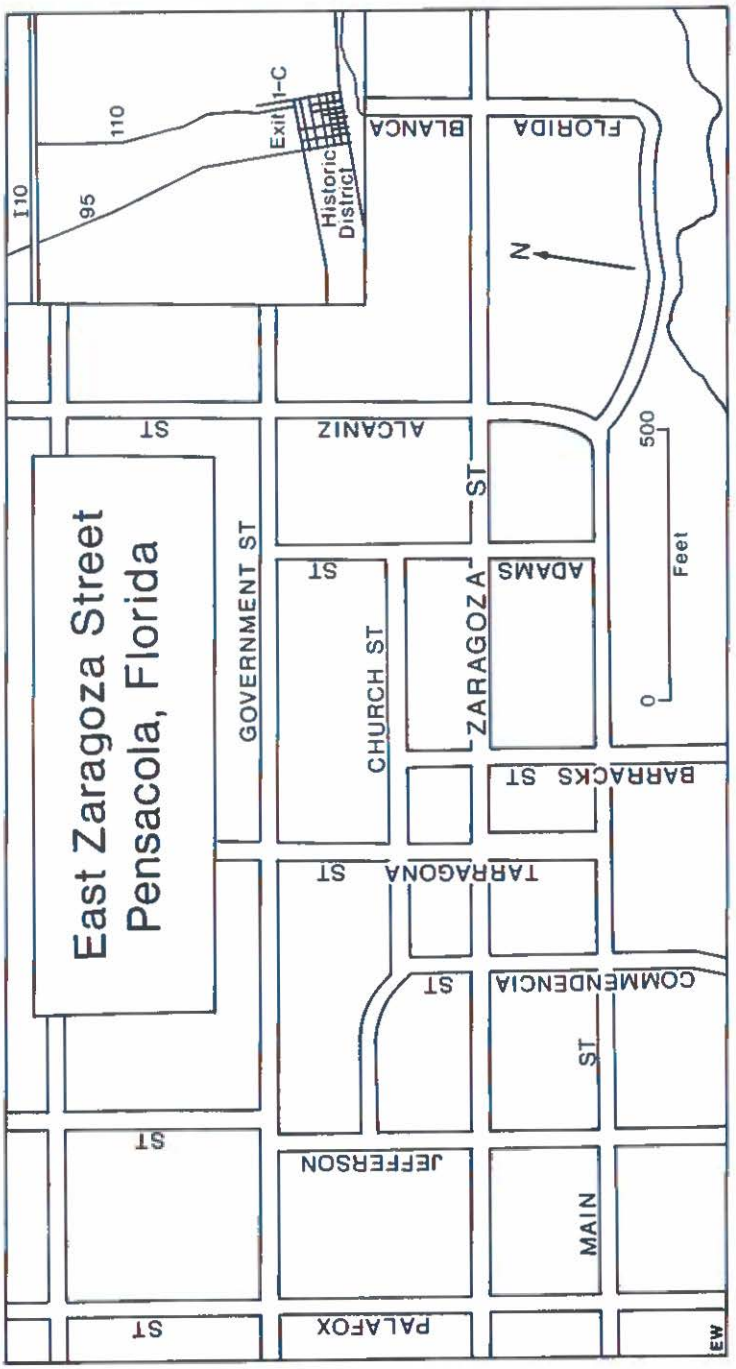
1920s East Zaragoza Street, Pensacola, Florida

Thomas Muir, Jr.

Many communities today contain districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Millions of dollars have been invested nationwide toward the redevelopment of these neighborhoods. Often, redevelopment is under the direction of state or local preservation organizations and community interest groups. Some organizations provide jobs for students of history and archaeology. To the benefit of service-oriented industries, historic districts in the United States attract millions of tourists seeking educational and recreational opportunities. Educational programs designed to increase visitor awareness of these resources may vary from conducted tours to printed or audio-visual guides. The programs may also simply consist of a series of museums, monuments, or markers mounted to the face of individual structures. Markers generally display the names of original occupants, or those of the most famous. The names are derived from inventories conducted by public historians, architects, and archaeologists, to support original nomination of the area to the National Register. Historic neighborhoods and the tools used to create them provide numerous opportunities for local historians to develop new studies and public programs which can offer new perspectives on the evolution of the community.

