

RECEIVED
UCF LIBRARY

MAR 14 2006

SERIALS

THE
FLORIDA
HISTORICAL QUARTERLY

PUBLISHED BY THE FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



VOLUME 84

WINTER 2006

NUMBER 3

The Florida Historical Quarterly

Published by the Florida Historical Society

Connie L. Lester, *Editor*

Sponsored by the University of Central Florida

Board of Editors

Robert Cassanello, University of Central Florida
Frederick R. Davis, Florida State University
Andrew Frank, Florida Atlantic University
Elna C. Green, Florida State University
Paul E. Hoffman, Louisiana State University
Daniel S. Murphree, University of Texas, Tyler
Gregory O'Brien, University of Southern Mississippi
Melanie Shell-Weiss, Johns Hopkins University
Irvin D.S. Winsboro, Florida Gulf Coast University

The *Florida Historical Quarterly* (ISSN 0015-4113) is published by the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, in cooperation with the Department of History, University of Central Florida, Orlando. Printed by the Sheridan Press, Hanover, Penn. Periodical postage paid. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Florida Historical Society, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922.

Subscription accompanies membership in the Society. Annual membership is \$40; student membership (with proof of status) is \$30; family membership is \$50; library and institution membership is \$55; a contributing membership is \$200 and higher; and a corporate membership is \$500 and higher. Correspondence relating to membership and subscriptions, as well as orders for back copies of the *Quarterly*, should be addressed to Dr. Lewis N. Wynne, Executive Director, Florida Historical Society, 435 Brevard Ave., Cocoa, FL 32922; (321) 690-1971; email: <wynne@flahistory.net>.

Correspondence concerning contributions, books for review, and all editorial matters should be addressed to Editor, *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Dept. of History, CNH 551, Univ. of Central Florida, Orlando, FL 32816-1350; (407) 823-6421; fax: (407) 823-3184; email: <flhisqtr@mail.ucf.edu>. Manuscripts should be submitted in triplicate. Guidelines for preparing manuscripts are available at <<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~flhisqtr/quarterly.html>>. The *Quarterly* is a member of the Conference of Historical Journals. The Florida Historical Society and the editor of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* disclaim responsibility for statements whether of fact or opinion made by contributors.

THE

FLORIDA

Winter 2006

HISTORICAL QUARTERLY Vol. 84, No. 3

**Hidden in Plain View: Eugene Poulnot and the
History of Southern Radicalism**

Elna C. Green

349

**Mythic Landscapes of the Boom and Bust Weedon
Island, Florida**

Sheila K. Stewart

383

**A Splendid Idea in China Turned Sour in Florida:
The Rise and Fall of Florida Splendid China**

Wenxian Zhang

411

Book Reviews

443

Cover Illustration: The cover image depicts the entrance to Florida Splendid China on U.S. Highway 192. The image was provided by Dr. James Wu, former business manager of Florida Splendid China from his personal collection.

Copyright 2006 by the Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, Fla.

Book Reviews

- Fogelson, *The Handbook of North American Indians. Volume 14, Southeast.*
- Swanson, *Documentation of the Indians of the Florida Keys & Miami, 1514-1765*, by Andrew Frank 443
- Hall, *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links*, by Matt Clavin 447
- Coclanis, ed., *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel*, by Carl Keyes 449
- Dibble, *Joseph Mills White: Anti-Jacksonian Floridian*, by James Cusick 451
- Bennett, *Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War*, by Susannah U. Bruce 454
- O'Brien, *Henry Adams and the Southern Question*, by Paul Escott 456
- Turner and Bramson, *The Plant System of Rail Roads, Steamships, and Hotels: The South's First Great Industrial Enterprise.*
- Reynolds, *Henry Plant: Pioneer Empire Builder*, by Larry Youngs 458
- Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations*, by Thomas A. Upchurch 461
- Ortiz, *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920*, by Robert Cassanello 463
- Chirhart, *Torches of Light: Georgia Teachers and the Coming of the Modern South*, by Joan Johnson . 466

Raper, <i>Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties</i> , by Fred Smith	468
Brundage, <i>The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory</i> , by Christopher Waldrep	471
Davis and Arsenault, eds., <i>Paradise Lost?: The Environmental History of Florida</i> , by Jack Temple Kirby	473

Hidden in Plain View: Eugene Poulnot and the History of Southern Radicalism

By Elna C. Green

“Outside agitator” is an epithet frequently hurled by southern white conservatives at those with opposing political positions. Claiming that they cannot fathom how any “true” southerner could reject regional orthodoxies, white conservatives conclude that such a person must be from somewhere else. Beginning in the antebellum era, southern conservative partisans have attempted to tarnish their political opponents with the stigma of being “an outside agitator.” In an assertion of a southern ideological monolith, conservative whites have used the label against abolitionists, feminists, civil rights activists, labor organizers, and radicals of varying hues. Indeed, in the collective mind of the white southern leadership, all such groups were largely one and the same. Hence a slavery apologist writing in the 1850s could conflate “the abolitionist-woman’s-rights-spiritual-rapper-negro-server-reformer” into one.¹ A century

Elna C. Green is the Allen Morris Professor of Florida and New South History at Florida State University. For assistance in this essay, she wishes to thank William LeFevre (Reuther Labor Archives), Bob Ingalls, Christopher Wilhelm, Joshua Youngblood, and the anonymous readers for the *Florida Historical Quarterly*.

1. “Modern Philanthropy and Negro Slavery,” *DeBow’s Review* 16 (January 1854), In a similar vein, historian Sheldon Hackney once listed the various threats to which southern whites reacted most strongly: “abolitionists, the Union Army, carpetbaggers, Wall Street and Pittsburgh, civil rights agitators, the federal government, feminism, socialism, trade-unionism, Darwinism, Communism, atheism, daylight-saving time, and other by-products of modernity.” Hackney, “Southern Violence,” *American Historical Review* 74 (February 1969), 924-25.

later, southern industrialists recognized that the “outsider label” was “the biggest thing they had” in their fight against labor unions.²

But many of those who suffered under the infamous label, “outside agitator,” well knew that “true” southerners could hold a wide range of political opinions. So-called outsiders were often, in fact, homegrown liberals, feminists, or radicals.³ One such figure was Eugene F. Poulnot, of Tampa. A committed radical and labor activist, Poulnot dedicated many years to the labor movement and was highly visible figure in Tampa during the 1930s. His activities brought him local notoriety, considerable national attention, and ultimately endangered his life. He was the victim of a vicious vigilante attack, the centerpiece of a trial that became a national *cause celebre*, and the object of a federal investigation that dogged him and his family for years to come. And yes, he was denounced as an “outside agitator.”

Despite living such a dramatic and public life, Poulnot has barely surfaced in the historical literature. Although the attack on his life was once depicted in a movie (the 1942 socialist-cinema file *Native Land*), Robert Ingalls’ book on vigilante violence in Tampa gives Poulnot his only scholarly coverage. Ingalls describes the “flogging” Poulnot suffered in 1935 and the subsequent series of highly publicized trials of his attackers.⁴ With that one exception, Eugene Poulnot has been overlooked by scholars, a surprising historical obscurity since his life in the 1930s placed him squarely in the cross-hairs of Klansmen, FBI agents, WPA administrators, and the Tampa police. The following essay hopes to restore Poulnot to his place in the historical narrative, and it will demonstrate that he was a central figure in the history of Tampa, of the labor movement in Florida, and of radicalism in the South. He was a homegrown radical, one of many the South produced.⁵ Returning native radicals to the narrative of southern history helps to remind

2. Barbara S. Griffith, *The Crisis of American Labor: Operation Dixie and the Defeat of the CIO* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 101.

3. The list of native-born southerners denounced at some point as outside agitators reads like an honor roll of activism. To name just a few: Martin Luther King, Jr., Carl and Anne Braden, Junius Scales, Virginia Durr, Will Alexander, Howard Kester, Aubrey Williams, Alonzo Herndon, and Jessie Daniel Ames.

4. Robert P. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882-1936* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1988).

5. Among those historians who have explored the South’s radical history are: Mark Fannin, *Labor’s Promised Land: Radical Visions of Gender, Race, and Religion*

us of the region's complex political discourse. Tracing the events of Poulnot's life and activism allows us to chart the ways that the range of political expression was narrowed in the South's recent past.

Eugene Frederick Poulnot was born in Jacksonville, Florida, on May 5, 1897.⁶ His father, Lawrence William Poulnot, was a bookbinder whose family had lived in Savannah since the Civil War.⁷ Although living in Florida at the time of Eugene's birth, the Poulnots moved back to Georgia shortly thereafter. Sometime before his twelfth birthday, Eugene's mother died.⁸ In 1911, his father married Euphemia Patterson, and the whole family soon moved to Tampa, settling there permanently around 1916. Lawrence took a job as a bookbinder for Rinaldi Printing. Eugene, following in his father's footsteps, began working as a pressman for the same company. Although by now eighteen years old, he continued to live with his parents.⁹

The Poulnots arrived in Tampa at a period of tremendous growth and tumult in the city's history. The cigar industry, founded in the 1880s, had come to dominate the city's economy and politics by the 1910s. The city was home to more than one hundred

in the South (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003); W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South: The Ruskin Colonies in Tennessee and Georgia, 1894-1901* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Robert F. Martin, *Howard Kester and the Struggle for Social Justice in the South, 1904-77* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Paul M. Gaston, *Women of Fair Hope* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984); Anthony P. Dunbar, *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929-1959* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981); James R. Green, *Grass Roots Socialism, Radical Movements of the Southwest, 1895-1943* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978); and Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York: Knopf, 1974).

6. His date of birth comes from his 1918 Selective Service registration card.
7. Lawrence William Poulnot's father, also named Eugene, was listed in the 1850 census as the son of a farmer in Charleston. By the 1870 census Eugene was an engine builder in Savannah. In 1880 he was listed as a machinist, still living in Savannah. Lawrence William was born in Georgia sometime around 1870.
8. I have been unable to locate the family on the 1900 census. By the 1910 census, Lawrence William was a widower, Eugene was 12, and his brother Lawrence A. Poulnot was 10. Since the younger son was listed as born in Georgia, the family must have moved to Georgia before 1900. The mother's name remains unknown.
9. The marriage information comes from www.RootsWeb.com. The 1916 Tampa city directory is the first to list the Poulnots as residents.

cigar factories, which produced more than 250 million cigars a year. Tampa's population had more than doubled since 1900. Much of that demographic change came from foreign immigration: the city's cigar industry relied heavily on the highly skilled labor of cigar rollers from Cuba. In the late nineteenth-century, the city also had begun to attract large numbers of immigrants from Italy. Together, these groups settled in what would come to be Tampa's Latin quarter: Ybor City.¹⁰

Although the cigar industry had moved from Cuba to Tampa largely to avoid labor troubles on the island, the skilled cigar workers were accustomed to a great deal of control over the manufacturing process in Cuba, and they brought their expectations and their commitments to organized labor with them when they immigrated. Tampa saw its first cigar workers' strike in 1887, just months after the arrival of the industry.¹¹ In subsequent years, strikes became almost commonplace in Tampa. Major city-wide efforts in 1910, 1920, and 1931 were particularly important to the labor movement in the city, and dozens of smaller actions took place in other years as well.