This study researches a three-block section in the Pensacola Historic District that has been listed on the National Register since 1970. The research focuses on the 1920s, with the objective of completing both a local history study, and an entertaining public program. The street, East Zaragoza, is located in the Old City tract. The tract was first surveyed and drawn during the colonial period. In 1920 it was part of the city center, and is an important element of the tourist experience in Pensacola today. An interpretation of 1920s East Zaragoza Street is constructed using several sources common to historic structure inventories. To support the research, several panoramic photographs in local archives provided a sweeping glimpse down the street in 1911, from a nearby camera mounted atop a grain elevator at the Port of Pensacola. Sanborn Insurance Company maps detailed the footprints of buildings on the street scape during


East Zaragoza Street
Pensacola, Florida
I10
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95
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Historic District
BLANCA
FLORIDA
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ALCANIZ
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GOVERNMENT ST
CHURCH ST
ZARAGOZA
ADAMS
BARRACKS ST
TARRAGONA
COMMENDENCIA
JEFFERSON
MAIN
PALAFOX
500
0
Feet

the period. City directories, courthouse records, and the 1920 census helped put people in the historic landscape. Chamber of Commerce studies and city planning documents described the progress of city improvements on the street. One unusual source, a fictional account of the lives of two elderly sisters living in the neighborhood in 1931, added some color to the research. Unfortunately for 1920s research, the local newspaper was not a good source for local information, but instead focused on national scandal.[1] Considering this research, a walk down 1920s East Zaragoza Street creates a picture of a community much different from the city as seen by today's visitor, and as it may have appeared in the nineteenth century.

Changes in the city from its humble colonial beginnings are most apparent when first viewed from East Zaragoza Street at the corner of Jefferson Street. At this intersection the University of West Florida Archaeology Institute recently investigated the western-most wall of a wooden fort constructed by the British during the eighteenth century. Visitors to the city today can enjoy a series of outdoor archaeology exhibits, constructed by the Historic Pensacola Preservation Board, displaying remnants of the British fort. Outside the thirty-acre public area occupied by the British military, provincial surveyor Elias Durnford first mapped Mansfield Street in 1764. During the early part of the nineteenth century Spanish surveyor general Vincente Pintado renamed Mansfield to Zaragoza, a city in Spain. The British street grid allowed Pensacola streets to be redrawn eastward through the central plaza once the stockade was removed. The open space, or parade grounds, outside the east and west gates of the fort were designated Seville Square and Plaza Ferdinand in 1813. By this time the wooden walls of the British stockade, and the large plaza it occupied, had begun to give way to the expansion of the town and its streets. One early nineteenth-century observer described the three east to west streets above Pensacola Bay as containing over two hundred and fifty one-story wood houses with porches.[2] While some of these buildings were still standing over one hundred years later, only a few of these ancient structures can be accounted for today.

At the beginning of the Florida territorial period, Plaza Ferdinand still occupied the land that would become the intersection of Zaragoza and Jefferson Street. It was near here that the flagstaff once stood

where General Andrew Jackson participated in the changing of the flag ceremony, July 17, 1821, reuniting East and West Florida. The plaza stretched from Pensacola Bay, north to Government Street. On the plaza in 1821 stood a large wood shed, twenty-four by fifty feet, constructed by the Spanish for the public market. Nearby, several buildings, originally part of the British fort, survived from the eighteenth century. The first United States courthouse was located in a two-story frame building first occupied by British officers, and later by the Spanish Governor. The United States customs house was located in the old fort's blockhouse, once fortified as part of the stockade's western-most bastion. Some of these old buildings became the subject of controversy by 1824, since they were considered to "occupy positions in the centre of one of the principal streets, to the injury and inconvenience of persons owning lots and living immediately in the rear of them."[3] The buildings were soon demolished.

Pensacola's public buildings still surrounded Plaza Ferdinand in 1920. Instead of serving the estimated three thousand souls living in the city in 1821, the city boasted thirty-one thousand in 1920, the third largest city in Florida. The public buildings were no longer simple wooden frame structures. Between 1880 and 1914, the city experienced a commercial construction renaissance. Tall and stately masonry revival-style buildings were erected, like the Court House (1887), City Hall (1907), City Jail (1908), and County Building (1911). Although they no longer serve their original function, the buildings are visible from the plaza today. Many are still publicly owned, but today house cultural institutions such as the T. T. Wentworth Jr. Florida State Museum and Pensacola Museum of Art. Just north of the plaza stands the impressive ten-story Empire Building (1909), the tallest in Florida at the time, and a symbol of the city's golden age. Most noticeably missing from this area in 1920 was the massive Opera House at Jefferson and Church streets severely damaged in the hurricane of 1916 and subsequently destroyed.

Leaving the plaza and walking east on Zaragoza during the 1920s, a visitor would be aware of many signs of progress in Pensacola. The street at the intersection of Jefferson and Zaragoza was paved passing the city hall. Electric street lights and concrete sidewalks surrounded the building. Pensacolians could boast 125 miles of concrete

sidewalks in 1920, replacing the hazardous wooden walkways of the nineteenth century. A two-story brick building located east of the city hall served as a garage for police patrol cars, a fire house, and upstairs a free government clinic. It was built originally as a restaurant and Masonic lodge in the 1890s. The 1920s fire department operated several specialized trucks, including an American-LaFrance ladder truck that had difficulty climbing the hill at Palafox Street. The police department then employed one auto brake inspector, one license inspector, three traffic officers, three motorcycle officers, and thirteen patrolmen, as well as three mounted, and three plain clothes officers.[4] This historic garage building gave way to an expanded parking area in the 1950s, and today, the site contains an outdoor exhibit depicting recent archaeological investigations.

On this block the 1920s visitor would also be very aware of the industrialization of the city center in recent decades. Several smoke stacks and large commercial buildings filled the surrounding skyline at the waterfront. The last evidence of a once busy saloon district could be found on Zaragoza just east of the county building. During the end of the nineteenth century the Gulf Saloon and liquor business of Alabama native Eugene Arbona stood at this location. Arbona built a masonry building facing Zaragoza after a fire on the block in 1884. Following his death, Arbona's son Joseph moved the business up Tarragona Street to Intendencia. In 1920 his widow Fannie Arbona still occupied a second story apartment at the 115 East Zaragoza location.

A succession of machine and electrical shops operated below the apartment. Just east of the Arbona Building, a small 1880s warehouse with tin roof was expanded to hold the enormous T. T. Todd Wholesale Fruit Company in 1922.[5] Altered remnants of these buildings are still part of the streetscape today. However, gone from the landscape is the intersection of Zaragoza and Commendencia streets. Commendencia was an unpaved alley that extended from Pensacola Bay, across Zaragoza, north to Church Street. East of Commendencia in the 1920s survived the numerous side tracks of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad that supported the once busy port facilities. The old brick warehouses of the M. F. Gonzalez Company, a wholesale grain and feed business, and the W. R. Gonzalez Press

were behind large tin awnings on the north side of Zaragoza. Both businesses had mid-nineteenth century beginnings.

The paved street extended across Commendencia Street and then up the railroad tracks at Tarragona Street. By 1927, Pensacola had 42 miles of paved road; 19 concrete, 13.9 brick, 7.5 wood block, and 1.6 asphalt, the newly preferred material. By 1929 area residents enjoyed the recently paved Scenic Highway with easy access across the Escambia River Bridge to Milton. Concrete State Road 7 connected automobile traffic north from Pensacola to Flomaton, Alabama. By this time over seven thousand cars were located in Pensacola and surrounding Escambia County. It has been estimated that by the end of the decade one in four Pensacolians owned an automobile.[6] City planners urged officials to consider removing downtown railroad tracks, now a nuisance to automobile traffic. Driving in the city was described as hazardous, with congestion occurring frequently in the business district, and many streets were too narrow for traffic. Steep hills to outlying neighborhoods presented further driving problems.[7] On Saturday evenings Palafox Street was filled with cars as Pensacolians crowded into dance clubs like the Venetian Ballroom, Tom's Night Club, and the San Carlos Hotel, to hear the new syncopated jazz.[8]

At the east side of the intersection of Zaragoza and Tarragona streets, two nineteenth-century commercial masonry structures survive today as the Museum of Commerce and Museum of Industry. In 1920 the warehouse to the south housed David Kugelman's wholesale grocery business. A two-story wood frame building, formerly a residence, once stood on the north side of the street. During the decade it housed the Charles Abbott Motor Company. The Levy and Hallmark wholesale produce company occupied the warehouse behind the building. Preservationists altered the building in the 1960s to serve as a state operated museum. Appropriately today, with a lumber train in front, the building houses exhibits for historic district visitors depicting Pensacola's turn-of-the-century industrial boom.