A vibrant culture of radical politics informed Tampa's energetic labor scene in ways more typical of large northeastern cities than the southern cities of the period. Both Italian and Cuban immigrants created radical discussion groups, debating clubs, newspapers, and political organizations.¹² These constituencies, along with native-born radicals of various hues, made Tampa a frequent stopping point for traveling political activists. In 1900, the Socialist Eugene Debs gave a two-hour speech in Tampa to a crowd estimated at between 3,000 and 4,000 people.¹³ Big Bill Haywood, of the Industrial Workers of the World, visited the city in 1908.¹⁴

10. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 87, 32-33. See also Robert J. Kerstein, *Politics and Growth in Twentieth-Century Tampa* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001); and Robert P. Ingalls and Louis A. Pérez, *Tampa Cigar Workers: A Pictorial History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

11. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 32-36.

12. Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 143-146; Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 56-57.

13. Ray F. Robbins, Jr., "The Socialist Party in Florida: 1900-1916" (MA thesis, Samford University, 1971), 14.

14. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 119.

Guiseppe Bertelli, Socialist editor of Chicago's *La Parola dei Socialisti*, made ten-day stop in 1910.¹⁵ Carlo Tresca, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, and Luisa Capetillo were among the many leftist luminaries who made appearances in Tampa.¹⁶ The Cigar City became a regular stop for any radical on tour.

Homegrown radicals emerged in Tampa as well. Winfred R. Gaylord of Tampa gave a speech on 4 January 1904, claiming that the local Socialist organization had 100 members. In April 1904, William P. Neild, a local newspaper editor, announced that he was organizing a Socialist debating society in the city. Socialists ran a full ticket in Tampa's municipal election in 1904. A Mr. S. Elliott was the Socialist candidate for mayor; E. B. Chamberlain ran for treasurer; and G. B. Mendenhall stood for clerk. In 1916, Karlos L. Harter ran for mayor on the Socialist ticket.¹⁷

Thanks largely to the strength of the party in Tampa, Florida soon had the largest Socialist Party vote in the South. From 1904 to 1928, Florida alone among the former Confederate states recorded more than 2,000 radical votes in every presidential election. In 1912, only nine states in the country had a higher Socialist vote percentage than Florida.¹⁸ The party successfully elected a handful of candidates to office, including one state legislator: Socialist party member A.J. Pettigrew was elected to the state house in 1906. In 1912, Eugene Debs garnered 4,806 votes in Florida, outpolling William H. Taft, the Republican candidate, by 527 votes. Debs received 9.3% of the state's votes cast that year.¹⁹

Florida's nascent labor movement was also growing in this same period. Florida workers participated in the nationwide outbreak of strikes that followed the end of World War I. In 1919, a strike begun by phosphate workers in Polk and Hillsborough coun-

15. Mormino and Pozzetta, *Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 149.

16. Nancy A. Hewitt, *Southern Discomfort: Women's Activism in Tampa, Florida, 1880s-1920s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 204.

17. Robbins, "The Socialist Party in Florida," 15-16, 58.

18. *Ibid.*, 11.

19. *Ibid.*, 27, 51. On the Socialist party in the South in this period, see Stephen Cresswell, "Grassroots Radicalism in the Magnolia State: Mississippi's Socialist Movement at the Local Level, 1910-1919," *Labor History* 1992, 33(1): 81-101; Cresswell, "Red Mississippi: the State's Socialist Party, 1904-1920," *Journal of Mississippi History* 1988 50(3): 153-171; James R. Green, "Tenant Farmer Discontent and Socialist Protest in Texas, 1901-1917," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 1997 81(2): 133-154; Grady McWhiney, "Louisiana Socialists in the Early Twentieth Century: a Study of Rustic Radicalism," *Journal of Southern History* 1954 20(3): 315-336.

ties spread to other industries, until more than 20,000 workers across the state were out on the picket lines.²⁰ In that same year, a construction workers' strike in Miami embroiled that city in angry confrontations for months, and shipyard workers in Pensacola went on strike in both the spring and the fall. Jacksonville, with thirty-eight American Federation of Labor (AFL) locals, saw repeated walkouts, accompanied by frequent violence.²¹

This evidence of political radicalism and labor activism was more than counterbalanced by powerful conservative forces in the state. Florida was still the "bastion of defense for traditional American ideas of property rights, freedom of contract, and labor as a commodity to be purchased by employers. . . ." ²² The 1910s and 1920s saw the revival of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a virulent anti-Catholic and nativist movement, and ongoing racial repression in the Sunshine State. Sidney Catts, running for governor in 1916, made anti-Catholicism the cornerstone of his campaign.²³ A rising tide of violence—directed at labor organizers, at African Americans, and at non-Protestants—took the form of individual beatings, group floggings, lynchings, and racial massacres (such as the infamous events at Rosewood in 1922).²⁴ The Klan acted openly, and had a penchant for the use of tar and feathers. Klansmen in the state were so aggressive they once earned a reprimand from the national body for the use of "unauthorized" violence.²⁵

Thus when the Poulnot family arrived in Tampa around 1916, it was at the height of the Socialist party's influence in the city, and

20. Wayne Flynt, *Duncan Upshaw Fletcher, Dixie's Reluctant Progressive* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1971), 132.

21. Wayne Flynt, *Cracker Messiah, Governor Sidney J. Catts of Florida* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 214-217. See in addition: Jeffrey Drobney, *Lumbermen and Log Sawyers: Life, Labor, and Culture in the North Florida Timber Industry, 1830-1930* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997); Eric Arnesen, "'What's on the Black Worker's Mind?': African-American Workers and the Union Tradition," *Gulf Coast Historical Review* 1994 10(1): 5-18.

22. Jerrell H. Shofner, "Communists, Klansmen, and the CIO in the Florida Citrus Industry," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 71:3 (January 1993): 301.

23. Catts' flamboyant nativism has attracted much scholarly attention. See for example Flynt, *Duncan Upshaw Fletcher*, chapter 3.

24. William P. Jones has recently suggested that the Rosewood massacre was not only the product of racial friction over jobs, but was also used by the local lumbermill "to extend its influence over African Americans who previously lived outside of company control." *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 26-27.

25. David Chalmers, "The Ku Klux Klan in the Sunshine State in the 1920s," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 42:3 (January 1964): 209-215.

on the eve of the postwar backlash against radicalism. Eugene Poulnot, who would have been eligible to vote at approximately the same time he entered World War I, came of political age at a time when radicalism was at its zenith. Tampa's civic culture provided encouragement for both labor activism and political radicalism. In the aftermath of the First World War and the Bolshevik Revolution, this "socialist moment" would fade quickly. What had been relative tolerance by local authorities would turn into a seething red scare.²⁶ But by then, Eugene Poulnot was already a committed radical and labor activist.

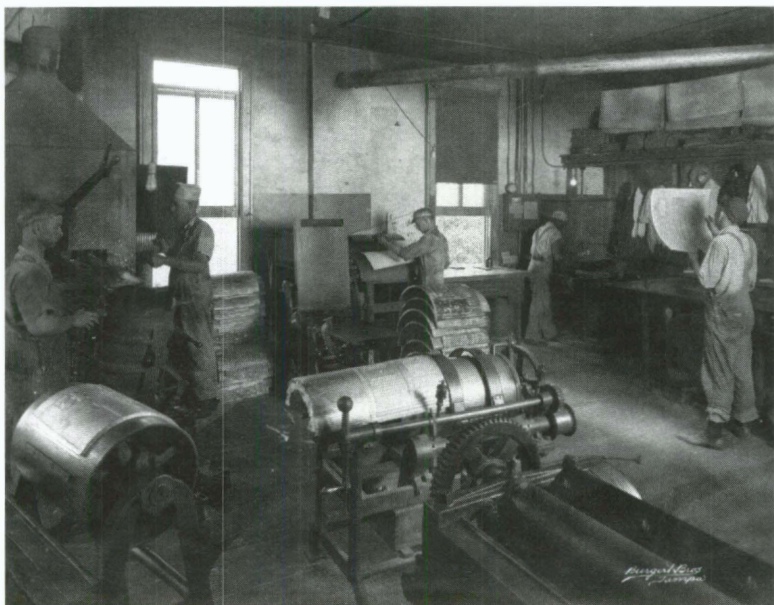
Eugene Poulnot received his honorable discharge from the service in July 1918, and returned home to move back in with his parents.²⁷ His father, now identified in public records as "William L." (probably to distinguish him from his son named Lawrence), had moved to a job at the *Tampa Tribune*. Eugene, once again modeling himself after his father, also began working at the newspaper. Soon, Eugene married Nana Barlow and the newlyweds continued to live with Eugene's parents. Younger brother Lawrence also married about this same time, and he and his bride Ethel moved into a house one block away from the rest of the Poulnots. The family thus began what would be several decades of close-knit family life, living and working together in a variety of patterns. In 1924, when William and Euphemia moved to Seminole Heights, a new housing development on River Boulevard, Eugene and Nana moved with them.²⁸

The 1920s were the most stable years in the life of the Poulnot family. In December 1922, Eugene was initiated into the Tampa

26. The classic text remains Robert K. Murray's *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955). Recent treatments include: Kim E. Nielsen, *Un-American Womanhood: Antiradicalism, Antifeminism, and the First Red Scare* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001); Regin Schmidt, *Red Scare: FBI and the Origins of Anticommunism in the United States, 1919-1943* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2000); and Theodore Kornweibel, *Seeing Red: Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy, 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998). On the red scare in Florida, see Flynt, *Cracker Messiah*, 251-259.

27. Discharge information comes from FBI Freedom of Information Act Request file, Poulnot. (FOIA request files do not include series, box, and folder numbers typical of archival filing systems. It comes as an unnumbered set of photocopies. Readers who wish to confirm information cited from the two FOIA requests cited in this article may contact the author for copies.)

28. Tampa city directories for 1920, 1921, 1922, and 1924.



Printers at Tampa's newspaper in 1923. This was Pounot's profession in the 1920s.
Photo courtesy of Florida State Archives

local of the Printing, Pressman, and Assistants' Union. This important milestone in his work life meant that he would henceforth earn union wages and hold steady employment.²⁹ (Just how important this was would become evident during the depression years, when he lost his union card and was unable to obtain employment in his profession. This lapse would cause him and his family considerable difficulty for many years.) Eugene continued to work as a pressman at the *Tribune* through at least 1930. The growing family—four children were born by 1928—continued to live in the same house on River Boulevard with Eugene's parents throughout the decade.³⁰ Compared to the upheaval and uncertainty they would face in the 1930s, these years must have seemed rosily secure.

29. C. E. Freeburn to Herbert H. Pickett, 20 February 1938. Workers Defense League Papers (hereinafter WDL), Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Box 143, folder 33.