As early as the 1920s, a few blocks north of Zaragoza, on Tarragona, residents considered the noise and smoke from the storage yards of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad a "blighting influence" on residential property to the south and east.[9] Railroad cars often littered the sides of Tarragona Street. South on Tarragona, the Florida

Power and Light Company generating plant produced more smoke. For Pensacola residents,the company offered "an attractive combination rate for domestic light, cooking and refrigeration."[10] The well-established competitor in 1926, the Pensacola Gas Company, claimed nearly three thousand domestic consumers.

Behind the row of commercial buildings lining the railroad tracks on Tarragona Street survives one of Pensacola's oldest residential areas. In the neighborhood, according to a 1920s observer, "Once stately and pretentious homes have succumbed to old age, obsolescence and the invasion of commerce, and in the process, have depreciated in quality and use to a status commonly called blight."[11] City planners estimated eighty-five to one hundred percent of the houses beyond this point were constructed before 1919.[12]

Leaving the pavement, on the two hundred block of East Zaragoza the street was sand, "with stretches of cinders to make it hard."[13] The next intersection east on Zaragoza was Barracks Street. This was once the center of the British fort and the location of the enlisted men's barracks that burned in the early nineteenth century. Like Commendencia, Barracks was an alley extending from the water north to Church Street. Today the abandoned street is central to the Historic Pensacola Village museum complex. During the 1970s preservationists relocated two colonial structures, Julee Cottage and LaValle House, from their old neighborhood on West Zaragoza Street to the site of the British barracks. In 1920 a two-story wood frame Victorian house was located on the site. It was owned by James L. Sweeney, superintendent of the city waterworks. It was also home to his spouse Mary, three children ages eight to twenty-four, his widowed sister-in-law, nephew, and three additional lodgers.

East of the Sweeney House, towering over the center of the block is the John Lear House constructed in 1890. This is a grand two and one-half story folk Victorian structure with the typical irregular floor plan of the period and abundant ornate jigsaw porch details. Historic photos of the surrounding district reveal that by 1920 the neighborhood contained many of these multi-story houses. Today only a few survive as symbols of the prosperity experienced in the community at the beginning of the twentieth century. Like many other houses of its kind in 1920, Lear House was rented to several

families. In 1927 Emma J. Snowden advertised furnished rooms at the 214 East Zaragoza address.

Looking inside a typical house on East Zaragoza Street in the 1920s would reveal an interior different from the nineteenth-century home or that of today. The late nineteenth century saw the development of single functions for rooms, and matching furniture designs to compliment these functions. The cluttered Victorian parlor had become the orderly 1920s living room. Improvements in lighting allowed for artistic groupings of furnishings. The grand piano gave way to the Victrola, radio, and crank telephone. Housewives of the era were taught, "It is fundamental economy to clear our days of useless tasks, to simplify our surroundings, and make housekeeping less frantic and fussy."[14] The 1920s kitchen, benefiting from an array of new appliances like the electric refrigerator and stove was an accepted food work space. The invention of the Hoosier Cabinet ended the need for the Victorian pantry. Designers of the period boasted, "our kitchens have become delightful laboratories in which we are tempted to linger."[15]

City sewer lines extended down Zaragoza early in the century allowing the addition of the bathroom. The highly visible nineteenth-century bedroom, often part of a sitting room, was now considerd a more private space. Homemaker experts aware of the large number of individuals living in apartments during the 1920s, wrote, "As the women of the family have so many interests today, either business or social, it is far better to be housed where coal, light and servant problems are taken care of."[16]

On the southeast corner of the Barracks Street intersection is a 1976 recreation of the Cazenave House, originally built in 1805, exhibiting a French or Creole high house architecture. The house was one of the first privately-owned structures built on the military plaza. It was part of the Tivoli, an entertainment complex during the last Spanish period in Pensacola. A dilapidated rooming house by the 1920s, fire destroyed the original structure in the following decade. Four families lived in the historic building in 1921. The renters included city fireman George Craig, his spouse Anna, four children age one to thirteen, and his widowed mother, Lizzie. Next door, in an area presently reserved for parking, sat an impressive one-story wooden structure once owned by Francisco Moreno. Moreno, 1792-