30. Tampa city directories for 1929 and 1930, federal census for 1930.

The Great Depression of the 1930s turned Tampa's already volatile scene into a potent, and potentially dangerous, mix of fear, desperation, and extremism. The national and international markets for Tampa's high quality cigars plummeted. As Americans learned to smoke much cheaper cigarettes, Tampa's tobacco manufacturing suffered.³¹ Heavily dependent upon this one industry, the city was devastated by the collapse of cigar manufacturing. Thousands were thrown out of work. Those who continued to hold jobs in cigar factories had to live with pay cuts.³² Mayor R. E. Chancey reported in May 1934 that some 45,000 people in the city were dependent on charity.³³ A Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) study the next year concluded that tobacco workers were the largest category of unemployed in the city.³⁴ The levels of dissatisfaction were palpable, as groups of workers expressed their frustrations loudly and insistently. Tampa was the scene of dozens of protests, strikes, walkouts, and riots, some of which were sponsored by the Communist Party as its members campaigned for higher wages and increased unemployment relief.³⁵ City officials carefully watched "some overt demonstrations," in which "[m]any school children whose parents were unable to provide lunches have engaged in demanding demonstrations, as well as others who have been in distress and style themselves as an Unemployed Brotherhood."³⁶

Although not employed in the cigar industry, the Poulnots nevertheless were affected deeply by the city's economic unraveling. Still working for the *Tribune*, Eugene also began working as a printer for the Masonic Home in St. Petersburg.³⁷ Whether this was because of cutbacks at the *Tribune* or some other reason is not

31. Mormino and Pozzetta, *Immigrant World of Ybor City*, 131.

32. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 149-150.

33. R.E. Chancey, mayor of Tampa, to Harry Hopkins, 21 May 1934. National Archives, College Park, WPA Records (hereinafter WPA), Civil Works Administration, Central Files, 1933-34, State Series, box 14, folder labeled "Florida Miscellaneous, A-F."

34. "12,190 Jobless Listed in FERA County Checkup," *Tampa Tribune*, 23 April 1935: 18.

35. Anita Brenner, "Tampa's Reign of Terror," *The Nation* 135 (7 December 1932): 556; Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 150.

36. R.E. Chancey to Harry Hopkins, 21 May 1934. WPA, Civil Works Administration, Central Files, 1933-34, State Series: Florida, box 14, folder "Florida Miscellaneous, A-F."

37. Eugene managed to be listed in the 1930 census in both Tampa and St. Petersburg, quite an unusual feat. Both entries are clearly for the same man.

clear from the records. What is clear is that the family's financial difficulties had begun. In December 1931, Poulnot stopped paying his union dues. A year later, he was suspended from his union.³⁸

Poulnot first surfaced as an activist in December 1933. He wrote Harry Hopkins, director of the Civil Works Administration, on behalf of the "Unemployed Brotherhood of Hillsborough County," complaining about discrimination in pay rates on work relief projects in Tampa.³⁹ His first political arrest occurred shortly thereafter, in May 1934, as he gave a speech that police deemed "incendiary" at a rally of relief workers demanding higher pay.⁴⁰ Within months, he appeared on a list of radicals under surveillance by U.S. Military Intelligence.⁴¹ Poulnot was arrested a second time that winter, along with his father, on charges of stealing gas from the Tampa Gas Company by making an illegal connection to their lines. Those charges were not pursued at the time, but would resurface later.⁴²

In 1935, the "Unemployed Brotherhood" evolved into a chapter of the Workers Alliance, a national organization of the unemployed and relief workers that pressed for expanded work relief programs and increased wages.⁴³ Allied with and supported by the

38. C.E. Freeburn to Herbert H. Pickett, 20 February 1938. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 33.

39. Poulnot to Harry Hopkins, 21 May 1933. WPA, Civil Works Administration, Central Files, 1933-34, State Series: Florida, box 13, folder "Florida Miscellaneous, L-P." Mayor Chancey later claimed that Poulnot had been "an agitator, consistently trying to stir up strife among relief clients" since at least 1931. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 181. Although I have not seen documents to prove that date, I have little reason to doubt the assertion.

40. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 181. The Tampa police arrested him on May 12, on suspicion of being a Communist. A *nolle prosequi* was later issued. (FBI F.O.I.A. Request file, Poulnot.)

41. "Summary of Subversive Situation in Fourth Corps Area, October 17, 1934," U.S. Military Intelligence Reports: Surveillance of Radicals in the United States, 1917-1941. (UPA microfilms) Reel 28, series 2664-61. Poulnot was listed as president of the "Workers Leagues, a radical organization." O. M. Alphonso was vice-president. David Benson was general secretary and treasurer.

42. "Poulnot and Strike Leaders Lose WPA Jobs," *Tampa Tribune*, 18 July 1937:1. The Unemployed Councils, a national movement, blocked evictions, returned furniture to houses, and reconnected gas and electrical services. Membership in the Unemployed Councils was estimated from 100,000 in 1933 to 450,000 in Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 217.

43. The Workers Alliance of America formed in 1935 by combining three previously existing, but smaller, efforts, including the Communist-led Unemployed

Socialist Party, the Workers Alliance was the most effective in urban, industrial centers with histories of strong labor movements.⁴⁴ In Florida, small chapters were formed in Miami, Gainesville, Pensacola, and Tampa. Tampa's unit, headed by Poulnot, quickly found itself enmeshed in municipal politics.

The city's politics had long been marked by graft, fraud, and periodic violence. The 1935 municipal elections were no different. The current mayor, Robert E. Lee Chancey, faced a former mayor, D. B. McKay, in the September Democratic primary. Both men had organized political machines; both factions desperately wanted the money generated by gambling and other illicit activities in Tampa that would accrue to the winner.⁴⁵ Tensions were so high that more than a thousand "special patrolmen," armed with clubs and shotguns, lined the streets on election day. When violence broke out anyway, Governor David Sholtz sent in the National Guard.⁴⁶ This fraud-filled primary, which sent Mayor Chancey to the general election in November, set the stage for the most dramatic moments in Eugene Poulnot's life.

Although corruption had long been one of the hallmarks of Tampa's political culture, this particular election provoked a backlash against the rampant and blatant fraud. Joseph Shoemaker, hired as a poll watcher for the primary election and disgusted by what he had witnessed, organized a reform group to challenge the corrupt mayoral candidate in November. Unemployed, a recently transplanted New Englander, and a Socialist who had been expelled from the party, Shoemaker was an unlikely political leader. But Shoemaker's third party organization, the "Modern Democrats," found allies among Tampa's Socialists. Socialists and Modern Democrats combined efforts to support candidates for mayor, tax assessor, and alderman. Eugene Poulnot and the

Councils. David Lesser of the Socialist Party became its chair. Matt Perry, *Bread and Work: Social Policy and the Experience of Unemployment, 1918-39* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 155-156.

44. In September 1936, for example, the Workers Alliance sponsored a 4-day strike in Minneapolis that involved more than 6,000 workers. "Talks of Halting Minneapolis WPA," *New York Times*, 6 September 1936:18. A Workers Alliance Strike in San Francisco in April 1937 claimed more than 16,000 WPA strikers. "Thousands Strike in California WPA," *New York Times*, 2 April 1937:15.

45. Hubert Herring, "Tampa Warns America," *Christian Century* 53 (4 March 1936): 359.

46. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 177-78.

Workers Alliance joined in the campaign on behalf of the Modern Democrats.⁴⁷

Mayor Chancey won the general election handily. The Modern Democrats received 919 votes, or less than ten percent of the total, and clearly did not pose a threat to the political establishment. But the Modern Democrats began holding rallies and trying to build a larger movement in preparation for the county and state elections to be held in 1936. Fearful of the potential this challenge represented, the city's political leadership struck back in what Robert Ingalls has called a "carefully planned vigilante attack" on the Modern Democrats. On the night of November 30, 1935, Joseph Shoemaker, Eugene Poulnot, Samuel Rogers and several others were conducting a meeting in a private home. A police raid, led by Sergeant Smitty Brown, seized five men and an armful of papers and took them all to police headquarters. After interrogating the men about their affiliation with the Communist Party, the police release them, one by one, into the dark night.⁴⁸

Poulnot, Shoemaker, and Rogers were each seized by men waiting outside the police station. They were taken to a remote spot outside town, where they were stripped and beaten with "an assortment of chains, straps, and hoses." After the beatings, the vigilantes applied tar and feathers to their wounds and left the men in the woods to die. (One witness later described Poulnot's tarred skin as "a piece of raw beef steak.")⁴⁹ Shoemaker, the most badly tortured of the three, lay in a hospital bed for nine days before he finally succumbed to his injuries. His throat had been so badly wounded that he was not able to speak before he died. Poulnot and Rogers, however, lived to testify against their attackers, at least one of whom was immediately identified as a policeman. There were rumors of Klan involvement as well.⁵⁰

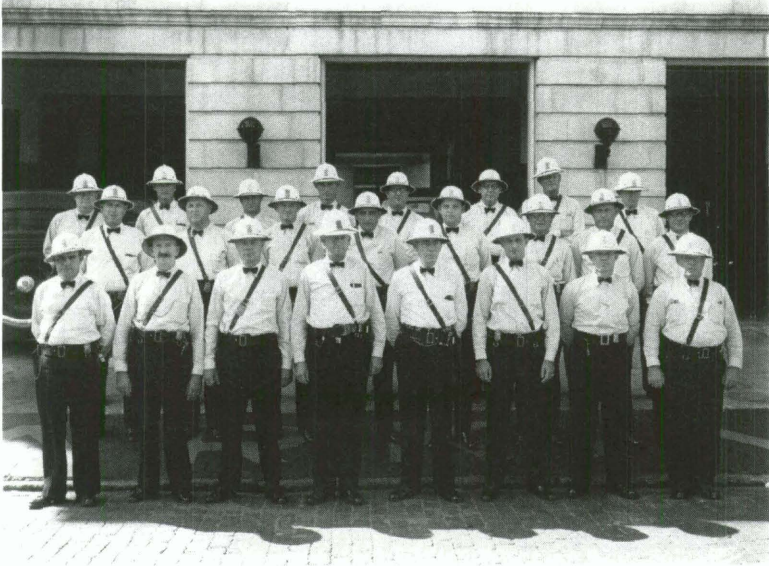
The events quickly made national headlines. The *New Republic* dismissed charges of Communism and argued that the "real grievance against the Modern Democrats was that some of them had been fighting for better treatment of the unemployed in Tampa,

47. Ingalls, *Vigilante Violence*, 179-81.

48. Ibid., 181-82.

49. D. M. Benson to David Lasker, 2 December 1935. ACLU Archives, v. 835, reel # 123.

50. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 182-83; Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights in Tampa, "Memorandum on the Tampa Affair," Norman Thomas Papers, sub-series J.6, reel # 67.