1882, was a noted Pensacola banker, and a city alderman in 1825 and 1828. He married three times, had 27 children and 121 grandchildren.[17] Moreno apparently built many houses in the neighborhood during the nineteenth century for his many children. Today several surviving structures display historic markers with the Moreno name. Photos of this house reveal a southern or French colonial style construction, with a side-gabled double pitch roof, three roof dormers, full width front porch, and two end chimneys. End chimneys dissipated the heat of open hearth cooking in the house during the oppressive summer weather.[18] The house was built toward the mid-nineteenth century. The architecture of the house and neighboring Tivoli, represented an early nineteenth-century rural building tradition, and appear out of place next to their Victorian neighbors and industrial surroundings in the 1920s. The house was built toward the mid-nineteenth century. The Moreno house tenants listed in the city directory changed frequently during the decade. They claimed varying occupations common to the district, such as watchman, laborer, fisherman, seamstress, and engineer.

One popular misconception among historic district visitors to East Zaragoza Street suggests this area was Pensacola's once-renowned red light district. References made to the rooming houses once located in this section contribute to this fallacy. Reportedly, there were some fifteen bordellos nearby on the first two blocks of West Zaragoza Street. One historian wrote, "By 1910 Pensacola had a well-defined red-light and saloon district, and the city enjoyed recognition among navy men as a good port."[19] City officials began the work of closing these houses in 1917. Although in decline by the 1920s, sections of town further west on Zaragoza still had a reputation for prostitution.[20]

The same is true for the city's once abundant saloons and gaming houses. In spite of Prohibition beginning in 1919, liquor was still readily available. An alarmed citizen wrote the Prohibition chief in Washington, D. C., to report the activities of notorious liquor ringleader Joe Johnson whose schooner the *Michigan* was commonly docked at the foot of Palafox Street. The citizen reported that area stores, cleverly advertising soft drink sales, taxi stands at the San Carlos Hotel and L & N Railroad depot, and West Zaragoza Street pool rooms, were all selling liquor.[21] City ordinances of the 1920s

included articles addressing miscellaneous offenses against public morals, bawds and bawdy houses, and gaming.

Just east of where the Moreno House was located on East Zaragoza stands the Moreno Cottage. According to local tradition, the cottage was a honeymoon present from Moreno to his youngest daughter Pearl. Built in 1879 the simple two-room structure displays exterior ornamentation popular during its day. Like its neighbors, the house had a succession of renters during the 1920s. On the north side of the street, facing east on Adams Street toward Seville Square, is the Old Christ Church. Built in 1832, tradition ascribes the plan of this structure's design to that of the Old North Church, Boston, which was drawn by architect Christopher Wren.[22] The building served as a public library beginning late in the 1930s, and beginning in the 1960s, the local historical society museum. The congregation moved to a new location up Palafox Hill in 1902. Up through the 1920s the building was home to the black congregation of the St. Cyprian Episcopal Church, evidence of the growing racial separation in the community after the turn-of-the-century. This part of the building's history has received little attention from local historians.

It would be difficult to call Seville Square of the 1920s a green space compared to the landscaped park found here today. Sparsely vegetated, the sandy plaza was surrounded by primitive telephone and electric poles. Below the square the 300 block of East Zaragoza is also a park today. Densely populated in 1920, the block contained some ten dwellings and outbuildings of varying shapes and sizes, each surrounded by crude wood and wire fences. Occupants of the compound included the widows Mattie Peoples, Theresa Moore, and Elizabeth Williams. The chief cause of death reported during this period for white and black men was pneumonia, followed by tuberculosis. The large number of widows in the neighborhood is not hard to believe considering housing conditions and the occupational hazards of the decade. Each widow on this block lived in a house with several lodgers who worked as shipsmates, carpenters, baymen, and chauffeurs. Also on the block were Mrs. Rosa L. Bradshaw, Western Union operator, and Mrs. Cora Fuller, dressmaker, evidence of the growing number of women entering the 1920s work force. By 1927 it is estimated one in four employed persons in the community was female.[23]

Looking east beyond Seville Square the majority of structures standing in 1920 date to the 1870s and 1880s. According to one colorful account, the buildings had fences with "palings of sundry vintages." The paint on many, that still adhered, "had turned moss-colored long ago." Yards consisted of "riotous tall grass," with perhaps a white oak, and an "ancient crepe-myrtle tree." "The people who used to live here, nice, genteel people, happy and cheerful and decent, are all gone, some of them dead, some of them moved away, and their house let to anybody, Greek or Italians or Norwegians. The neighborhood children tear down the fences and play in the street and scatter their trash in other people's yards."[24]

The old and weather-beaten buildings of the district apparently fared well in the famous September 19, 1926, hurricane. Residents of the area were aware of the approaching storm four days in advance. The recently-opened public-sponsored radio station, WCOA, broadcast throughout the one hundred mile-per-hour winds of the storm from studios on the third floor of the nearby city hall. City officials reported only minor damage to local roofs and chimneys. It was thirty days before damage from downed trees, telephone, and power poles was cleaned-up. Economically disadvantaged residents of older structures in the district may have had to live with leaking roofs for years to come. One resident of the period recalled an out-break of pneumonia in the community due to soggy hurricane conditions.[25]

On the corners opposite Seville Square, three Victorian two-story dwellings dominated the intersection of Zaragoza and Alcaniz streets in 1920. During the nineteenth century living on Seville Square was a symbol of a family's prosperity. However, none of these buildings exist today. Moving east from the square the scale of buildings rapidly changes as one-story houses lined the rest of the street until the next intersection at Florida Blanca Street. Like the previous blocks of housing, only a small percentage was owner occupied during the 1920s. Just past the corner at 405 East Zaragoza stood a small neighborhood grocery, first operated by Arthur Coryopolis, and later Athens Kougiopoulios. These neighborhood stores were abundant in 1920s Pensacola. Most of the other people on this block claimed employment either in fishing, shipbuilding, or with the railroad. The presence of a few individuals working in the auto, electric, and telephone industries is evidence of some changes in employment

opportunities during the decade. City leaders of the 1920s were generally optimistic about the economic outlook for the community. There was plenty of new technology, plans for the coming of new railroads, promises of new industry, and the opening of modern highways and bridges. One has to wonder whether the residents of East Zaragoza Street shared this spirit of hope for the future.

Wartime prosperity attracted large numbers of rural immigrants to the city in the previous decade.[26] The trend of people leaving the farm for the city continued through the 1920s in the United States. Pensacola, however, experienced declining population, immigration, and birth rates during the period. During the 1920s many Pensacola families lived on an annual income of less than two thousand dollars annually, which was regarded as a minimum for maintaining health and decency.[27] The average wage of an unskilled man was sixteen dollars per week, and that of a woman, nine dollars. One scholar described the 1920s Pensacola economy as insufficient for prosperity. A large layoff occurred at the Newport Industry facility in 1921. Fisheries were in decline, and the shipping industries only gave intermittent work to large numbers of stevedores. Approximately forty percent of white and sixty percent of black laborers were unemployed in 1921.[28] However, there was a positive sign of the future. By the end of the decade the Naval Aeronautical Station supplied one-fourth of the total salaries in Pensacola.[29]

By the 1920s the city contained fewer bi-racial residential blocks, as it became increasingly segregated. Pensacola's population of 1925 totaled 25,305, and included 8382 white men, 8599 white women, 4632 black women, and 3681 black men.[30] Causes for the increasing racial separation include Jim Crow legislation, employment pressures in the community, reaction to changes brought by technology, and availability of housing.[31] In spite of declining population, city planners viewed local housing accommodations as saturated. One period observer reported, "At present, most of the houses for rent or sale are such as would appeal to the working class only." "These consisted of several large houses which are old residences out of repair and out of date in regard to conveniences."[32] Rooms cost on the average five to seven dollars per month, a room with a bath at the recently expanded luxury San Carlos Hotel cost two to six dollars per night. In 1927 community leaders were excited about the prospect

of a new twenty-four unit apartment house being erected in the East Hill area, on the banks of Bayou Texar, near the East Pensacola Bridge.[33]