Tampa's police force, June 1935 Months before the Poulnot flogging. *Photo courtesy of Florida State Archives*

many of whom are now on W.P.A. projects at a wage of \$7.50 a week for a full week's work, and that they had helped call public attention to the relations between the city administration and Tampa's flourishing colony of gamblers."⁵¹ *Christian Century* denounced the attack as "American fascism."⁵² Labor organizations in particular urged swift and complete justice. Without it, "organization of labor in Florida, both of the employed and unemployed, will be even more difficult than before; no independent political party will be able to function in the open."⁵³ The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) offered a \$1,000 reward for information resulting in convictions of the guilty parties.⁵⁴

51. "A Man is Killed," *New Republic* 85 (25 December 1935): 187.

52. Hubert Herring, "Tampa Warns America," *Christian Century* 53 (4 March 1936): 359.

53. Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights in Tampa, "Memorandum on the Tampa Affair," Norman Thomas Papers, subseries J.6, reel # 67.

54. Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights in Tampa, "Memorandum on Tampa Flogging Cases submitted to Governor Fred P. Cone, June 23rd, 1937," Norman Thomas Papers, subseries J.6, reel # 67.

Norman Thomas organized the Committee for the Defense of Civil Liberties in Tampa (henceforth "the Committee"), and raised money for the support of the victims and the investigation.

There was much public pressure on the federal government to take action. The ACLU pushed the WPA to conduct an investigation.⁵⁵ Some hoped that Franklin D. Roosevelt would intervene personally: "Before the enemies of your principles of fair play get too strong a hold elsewhere, as well as in Florida, can you not act in the case of alleged official injustice against Joseph Shoemaker and others in Tampa? Surely there is technical ground for presidential interference when W.P.A. workers and their organization are involved. If Fascist-minded police of Tampa are successfully whitewashed then 'civil liberty' is a mockery."⁵⁶ Despite the intense public pressure, no federal agency overtly intervened in the case.

Eventually eleven men were indicted on various charges related to the floggings, including covering up the crime after the fact. The first trial, set to begin in April 1936, was on the kidnapping charges only. The murder charges were to be tried separately. As the trial date approached, Poulnot believed his life to be in danger. Two other witnesses had already died under mysterious circumstances. The defendants were all policemen, and several were widely reported to be Klansmen as well. Knowing that his testimony was critical to obtaining any convictions, Poulnot began keeping a gun under his pillow and quietly pledged that he would not be kidnapped again.⁵⁷

The involvement of the Klan in the floggings and in subsequent threats against Poulnot's life does not mean that race was an issue in these events. From all available records, Poulnot's politics were based on concerns about organized labor rather than civil rights. Southern anticommunism in the 1930s was still more about radicalism than about the civil rights movements, and the KKK acted as a union-busting organization across the South. Atlanta, for example, saw nearly 50 Klan floggings between 1937 and 1940

55. Roger Baldwin telegram to Nels Anderson, 14 December 1935. ACLU Archives, v. 835, reel # 123.

56. Aletha Elsworth, Dearborn, Michigan to FDR, 3 January 1936. WPA Central Files: States, 1935-1944, series 693, Florida, Box 1122.

57. Unsigned report to Mary [probably Mary Fox, League for Industrial Democracy]. ACLU Archives, v. 835, reel # 123; Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 188-193.

directed primarily against union organizers.⁵⁸ In Birmingham and Memphis, several vigilante groups conducted a "reign of terror" against miners during the UMW strikes of the 1930s, including a flogging in Memphis in 1937 quite similar to the Poulnot case.⁵⁹ And southern labor leaders recognized that the KKK "served as an anti-labor force and has beaten and killed labor organizers, wrecked union halls and acted as vigilante groups in times of strikes."⁶⁰

In the Poulnot case, a Klan circular, distributed in Tampa just after the floggings, was devoted solely to agitating against communism; it never mentioned race.⁶¹ And the Tampa newspaper reported that popular opinion believed the floggings were "only the beginning of a series that would 'put the fear of God' in political and social agitators and deter them from attempting to interfere with machine politics in next June's primary."⁶² Southern anticommunism would grow obsessed with race during the 1950s and 1960s, but during the 1930s it remained focused on political radicalism.⁶³

And southern anticommunists believed that in fact they had good reason to be concerned. Communists and fellow travelers had been more active and more visible in the South during the Depression. The CP-USA, through its legal branch, the International Labor Defense (ILD), had been prominent in its role in defending the Scottsboro 'boys' in their trials in Alabama.⁶⁴ The ILD had been equally notable for its defense of Angelo Herndon, arrested in 1932 for leading a rally of a thousand unemployed workers in Atlanta.⁶⁵ Socialist support for the Southern

58. Douglas L. Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988), 189. On Georgia, see also Bryant Simon, *A Fabric of Defeat: The Politics of South Carolina Millhands, 1910-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998), 114, 121, 202.

59. Smith, *New Deal in the Urban South*, 190, 197.

60. Rome (Ga.) *News-Tribune*, 17 June 1946, quoted by Michelle Brittain, *The Politics of Whiteness: Race, Workers, and Culture in the Modern South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 137.

61. This flyer, in the University of South Florida Special Collections, in reproduced in Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 173.

62. Quoted by Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 184.

63. See Jeff Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare: Segregation and Anti-Communism in the South, 1948-1968* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004).

64. See Dan Carter, *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969).

65. See Charles H. Martin, *The Angelo Herndon Case and Southern Justice* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1976).

Tenant Farmers' Union was well known; Communist support for the STFU was widely suspected.⁶⁶ Many southerners also believed that the failed General Textile Strike of 1934 had been instigated by Communists.⁶⁷ Southerners' worries about Communism fueled the creation of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the pet project of Texas Congressman Martin Dies.⁶⁸ Concerns about Communism in Florida were such that the state established its own "little HUAC" even before the creation of the Dies Committee by Congress.⁶⁹

Given this context and the fact that the eyewitness testimony of Poulnot and Rogers was thoroughly damning, the defense attorneys worked hard to keep communism, rather than the actions of the floggers at the center of the trial. They insisted that the Modern Democrats was a "communistic organization" and tried to introduce evidence that Poulnot had once told a meeting of unemployed workers to "go down to the warehouse and take what they pleased."⁷⁰ They linked the Modern Democrats to the Scottsboro "boys," to Norman Thomas, to Angelo Herndon, and to the ACLU.⁷¹ They repeated the word "Communist" frequently enough that it was drummed into the public consciousness, even though there was no evidence that Poulnot, Rogers, or Shoemaker had ever been Communists.⁷²

Despite this strategy, and to the surprise of many observers, the first trial resulted in five convictions of kidnapping, on May 23, and the five men were sentenced to four years each at Raiford prison. But the convictions were immediately appealed, and the policemen remained free on bail. In the meantime, perhaps hop-

66. See Donald H. Grubbs, *Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971).

67. John A. Salmond, *The General Textile Strike of 1934, From Maine to Alabama* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 47.

68. Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1945-1980: The Story of the South's Modernization* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 80. There were always large numbers of southerners on HUAC, including Florida Congressman J. Hardin Peterson.

69. Florida's investigative committee was formed in 1937 and was headed by Thomas H. Cooley of Mount Dora. "Legislators who will Investigate Communism to Meet," *Tampa Tribune*, 13 June 1937: 1. I have been unable to locate any records generated by this committee.

70. *Tampa Tribune*, 20 April 1936: 1.

71. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 194-96.

72. Poulnot always and consistently denied being a Communist, although he openly acknowledged being a Socialist, a distinction lost on many Americans in the 1930s.

ing to capitalize upon the ongoing publicity surrounding the case, the Socialist Party met in Tampa and chose Poulnot to run as their candidate for congress.⁷³ Poulnot reported that he was promptly fired by the WPA for his political activities: "the Florida WPA under the administration of Frank P. Ingram discharged me from a job a truck driver . . . for being a candidate to the House of Representatives on the Socialist Party Ticket . . ."⁷⁴ The Workers Alliance charged that the WPA was working in cooperation with the Klan, hoping "to starve Poulnot out of Tampa so he will not testify against Ku Klux floggers when the trial for the murder of Joseph Shoemaker comes up. The WPA by refusing to put Poulnot on the job is aiding in dominance of the WPA by the Klan."⁷⁵

The Poulnot firing once again brought national attention and national pressure. Letters, such as this one, poured into the governor's office and the White House: "Although you have announced that there must be no discrimination against W.P.A. workers because of their beliefs or organizational activities, Administrator Frank P. Ingram of Tampa, Fla., has taken it upon himself to fire Eugene Poulnot from his W.P.A. job giving 'political activities' as the reason."⁷⁶ In response, federal authorities in Washington ordered an investigation into the firing in November 1936.⁷⁷

Not everyone in Tampa appreciated the federal intervention. Local businessman H.C. Tillman complained,

I read in yesterday morning's paper that an investigation had been ordered leading to the reemployment of Eugene F. Poulnot, who was laid off sometime ago by the Works Progress Administration. I want to protest vigorously any action out of Washington which would have for its object the reemployment of this man. We have in this County now approximately 7,000 people eligible for jobs

73. "Socialists Pick Tampan to Run for Governor," *Tampa Tribune*, 10 August 1936: Charles E. Jensen, also of Tampa, was selected as the Socialist candidate for governor.

74. Poulnot to Aron S. Gilmartin, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

75. "Workers Alliance Charges State WPA Allied with K.K.K.," *Tampa Tribune*, 21 November 1936: 6.

76. Miss Virginia Gower, New York City, to Harry Hopkins, undated but received 19 August 1936. WPA Central Files: States, 1935-1944, series 693, Florida, Box 1122.

77. "WPA to Probe Dismissal of E. F. Poulnot," *Tampa Tribune*, 17 November 1936:17.

and the WPA cannot take care of half of them. Poulnot is a trouble-maker and is generally considered a 'RED.' The whole State of Florida gave Mr. Browder fifty votes and I cannot see why the local authorities of the WPA should give employment to men of Poulnot's stripe. I have not always agreed with the local authorities with reference to employment of people in the WPA but I do heartily agree with the action of those authorities in seeking to keep a trouble-maker like Poulnot from trying to cram his Communistic doctrines down the throats of the workers of this Community.⁷⁸

Poulnot was quickly reinstated to the WPA and returned to his relief job as a truck driver. But by this time, Poulnot's notoriety was such that every move he made seemed to be newsworthy. When the AFL held its annual convention in Tampa that fall, the paper made sure to mention that Poulnot was a frequent observer at the convention hall.⁷⁹ The newspaper noted, a little too gleefully, when Poulnot once again endangered his relief status by failing to take a private sector job.⁸⁰ The Poulnots lived in a fishbowl.

Poulnot's continued public life only heightened the daily scrutiny of his family's affairs. On July 1, 1937, the state supreme court overturned the kidnapping convictions on a technicality and ordered a new trial for the policemen. The judicial process, with front-page daily news coverage, would continue for months more. Also July 1st, WPA sewing rooms across the state cut their work forces dramatically, responding to order from Washington to trim the program and its costs. In Tampa, eighty-eight women were released from the largest sewing room, which was located in an old cigar factory at 12th Street and 20th Avenue. The result of these cuts, as local and state WPA officials noted, was "considerable unrest among the workers, [and] community protests . . ."⁸¹

78. Mr. H.C. Tillman, Tampa, to Aubrey Williams, 18 November 1936. WPA Central Files: States, 1935-1944, series 693, Florida box 1122, folder labeled "July 1937 - July 1938."