On Zaragoza, between Alcaniz and Florida Blanca, only half of the houses standing in 1920 survive today. Most of the buildings were formerly residences but now serve commercial purposes. Missing from the historic landscape are eight accessory buildings. The buildings may have served as carriage houses during the nineteenth century, but in the 1920s were converted to auto garages. At the intersection of Florida Blanca, only the widow of sea captain Gus Axelson remained by 1927, a sole example of the former street residents from the previous century. Many of the old families moved to the new suburbs of East Hill and North Hill during the 1900s and 1910s. They still visited the old neighborhood once a month to pick-up the increasingly difficult-to-collect rent.[34] City directories display some evidence of 1920s East Zaragoza residents leaving the neighborhood for homes in new parts of the city. However, this was reserved for skilled laborers like Arthur Cox, foreman at the E. E. Saunders Fish Company, spouse Elizabeth and four children seventeen to twenty-seven years, and people like C. C. Leaman, who advanced from clerk to Piggly Wiggly manager, and spouse Agnes. One of four street car loops in the city passed nearby on Government Street and Cevalos Street providing easy access to the suburbs. For ten cents a ride the 1920s East Zaragoza Street resident could travel west to Kupfrian's Park to enjoy horse racing, further west on the bayshore to Palmetto Beach to watch a baseball game, or East on Bayou Texar to Magnolia Bluff for a swim. However, decreasing riders and revenues, caused by the popularity of the automobile, would soon spell an end to the electric street cars in the city.

In 1920 adjacent to a recently installed city fire box, at the intersection of Florida Blanca, stood the graceful Victorian cottage of bar pilot Charles Perry. By the end of the decade it housed the widow Mrs. E. E. Miller and two working daughters, police officer J. E. Abel and spouse Minnie, and carpenter William Henderson and spouse Anna. South on Florida Blanca the early nineteenth-century home of British merchant George Barkley was also now a rooming house. Its many roomers included Burt Barnes, a musician at the recently opened Saenger Theater on Palafox Street. Located nearby at

508 East Zaragoza was a row of shotgun houses. The vista east and along the bayshore, as viewed in period photographs, reveals several more clusters of these early row houses, ideally suited for increasingly narrow urban lots. Here lived the only people of African-American descent on East Zaragoza Street, including laundress Mary Brooks and driver Henry Garner. Local residents called the working class neighborhood east of the St. Michael's Cemetery and above the Louisville and Nashville's Muscogee Wharf "Hawkshaw." Few of the original buildings of Hawkshaw exist in this part of the city today.

Looking back on Pensacola from the end of East Zaragoza Street at Pensacola Bay, it is most apparent that the historic district of the 1990s little resembles the aging community of the 1920s. It is also evident that most of the remnants of the city's proud nineteenth century, still visible in 1920, are gone today. Massive new construction dominates the immediate block. Although built with compatible materials to the historic environment, the new buildings in no way reproduce the Victorian architecture of the previous century. After efforts in recent decades to foster increasing commercial development in the historic district, new evidence reveals a growing return of residential use. The 1990s resident is drawn to the street by the status of living in a historic area. The 1920s resident located here out of economic necessity.

In the 1920 census the occupants of the district largely claim southern states' origins, evidence of the early impact of rural immigration on Pensacola. Only a small percentage of East Zaragoza tenants exhibited foreign births. They were from middle and eastern European locations such as Greece, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Italy, and Norway, but were not recent immigrants, having come to the United States before the turn of the century. Unlike the nineteenth century or today, most neighborhood houses, though originally intended as single family dwellings, contained numerous lodgers, extended family relatives, and several children. Only a rare few were owner occupied. Frequent changes in occupant listings in directories during the decade exhibit the transient nature of the 1920s working class community. This is also an example of the poor state of the economy during the period. Of the occupations listed in the directories a majority of individuals, employed or unemployed, are unskilled laborers. Numerous widows, some in their eighties, illustrate the hardships of

the times, and the reliance by many on real estate for needed retirement income. The 1920s does not appear to be an era that preservationists would use to model the rehabilitation and reconstruction of an historic district. The aging housing of 1920 would not attract tourism and community investment for decades to come. The automobile now provided easy access to surrounding areas in Escambia County for new development. The era and the resources available for its study today do provide fertile ground for research and interpretation. They reveal that it was a unique transition period in the evolution of the development of Pensacola.

Notes

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[5]Rowland H. Rerick, *Memoirs of Florida* (Atlanta, 1902) 1: 419-20; Margo S. Stringfield, *The Pensacola Cultural Center: An Urban Archaeology Project in Pensacola, Florida* (University of West Florida, 1995), 44.

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[11]Ibid., 128.

[12]Ibid., 130.

[13]Florence Glass Palmer, *Life and Miss Celeste*, (New York, 1937), 101.

[14]Charles Alma Byers, et al., *Modern Priscilla Home Furnishing Book* (Boston, 1925), 130.