79. "Socialist Asks Labor To Push Flogging Trials," *Tampa Tribune*, 21 November 1936: 1.

80. "Poulnot Fails to Take Private Job, Loses Relief Status," *Tampa Tribune*, 20 November 1936: 13.

81. July 1937 Narrative Report, p. 1. WPA Records of the Division of Professional & Service Projects, 1935-41, Narrative Reports, Florida July 1937 - June 1938, box 4A, folder July-Dec 1937.

Poulnot and the Workers Alliance stepped in and helped to organize a sit-down strike of women in the sewing room.⁸²

A committee of women workers, led by Mabel Hagan of the Workers Alliance, demanded the reinstatement of the eighty-eight women and a 20 % pay raise for all sewing room workers. To put pressure on the WPA, they also called for a general sit-down strike of all WPA workers in the city, which if successful would have involved thousands of people.⁸³ In the meantime, they would occupy the factory. "Several truckloads of bread, buckets of ice water and coffee and other edibles were handed to them through the windows as they settled down for the first night of their sit-down." Hagan told the press that they had sufficient food supplies to last a month. Many women had blankets and bedding delivered to them as well.⁸⁴

Poulnot's job was to try to convince workers on other WPA projects to join the strike. On the second day of the sit-in, 250 men from three different WPA projects joined. Poulnot especially reached out to cigar workers, with their long record of labor activism, and called for solidarity among all workers. He visited other projects in the city and predicted that the strike would spread the next week. Mabel Hagan made even bolder claims: "Every project in town will be out next week, and other workers will join us." The Workers Alliance held a mass meeting that night at Labor Temple, a few blocks from the sewing center, to rally support for the effort.⁸⁵ But the strike spread no further.

82. The only published work to date on this strike is James Tidd, "Stitching and Striking: WPA Sewing Rooms and the 1937 Relief Strike in Hillsborough County," *Tampa Bay History* 1989 11(1): 5-21. Relief strikes were more common than one might think. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported there were 80 relief strikes in 1936, involving more than 40,000 workers. The number for 1937 was undoubtedly higher, but that year was not included in the study. Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States, 1880-1936* (Washington: GPO, 1937) Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin No. 651, Table 37, p. 160. A few work relief strikes were reported in the South. Others were halted by the early intervention of local authorities, such as in New Orleans in November 1936. Police there arrested the organizers, and the strike never materialized. Smith, *The New Deal in the Urban South*, 102.

83. "WPA Sit-Down Called; Women Hold Building," *Tampa Tribune*, 9 July 1937:1.

84. Ibid; "Los Costureras americanas y latinas de la WPA mantienen la Huelga sentada en el Edificio donde estuve 'La Flor de Cuba,'" *La Gaceta*, 9 July 1937:1; "El Pan a Las Heulgistas," *La Gaceta*, 9 July 1937:4.

85. "250 Men Join 130 Women in WPA Sit-Down," *Tampa Tribune*, 10 July 1937:1; "Del Comite Central," *La Gaceta*, 14 July 1937:3.

Poulnot devoted all his time to this effort, hoping to produce a city-wide general strike. His commitment was such that even a family tragedy did not derail him. Nana had given birth to a still-born child during the strike, and Eugene later lamented to Norman Thomas and the Committee that “. . . I was forced to let its little body lie in state while I was directing the strike action committee and not untill [sic] five days latter [sic] when the strike was [over] was that I had a chance to make arangements [sic] for its burial. . . .”⁸⁶

On Tuesday, July 13th, there were still over 100 women sticking to the sit-down although their numbers had dwindled some over the long weekend. WPA administrator Frank Ingram issued a statement explaining the WPA's rule on dismissals: anyone absent from their job for more than four consecutive days could be fired, and pink slips were being prepared. At least a dozen more women left the sit-down at that point.⁸⁷ The next night the Workers Alliance held a “stormy” meeting in the Ybor City Labor Temple, after which the workers decided to call off the strike. Poulnot, as president, explained to the press that the vote to end the strike was taken “in order that there would be no bloodshed between strikers and strikebreakers.”⁸⁸

The WPA permitted all workers to return to their jobs except for the leaders of the strike; Mabel Hagan and Eugene Poulnot lost their jobs.⁸⁹ Poulnot charged that the firings were unfair. Although the WPA claimed the action was done because of the need to reduce forces, Poulnot reported to the Committee that “all of [the fired workers] went back on the job in a few days except [Octavio] Alfonso and myself, and again several drivers have quit and their jobs have been filled from the long list of political pets while we are still off for the reason of ‘reduction of forces.’”⁹⁰

The failed sit-down strike had some important ramifications. It tore the Workers Alliance apart, as Alliance members began to

86. Poulnot to Norman Thomas, undated, WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31. I have located a death certificate for a Poulnot infant for 1937.

87. “Strike Closed WPA Projects to be Reopened,” *Tampa Tribune*, 14 July 1937: 18; “WPA Sit-Down Here is Ended; Women Go Home,” *Tampa Tribune*, 15 July 1937:1.

88. “WPA Sit Down Here is Ended; Women Go Home,” *Tampa Tribune*, 15 July 1937:1.

89. “Poulnot and Strike Leaders Lose WPA Jobs,” *Tampa Tribune*, 18 July 1937:1.

90. Poulnot to Aron S. Gilmartin, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

turn against Poulnot. Mabel Hagan publicly denounced him and blamed him for the failure of the strike.⁹¹ The disintegration of the Alliance meant that there was no longer an organization in place that could unite both employed and unemployed workers in any kind of cooperative effort. It also meant that there was no longer an organization in place that would accept radicals into its ranks, contracting the range of political expression in Tampa.

In addition, Poulnot believed that the strike had made him even more of a target for the city's leadership than had the flogging trial. He told the Committee: "... since the Workers Alliance sit-down strike the hatred that then existed on the part of the politicians and industrialist[s] has increased a thousand fold, to the extent that threats against my life have made it imposible [sic] to even leave the house except in company of trusted friends."⁹² In a clearly political move, the city now revived the cases against Poulnot and his father, William, on the gas stealing charges that had been sitting inactive in criminal court for two and a half years. The city chose this particular moment—the week after the sit-down—to reopen them. William was arrested July 17th and released to the custody of his attorney, Ethel Jane Steele.⁹³ That fall, both William and Eugene were found guilty on the gas stealing charges, and Eugene wrote "... no fooling they intend to punish men and make an example out of me as to how to deal with those who testify against the klan [sic], Carlisle and others of the Klan cops were at the trial and I believe some of the Klansmen were on the jury."⁹⁴ Eugene was sentenced to six months imprisonment. The Workers Alliance, worried that he would not survive a jail sentence, moved to obtain a pardon.⁹⁵

With the help of a Committee-funded attorney, Poulnot was able to get a new trial. For reasons that are not clear in the existing records, Poulnot's father was not so fortunate. William's petition for a new trial was denied, and he was sentenced to serve thirty days in the county jail or pay a fine of \$100. Given the financial difficulties facing the family, William agreed to serve the sentence

91. "Woman Strike Leader Asks County's Help to Get Her New Job," *Florida Labor Advocate*, 27 August 1937: 2.

92. Poulnot to Norman Thomas, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 1.

93. "Poulnot and Strike Leaders Lose WPA Jobs," *Tampa Tribune*, 18 July 1937: 1.

94. Poulnot to Gilmartin, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

95. Ida Fox, Workers Alliance National Headquarters, to Aaron Gilmartin, 27 November 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

and then petition for some relief from the local ministerial parole board.⁹⁶ Eugene awaited a re-trial.

At the same time that the Poulnots were in court fighting the gas stealing charges in October 1937, the trial of six men charged with the murder of Joseph Shoemaker commenced, but moved slowly. There were delays, foot-dragging, and numerous continuances.⁹⁷ There was also a great deal of national attention on the case. The AFL demanded "prompt and vigorous prosecution of the balance of these cases, to the end that full justice may be obtained and that such action shall serve as a warning to all terrorist groups." The *Tampa Tribune* had worried for nearly a year that the slow pace of justice would damage the city's reputation: "There is unquestionably a public demand that the remaining cases be brought to trial and Tampa's slate washed clean of the discreditable affair, one way or another. On November 30 one year will have elapsed since the flogging group did its fatal work. How long, Justice, how long?"⁹⁸ And indeed, there were voices calling Florida "the sink hole of American civilization."⁹⁹

Poulnot, in the meantime, had no job, no union card, and could get no work relief. He was forced to seek charity from the Family Service Association.¹⁰⁰ He begged for funds from any source and wrote numerous letters to the Committee, to the Workers Defense League, to the Socialist Party, and to individual supporters such as Norman Thomas asking for assistance. He could not leave Tampa, for, as he understood it:

My job now is to stay and see the trials through and do my best in to [sic] trying to secureing [sic] a conviction, of which there seems to be but a remote chance, but in either case Tampa will be entirely too hot for me and my

96. Poulnot to Gilmartin, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

97. Committee for the Defense of Civil Rights in Tampa, "Memorandum on Tampa Flogging Cases submitted to Governor Fred P. Cone, June 23rd, 1937." Norman Thomas Papers, reel 67, subseries J.6. (There were two organizations with very similar names at work. The organization cited here was a local effort, separate from the Committee headed by Norman Thomas mentioned throughout the text.)

98. "Demands for Action," *Tampa Tribune*, 21 November 1936: 8.

99. Frank McCallister, Workers Defense League, to Norman Thomas, 6 July 1937. Norman Thomas Papers, series 1, reel 7.

100. James Francis Tidd, Jr., "The Works Progress Administration in Hillsborough and Pinellas Counties, Florida, 1935 to 1943" (MA thesis, University of South Florida, 1989), 27.

family after the trials, and preparation must be made for us to leave immediately there after, I am looking forward to the time that I can be removed to some civilized place and have a little peace of mind, something that I haven't [sic] had for the last five years, my wife and my self are approach[ing] middle age with children at an age that need to have me work a[n]d supply the necessary things that go to them fit for the future fight that they will not doubt have to wage and conquer against the insane system under which we live.¹⁰¹

Small donations raised throughout the radical community helped the Poulnots. Fifty dollars here, five dollars there, trickled in.¹⁰² But the organizations supporting Poulnot, especially the Committee for the Defense of Civil Liberties in Tampa and the Workers Defense League, began to grow weary of the financial burden that Poulnot and his large family had come to represent. Frank McAllister and Aron Gilmartin were in agreement: Poulnot needed to become self-supporting.

Waiting for the murder trial to begin in the fall of 1937, conditions began to grow desperate for the family. Poulnot wrote the Committee pleading, "Please wire me About [sic] twenty-five dollars[.] I have a sick wife and am about to be evicted from the house that I am now renting, I must have it before Monday morning or I will be thrown out in the street and then I could not rent an other [sic] house even though I had money to pay, local pressure is becoming unbearable with the approach of the trials, and am spending my last cent to mail you this letter, please do not fail."¹⁰³ He confessed that "I can see now where it would have been better if I had of [sic] left Tampa after the last trial and got a job and could have returned here when it was necessary to testify, but who would have thought that it would have been two long years."¹⁰⁴ He wrote Norman Thomas in a similar vein: "Now Comrade I have never felt that either the party of the movement has ever owed me anything, on the contrary I owe every thing to the party and the movement, but if [it] were not for the trials that I have no hope of getting a con-

101. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 15 September 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

102. James Myers to "Dear Metcalf," 15 October 1937. Samuel H. Friedman to "Comrade McAllister," 16 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

103. Poulnot to Gilmartin, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

104. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 15 September 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

viction in but must stay and do my part and my in to that end, I would have long ago take my family and have walked out of here if no other way was available to some Northern city and tried to start all over again, but I must stay, and I am cut off of the WPA and there is no home relief in Florida. . .”¹⁰⁵

Nor was Poulnot able to work in Tampa. His notoriety precluded him from getting most jobs. “. . . I have tried [sic] to find employment in private industry but it seems that my radical activities here makes that imposible [sic]. . .”¹⁰⁶ He also feared his vulnerability in public: “As the trial date nears threats and warnings be come more numerous and the danger more menacing, I sel-dome [sic] the house and not then unless in the company of trusted friends, I have never been a coward, some times considered fool-hardy, but I well remember how Joseph Shoemaker used to worry over the warnings that he and I received and how I used to chide him for paying any attention to them, but a burned child dreads fire, so I have to be cautious.”¹⁰⁷ Others around Poulnot also grew nervous. Frank McCallister of the Workers Defense League in St. Petersburg confided to Norman Thomas that “We have been bothered frequently of late with strange cares parked around the house. I do not believe they dare do anything but I have acquired a gun and expect to use it if it becomes necessary to defend our home.”¹⁰⁸

The Poulnots began pursuing options that had previously seemed unthinkable. “[M]y wife has been trying to get our relief case transfered [sic] to her so that she could go to work on the sewing room project, but they wont [sic] give it to her for fear that once she is in there that she would reorganize the project.”¹⁰⁹ Poulnot also began looking for way to get himself and family out of Tampa as soon as possible, fearing that his life would be in danger as soon as the publicity of the trial ended. He wrote:

I shall do my best at the trials and shal [sic] expect the commitee [sic] to move me And my family out of here as soon after as possible[.] I want to get a job and earn My

105. Poulnot to Norman Thomas, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

106. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 21 November 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

107. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 15 September 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

108. Frank McCallister to Norman Thomas, 1 October 1937. Norman Thomas Papers, series 1, reel 7.

109. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 21 November 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.



A KKK rally in Tampa, 1923. *Photo courtesy of Florida State Archives.*

own living as I once did, after if every worker did as much and gave as much time to the cause as I have we would all be living in a Socialist Nation by now and I feel that I [have] gone as far as I can with out remuneration, and that I owe it to my family to take up a private life again.

In the meantime I am continueing [sic] to suffer untold hardships be cause [sic] of my activities in this case, neither my family or myself have had enough to eat since I was cut off of WPA and I am two weeks behind with my house rent and am threatened with eviction, the local Workers Alliance has paid my rent, twice now but I well know their financial standing and know that they cant [sic] do it again[.] it does seem that the committee could find a way to relieve me of this destitution . . .¹¹⁰

The problem, as always, was finding a job. Aron Gilmartin and other supporters began looking for openings of any kind, any

110. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 1 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

where.¹¹¹ Although he was known as a “good orator,” the leadership of both the WDL and the Socialist Party agreed that Poulnot was not cut out for fundraising or organizing work for the moment. “[W]e do not feel that any speaking tour could possibly raise enough money to pay for itself.”¹¹² Norman Thomas believed that Poulnot’s professional background was the problem. Thomas suggested that an organizer should “have the experience of normal work first,” by which he presumably meant factory or industrial work of some kind. Poulnot’s background as a skilled tradesman did not offer the proper credentials.¹¹³

For his part, Poulnot insisted he should continue to work at his trade as a pressman. But without his union credentials, he had few options. And even with a union card, the openings were few, especially during the 1937 recession. A colleague in Ohio reminded Gilmartin of the “rather sharp business slump in progress which may make a job more difficult to find . . . Printers looking for work here report jobs very scarce.”¹¹⁴ In Oklahoma, Siegfried Ameringer of the labor paper *The American Guardian* reported that “[o]ur own pressmen are working part time, and of course they are members of the union, which after all controls the placing of work. Here in Oklahoma City Poulnot could pick up a days work here and there, but it might take several years before he could land a steady job.”¹¹⁵ Aron Gilmartin and associates, increasingly eager to cut Poulnot loose, began raising money to get his back dues paid off, which would facilitate his eventual financial independence.¹¹⁶

That fall, despite Poulnot’s eyewitness testimony, the Shoemaker murder trial ended in the acquittal of all the police-

111. Gilmartin to George Clifton Edwards (Detroit), 9 September 1937; Gilmartin to Paul Porter, Editor, *Kenosha Labor*, 13 October 1937; Clarence (Senior) to Aaron [sic] Gilmartin, 8 October 1937; all three in WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

112. Gilmartin to Poulnot, 18 November 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32. The “good orator” quote comes, ironically, from the FBI. FOIA Request file, Poulnot.

113. Norman Thomas to Gil [Gilmartin], 14 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

114. Ernest Morgan to Gilmartin, 25 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

115. Siegfried Ameringer to Miss Mary Fox, League of Industrial Democracy, 21 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

116. Gilmartin to Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Morgan, 21 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

men charged.¹¹⁷ Although Poulnot was still needed to testify in the re-trial of the kidnapping charges, the family felt tremendous pressure to leave Tampa. Immediately after the acquittals, Poulnot went to Ohio, where a temporary job and accommodations with local printer Ernest Morgan had been arranged for him by the Committee and the Workers Defense League. He planned to send for his entire family after getting himself established in a job and a home.

The experiment failed. Morgan reported that he had arranged for Poulnot to work part time in Morgan's shop in Yellow Springs and sleep there as well, an arrangement which would allow Poulnot to look for full-time work and save money. Morgan had already made contacts with printers in Cincinnati to pave the way for a permanent job there. But after Poulnot arrived on October 28th, he called home and spoke to his wife. "He was very much worried about his family, and in [Morgan's] estimation, severely homesick. At his repeated and very urgent request we went to the county seat and got him a pint of liquor, for him to use as a sedative, somewhat against my better judgment. His determination to go home increased, and I harangued him, and tried to lay down the law, but not very effectively . . . [he] insisted that he must get back to his family." Poulnot left on the 29th, less than twenty-four hours after his arrival.¹¹⁸

Poulnot was extremely worried about the safety of his family without his presence. Morgan thought ". . . nothing short of hog-tieing him would keep him here. . . I doubt if he can do this away from his family, and I see no way of fixing things up so that his family can come with him."¹¹⁹ His benefactors were extremely disappointed. Aron Gilmartin wrote to reprimand him: "I do not know what has caused you to make this decision and to change carefully laid and fairly costly plans. . . Mr. and Mrs. Morgan were extremely generous in their arrangements for your welfare and we were all confident that you would find permanent job in a short time. Apparently you did not see fit to give it anything like a fair test. It is necessary for me to say also that I feel you have let this commit-

117. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 198-99.

118. Ernest Morgan to Gilmartin, 29 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

119. Ernest Morgan to Mrs. Poulnot, 29 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

tee down somewhat badly. . . I hesitate to say now what, if any, responsibility they will take for you or your family in the future."¹²⁰

Poulnot tried to explain that he had

arrived in Yellow Springs after two sleepless nights which with the loss of sleep together with the anxiety for the welfare of my family had torn my nerves which were already over wrought to a point where I was about to take the choice between a river and the railroad track. Comrade Morgan who is an otherwise wonderful person just couldn't seem to understand and [sic] appreciate the fact that I was very much in need of rest, he offered me the opportunity to sleep in the back of the shop where there was no heat of any kind at night . . . I tried to explain to him that I would have to have a room with some heat because I was very much afraid that under those conditions that I would become ill [,] which I did . . . when I talked to my wife over the phone . . . she told me that Farrior had failed to squash the Gas case against me and that I would have to stand trial on the 12th, rather than let my bondsman down I knew then that it was only a question of a few days that I must return any way . . . this letter is written by my wife at my dictation as I am in bed sick and couldn't write a line if it was to save my life.¹²¹

Nana Poulnot was extremely concerned about her husband's mental state. In a separate letter to Gilmartin, she gave further details:

Gene arrived in Tampa this morning in a much worried and nervous condition, in fact such a state of mind that I am very much worried as to the out come of his nerves for fear that I may expect the worse at any time in fact I advised him not to come back for fear that the return to this terror ridden Klan town will be all the worse for his nerves, but when at any time he is overcome by one of these nervous spells (if I may use my simple way of explaining it) he does not seem to reason with himself what may be [the] outcome of his move at that time in concern of the future.

120. Gilmartin to Poulnot, 30 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

121. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 31 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

When I mentioned to him about Farrior not haveing [sic] as yet nole-prosse this Gas case (which he and his Father both still have hanging over their head), I did not do it with any intention of scaring him but it apparently did, to the extent that he immediately thought, that if he did not return immediately his father would be convicted . . . I am not trying to make any excuses for myself or for Gene . . . perhaps you noticed when you was [sic] here that he was very nervous, and I can say that his nerves have been steadily getting worse since about two weeks before the last trials of the Policeman [sic] . . . his nerves are about on the verge of breaking under the strain . . .

She added, "I believe the thought of leaving us here without his protection and presence makes him feel that we too are in danger."¹²²

Poulnot very much wanted to keep the family, including his parents, together whenever they moved. He wrote of his ' . . . hopes that the committee could see fit to take my intier [sic] family out of this at the same time and we [are] dissapointed [sic] to learn that they decided otherwise, if we could all go at once I am sure that I could make good, as I would not be worring [sic] about what would happen to them in my absence . . . If I should leave again I must have definite [sic] assurance that my family will be cared for while I am away . . . "¹²³ After the final trials were over and his obligations in Tampa were ended Poulnot hoped to go to New York "and try to get a job[.] Fred [Poulnot's oldest son] said that he could keep me a while at his place and after my father gets out of jail my wife will get some cheaper rooms and try to take care of the children till I can get located, we just cant [sic] keep on going on like this rotting [sic] away here."¹²⁴

The family remained together, but their situation continued to worsen. Eugene was finally acquitted of the gas stealing charge, but their hopes for clemency for William were not met. It soon became clear that "he will have to serve his entire sentence [sic], which means that he wont [sic] be released till after the Yule Tide, which wont [sic] add any thing to the Xmas cheer

122. Nana Poulnot to Gilmartin, 31 October 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

123. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 12 November 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

124. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 7 December 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

for us, [Nana] went to see him yesterday, and he is ill, the food that he gets and the confinement [sic] is having a telling effect on him, and at his age it is doubtful that he will recover from the effects intirely [sic], as he says 'He is sixty seven years old, and the law had to wait till he was that age to exact its pound of flesh for the first time' he is out of the old school and he takes his punishment with the idea that he is disgraced for ever [sic]."¹²⁵ For Eugene, who clearly was close to his father, this would have been a terrible blow.