[15]Byers, 138.

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[19]James R. McGovern, "Sporting Life on the Line: Prostitution in Progressive Era Pensacola," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 54 (October 1975): 132.

[20]Ibid., 136-44.

[21]C. L. Bryant to J. M. Doran, June 21, 1927, Pensacola, FL., Historic Pensacola Preservation Board.

[22]Julia J. Yonge, *Christ Church Parish: Pensacola, Florida 1827-1927* (Pensacola, 1927), 9.

[23]Parsons, *Survey*, 38.

[24]Palmer, *Miss Celeste*, 86.

[25]Carl Wernicke, "The Hurricane of 1926," *Pensacola History Illustrated* 1 (Summer 1983): 8, 22; Parsons, 12; Palmer, 73, 214.

[26]McGovern, *Emergence*, 96.

[27]George W. Simons, Jr., *Comprehensive Plan of Pensacola, Florida* (Jacksonville, 1948), 20.

[28]McGovern, *Emergence*, 81-86; Parsons, 73.

[29]James R. McGovern, "Pensacola Florida: A Military City in the New South," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 59 (July 1980): 33.

[30]Parsons, 7.

[31]McGovern, *Emergence*, 113.

[32]Parsons, 32.

[33]Ibid., 32, 40.

[34]Palmer, 27.

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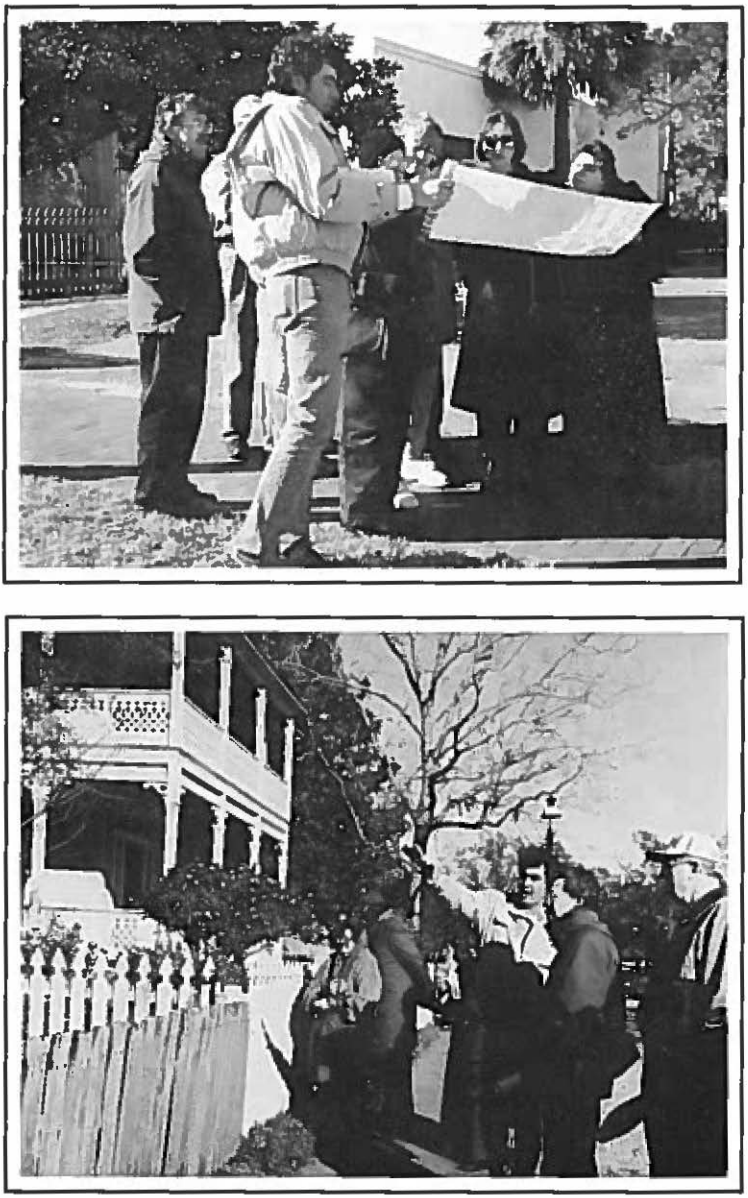

Tom Muir leading the walking tour of East Zaragoza Street, Pensacola, January 27, 1996. Mike Thomason photo.