In the meantime, the state WPA continued to deny work relief to Eugene, but officials did offer a small compromise. Nana was given a work relief job in the sewing room. This helped the family some, but not as much as if Eugene had been reinstated. His WPA wages had been \$52 per month, while Nana now earned only \$36.¹²⁶ Although poorly paid, Nana's sewing room job did mean that Eugene could again seek work elsewhere and know that the family had some support. Aron Gilmartin encouraged Poulnot to begin looking for a job in the North, "knowing that she [Nana] is working and that your family will have this income . . . " However, he continued to discourage Poulnot from his insistence on seeking work in New York: "The situation is much more difficult now than a few months ago. There is a very real depression on and industry is laying off people despite the fact that this is the season for taking on more people. New York City in particular seems to be hardhit [sic] and we feel that we will have more trouble now than ever before."¹²⁷ The depths of the "Roosevelt recession" of 1937 was a difficult time to find work.¹²⁸

December 1937 probably seemed the low point in the family's life. Eugene was unemployed. Nana was working a sewing-room work relief job. William remained in jail. As national attention on the flogging trials waned, many of their previous sources of support dried up. The Committee wrote that "[m]oney still comes in very slowly and we are scarcely able to keep going at all . . . We wish we were able to do something for

125. Poulnot to Gilmartin, undated but must be December 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

126. Poulnot to Gilmartin, undated. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

127. Gilmartin to Poulnot, 9 December 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

128. The best account of the "Roosevelt recession" remains Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

you and your family at this time. It may be that we can help a little in a week or so but I make no promises because I have no confidence that they can be kept."¹²⁹ The family's conditions were so critical that Eugene confessed "we are making all the mission houses for what we get to eat."¹³⁰

After this winter of despair, the spring brought some hope. William was released from jail. Eugene got a part-time job in St. Petersburg, with the possibility of full-time work later. Once again the lack of a union card was an impediment. He still needed \$35 to pay his back dues in order to be reinstated in the pressman's union, and again wrote Gilmartin for help.¹³¹ But even without his full union privileges, Poulnot reported improvement both in the family's finances and in his own health. "Since I have been over here [St. Petersburg] and am eating regular again I have gained some weight and am begining [sic] to feel like my old self again. my [sic] nerves have improved one hundred percent, I sleep well to[o] something that was imposible [sic] a year ago, I think that if you see to it that my union obligation is taken care of, that I will be able to make it from there alright, at least every thing depends on it any way."¹³²

In June 1938, the re-trial of the policemen on the kidnapping charges finally made its way to court. Part of the delay had been caused by Poulnot's supporters, who had worked to remove the presiding judge from the case. But even with a new judge, the trial ended in acquittals. The years of public accusations of Poulnot's being a Communist had made an impact: the jury told the press that they "felt the defense had raised reasonable doubt as to the credibility of Poulnot."¹³³ Given the outcome of the last two trials, there seemed to be little point in pursuing any of the charges further. All remaining charges were dismissed. No one ever served any time for the murder of Joseph Shoemaker or for the flogging of Eugene Poulnot.

Although this dramatic phase of Poulnot's life now came to an end, it did not mean that his position in Tampa improved. The ongoing repression of radicals in the 1930s and 1940s continued

129. Gilmartin to Poulnot, 9 December 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

130. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 7 December 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 32.

131. Poulnot to Gilmartin, undated but reply from Gilmartin dated 14 February WDL Papers, box 143, folder 33.

132. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 27 April 1938. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 33.

133. Ingalls, *Urban Vigilantes*, 198-99.

to impinge on his life. The Workers Alliance, which he had once led, now purged all the "reds," including Poulnot and Octavio Alfonso. At a meeting held at Labor Temple in July 1940, the Alliance condemned Poulnot and Alfonso for "betraying the unemployed." The nature of their offenses is unclear, but members of the Alliance believed that Poulnot and Alfonso had been informants for the FBI.¹³⁴ It was officially announced that they had deserted their posts and they were "condemned and repudiated" by the membership.¹³⁵ (This attempt to salvage the Workers Alliance by purging its problem members failed, and the organization folded shortly thereafter.)

Poulnot's ties with all radical organizations were severed at this point. He was no longer a leader, and in fact no longer an activist. He acknowledged that "the curtain has fallen on my activities in this part of the country and much as I hate it I might as well realize that I have gone as far as I can go to any advantage as far as the cause is concerned . . ."¹³⁶ It is somewhat ironic that this is the time when the FBI deemed him an internal security risk and began a three-decade long watch on Poulnot and his family. The outbreak of war in Europe and the increasing possibility of American involvement in that war provoked a vast federal domestic screening program. In 1941, Poulnot was marked for "custodial detention . . . in the event of a National emergency . . ."¹³⁷

The FBI checked mail received by the Poulnots, checked police files, and searched Eugene's citizenship status. More intrusively, the FBI also interviewed neighbors, co-workers, and employers, asking if they knew of any Communist activity on his part. If they had not know about his political activities already, they were certainly informed by the FBI's questions. And the

134. FBI F.O.I.A. Request file, Alfonso; FBI Request file, Poulnot.

135. Tidd, "The Works Progress Administration in Hillsborough," 41.

136. Poulnot to Gilmartin, 8 September 1937. WDL Papers, box 143, folder 31.

137. The first dated document in Poulnot's FBI file is 8 August 1940. The FBI formally initiated an internal security investigation on 20 February 1941. FBI FOIA Request file, Poulnot. Octavio Alfonso, another officer of the Workers Alliance, was also under investigation by the FBI beginning in February 1940. FBI FOIA Request file, Alfonso. On domestic surveillance in this period see: Athan G. Theoharis, *Spying on Americans: Political Surveillance from Hoover to the Huston Plan* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); William W. Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover: Rise and Fall of a Domestic Intelligence State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

investigations were renewed year after year.¹³⁸ This may have contributed to Poulnot's ongoing employment difficulties as well as the family's constant moves throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The Poulnot family shuffled from Marion Street to Delaware Avenue to Ross Avenue to Dundee Avenue. Unemployed during the first years of the war, Poulnot finally obtained a job as a "burner" at the McCloskey Shipyards in June 1942. After the war's end, he jumped from job to job, working for the Florida Growers Press, Frisco Printing, Gary Printing, Free Press Publishing, and Tampa Printing. Beginning around 1951, Nana also started working, first at the Tampa Day Nursery and later at the Southwest Florida Tuberculosis Hospital.¹³⁹ That these years of constant flux in both employment and in residence coincided with the height of the McCarthy anti-Communist hysteria is surely not coincidental. By now, everyone in Tampa would have known the name Poulnot and would have associated it with Communism. Maintaining a job and finding housing would have been difficult in the community.

Poulnot and his family suffered tremendously for his political activities. In addition to losing their home, they lost jobs, friends, and a stillborn child. They moved repeatedly, had threats made upon their lives, and were harassed by both the KKK and the FBI. William went to jail; Eugene was nearly killed by the 1935 flogging. The pressure was too much for their eldest son, Eugene Jr. Known as Fred to the family, his son left to live in New York in the 1930s and spent the next forty years trying to hide his association with his family.¹⁴⁰

Still, despite his once urgent desire to move his family out of Tampa, Poulnot remained in the city the rest of his life. He continued to work as a typesetter until his retirement around 1960.¹⁴¹ He surfaced one last time in FBI files, when an informant reported in 1961 that he was on a mailing list of the Tampa Bay Chapter

138. FBI FOIA Request file, Poulnot.

139. These details come from FBI FOIA Request file, Poulnot, and from the Tampa city directories for 1946 through 1960.

140. The FBI interviewed dozens of Eugene Jr.'s co-workers at various jobs. They all said the same thing: he was a member of the carpenters' union, he never talked about politics, and he never mentioned his family. Some knew he was originally from Florida, but no one knew anything about his family. FBI FOIA Request file, Poulnot.

141. Phone interview with Mr. Teri Poulnot, Tampa, 25 September 2004.

of Fair Play for Cuba Committee, a pro-Castro organization.¹⁴² Otherwise, Poulnot lived quietly in retirement, giving occasional interviews to journalists and historians who had learned of the 1935 flogging, until his death in January 1976. His obituary said nothing about the flogging case or any of the other dramatic historical events in which he played a role.¹⁴³

But in the years between 1935 and 1937 at least, Eugene Poulnot was Tampa's most famous (some would have said infamous) resident, and this "inside agitator" stood as the symbol of political radicalism in the city. The story of his life and activism highlights the very real, if neglected history of southern radicalism. Scholars need to look more closely for the evidence of southern activists, often hidden in plain view. Poulnot's story also points out the enormous obstacles that confronted those who challenged the South's political and economic structures. The legal system, local political leaders, the FBI, military investigators, and unknown vigilantes combined to repress Tampa's grass-roots demands for change. With the opposition of such an array of powerful forces, what is surprising is not that Poulnot failed but rather that it took so long to silence him.

142. FBI FOIA Request file, Poulnot. In 1948, Poulnot's son, Eugene Jr., was also the subject of an FBI investigation, based solely on his father's alleged Communist activity. Eugene Jr. had worked in naval shipyards in Tampa during the first part of the war, and then served in the U.S. Navy from 1942 to 1946. Living in New York and working for a jeweler in 1948, it is unclear why he was investigated. The investigation was renewed in 1975, when Eugene Jr. applied for a job as a carpenter with the Energy Research and Development Administration. (FBI FOIA Request file, Poulnot.)

143. Obituary, *Tampa Tribune*, 24 January 1976: 11-D. His widow, Nana, remained in Tampa until her death in 1982. Their children either lived in Tampa their whole lives, or eventually returned there after residence elsewhere. Descendants of the Poulnots remain in Tampa today.

Mythic Landscapes of the Boom and Bust Weedon Island, Florida

By Sheila K. Stewart

The Weedon Island Preserve is a 3,164-acre nature park situated on the shores of Old Tampa Bay in northeast St. Petersburg.¹ A mosaic of mangrove forest, tidal marshes, pine flatwoods, and remnants of hammocks, the preserve also encompasses a famous prehistoric archaeological site, which was excavated by the Smithsonian Institution in the 1920s and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1972. Of national, state, and regional significance, Weedon Island's wild landscape carries a strong sense of place for the citizens of Pinellas County and in the last thirty years has captured community support for the conservation of the cultural remains and natural resources there.

Like many areas across Florida disrupted by developers, railroads, and agribusinesses, the ecosystems of Weedon Island were

Sheila K. Stewart is a Fellow of the Florida Studies Program at the University of South Florida, a founding manager of the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center, and Immediate Past President of the Florida Anthropological Society. The author wishes to acknowledge the support of Dr. Gary Mormino and Dr. Ray Arsenault, University of South Florida; Phyllis Kolianos, Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center; Pinellas County Heritage Village, Pinellas County; Dr. Brent Weisman, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida; and the St. Petersburg Museum of History.

1. Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management, Environmental Lands Division. Office of Environmental Services, Division of State Lands, Florida Department of Environmental Protection. *Weedon Island Preserve Resource Management Plan/ Final Report*, April 25, 2002.

altered dramatically throughout the twentieth century.² However, the significant cultural history of Weedon Island, celebrated by thousands of residents and visitors during the Florida boom, spurred archaeologists to band together, first with governmental agencies, and finally with environmental activists to preserve "St. Petersburg's last pocket of wilderness" in its built-out urban landscape.³ As a result, the State of Florida purchased Weedon Island in 1974 for six million dollars and allocated funds to protect environmentally endangered lands; in 1986 the St. Petersburg Historic Preservation Commission unanimously approved the designation of the Weedon Island archaeological site as a local landmark.⁴ A special task force, formed in August 1988, prevented the development of Weedon Island as a traditional park and preserved its rough charms as a part of Pinellas County's environmental land management program.⁵ In a region of theme parks and fantasy worlds, Weedon Island continues to be an island of wilderness, a wild secluded place for reflection and communing with nature.

The present buildings, fishing pier, rustic boardwalks, and tower structures on the Weedon Island Preserve are the reflections of the cultural dynamics of Pinellas County during the last thirty years of the twentieth century. But a number of different landscapes prevailed during the early decades of the century, as Weedon Island underwent several "cultural makeovers." Narváez Park and pavilion tower, the San Remo Club, the Grand Central Airport, and Kennedy City, the site of Florida's first motion picture studios, presented successive profiles on the face of Weedon Island between 1923 and 1933.

-
2. David R. Colburn, "Florida Politics in the Twentieth Century," in *The New History of Florida*, ed. M. Gannon, 344-372. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1996), 349-351; Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2005), 213-228; *The Weedon Island Story*. (Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management, Environmental Lands Division, 2005), 25-40.
 3. Unpublished correspondence between Ray C. Robinson, President of the Suncoast Archaeological Society Inc. and Congressman Elect C.W. Bill Young in possession of the author, 18 December 1970, 22 December 1970; Diane Rado, "State Won't Build on Weedon Island," *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 March 1988.
 4. David Olinger, "Weedon Opponents Gain Allies," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 February 1988.
 5. Weedon Island Committee, Pinellas County, Florida. *Report and Recommendations to the Florida Department of Natural Resources*, June 1, 1988.

In the 1998 film *The Red Violin* scientists and musical instrument experts discover the history of a mysterious violin put up for auction. By examining the markings and peculiarities on its surface and by researching the historical documents, the experts uncover intriguing stories of the violin's previous owners through the centuries and ultimately decipher the meaning of its unusual rosy luster. Like the red violin in the film, the stories of owners and entrepreneurs are embedded in the landscape of Weedon Island in the burial mounds of Native Americans, in the sandy scars of airport runways lined with palmettos, and in the mangrove swamps pierced by scattered, rotting electrical poles.

Beginning in the 1920s, promotional campaigns on behalf of the growing city of St. Petersburg increased, and the functions of the buildings on the Weedon Island landscape shifted from homesteads to a dinner and dancing pavilion to an archaeological excavation site to a supper club and tourist destination to an airport and finally to a movie production development. Each venture left a record on the landscape, and as with the red violin, each generation of developers projected its ethos into a new story about Weedon Island. Old-timers say there is something special about its landscape, something that captures your imagination and gets into your blood.

Even the persistence of the peninsula's designation as an island is more a part of its cultural charisma than its geography. In fact, Weedon Island is a peninsula, and the first glimpse of its form appears in a survey of the area made by George Watson Jr. in May 1848. Watson's "Study of the Land District Cast" included a sketch map drawn by one of his assistants. The area known today as Weedon Island Preserve was depicted as an uninhabited swampy peninsula attached to the mainland at an amorphous boundary. No roads or structures were drawn on its landscape. Aerial photographs produced by the Burgert Brothers of Tampa as part of archaeological field work conducted in 1923 by the Smithsonian also showed a slender land bridge of mangroves connecting the main peninsula to the mainland. Yet, the caption below the photograph identified the area as an island.⁶

6. J. Walter Fewkes, "Archeological Field-work in New Mexico and Florida/Field Season of 1923." In *Explorations and Field-Work of the Smithsonian Institution in 1923*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1924), 81, 89.

January 1924 newspaper articles indicate that the Boulevard and Bay Land and Development Company arranged boat trips to "Weedon's Island" while the Smithsonian was excavating the Indian mounds.⁷ An early development plat map published in the *St. Petersburg Times* shows concentric rings with the bulls-eye centering on the St. Petersburg Yacht Club and the Weedon Peninsula as the remote outer ring of their proposed "Florida Riviera." Perhaps the development corporation gave it the mythical island designation to enhance the ambiance of the Riviera on the outer reaches of St. Petersburg. Or, perhaps the isolation and inaccessibility of the place formed an island in the minds of the visitors who sailed there in yachts launched from the St. Petersburg docks. But with the construction of the scenic boulevard leading from St. Petersburg to the pavilion on the peninsula in February 1924, the "island" definitely became accessible to the public by car.⁸

In his 1924 excavation report, Jesse Walter Fewkes, Chief of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology, referred to the landscape as an island even while sketching a land bridge entirely blanketed by prehistoric Indian mounds connected to the mainland.⁹ According to the *St. Petersburg Times*, Dr. Fewkes and his assistants drove to the excavation site by automobile. Yet the same article describes the site as an island "a mile and a half wide and four miles long...of shell mound formation."¹⁰ With the publication of the Smithsonian's report, the prehistoric culture first discovered at Weedon Island was named after the site, and the island moniker became a permanent part of the cultural memory of St. Petersburg. Dr. Fewkes misspelled "Weedon" in his report, and the prehistoric culture has been referred to as the "Weeden" Island Culture in archaeological literature ever since.¹¹

The State of Florida first sold the swampland of the peninsula to Joseph Masters on April 1, 1859, and then to settler William P.

7. "Two Big Picnics Arranged for Weedon's Island Soon," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 11 January 1924; "Scientists to Excavate Old Indian Mounds," *St. Petersburg Times*, 18 January 1924.

8. E. M. Elliott and Associates, "Thousands See Florida Riviera," *St. Petersburg Times*, 5 February 1924.

9. J. Walter Fewkes, *Preliminary Archeological Explorations at Weeden Island, Florida*. Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 76, No. 13, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1924).

10. "Ethnologist Finds Skulls of Prehistoric Race on First Trip to Weeden's Island," *St. Petersburg Times*, 7 November 1923, p.3.

11. Fewkes, *Preliminary Archeological Explorations at Weeden Island, Florida*.

Pillans on November 25, 1868.¹² Little has been written about this early homestead period of Weedon Island. The quiet inlet around which the Weedon peninsula curves was named Papy's Bayou after Antonio Papi, a descendent of Gaspar Papi and Anna Pons from St. Augustine. The Italian Papy/Papi family arrived in Tampa in 1868, and Antonio, a Confederate war hero and veteran of the Third Seminole War, homesteaded on the Pinellas peninsula and established a fishing *rancho* on Tampa Bay.¹³ In his *History of Pinellas Peninsula*, John A. Bethell refers to "Pillings" [sic] as the first settler to take up residence on Weedon Island and reports that he raised a "very fine garden truck" and planted the original orange grove on his fenced homestead.¹⁴

By the time S. T. Walker explored the property while conducting business for the U.S. Fish Commission in 1879, he only saw the remnants of the early homesteads. Walker observed both the tumble-down houses with orange and lemon trees of historic settlers and the shell mounds and middens of prehistoric settlers.¹⁵ He described the location of the mounds on a "narrow peninsula" in a place known as "Pillan's Hummock," providing a verbal snapshot of the landscape before the island myth crept into the vernacular.¹⁶ The early settlers' homes and groves were passing into the archaeological record, artifacts of the first historic story played out on Weedon Island.

Perhaps the most celebrated owners of the place are Dr. Leslie Washington Weedon and his wife Blanche Henderson Weedon, who was deeded the property in 1898 by her father, William B. Henderson.¹⁷ By the time the couple married the following year, Dr. Weedon already enjoyed a national reputation for his research on yellow fever and had served as the city physician for Tampa for

12. Harvey L. Wells, Pinellas County Historical Commission, Unpublished letter to Walter P. Fuller on file at Heritage Village, Pinellas County, 1 February 1966, 1; Pinellas County Deed Records, Book B, 8 January 1926, 38; Pinellas County Deed Records, Book 381, 25 November 1868, 38.

13. Gary R. Mormino, *Italian Americans & Florida*. (Boca Raton, Florida: Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, 2003), 9.

14. John A. Bethell, *History of Pinellas Peninsula*. (Clearwater, Florida: Pinellas County Historical Commission, 1911), 23.

15. S.T. Walker, "Preliminary Explorations Among the Indian Mounds in Southern Florida." In *Annual Report of the Smithsonian Institutions for 1879* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1879): 407-410.

16. Ibid, 409.

17. Wells, 2; Pinellas County Deed Book 17, 10 April 1917, 316.

twelve years. Dr. L.W. Weedon was the grandson of Dr. Frederick Weedon, the U.S. Army surgeon who attended Seminole leader Osceola, when the Native American leader was stricken by a fatal disease during his internment at Fort Moultrie in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina.¹⁸ A leader in the medical community, Dr. Leslie Weedon worked with other prominent physicians to found the Hillsborough County Medical Society, establishing the goal of solving the public health problems that resulted from the "primitive conditions and rapid growth" that characterized the city during the late nineteenth century.¹⁹

The Weedons built their house on the landscape of what was later to be called "Weedon's Island" atop a mound, reported to measure 400 feet across and 40 feet tall.²⁰ They used the house as a weekend and holiday destination for their family and planted a large citrus grove near other Indian mounds. The naked swath of land cleared for the grove was still visible on the aerials flown for the Smithsonian's 1923 excavation and lined up with the southern extreme of the low midden shell heaps skirting the large mound in Fewkes's sketch of the site. Early settlers in Florida often took advantage of the rich midden soils for their citrus trees. Today, the only trace of the grove is the occasional grapefruit tree interspersed in the wild hammock on the Weedon Island Preserve.²¹

Dr. Weedon recognized the importance of the Indian mounds and made a collection of artifacts he found on the surface; Fewkes reported that the collection was already on display at the Tampa Chamber of Commerce by the time he began excavating the site. According to Fewkes, Dr. Weedon saw the "great possibilities of his island as a recreation place and made an application to the United States government to have it reserved as

-
18. Karl H. Grismer, *Tampa/ A History of the City of Tampa and the Tampa Bay Region of Florida*. (Florida: the St. Petersburg Printing Company, Incorporated, 1950), 342-343; John W. Griffin, "The Search For Osceola," in *Fifty Years of Southeastern Archaeology: Selected Works of John W. Griffin*, ed. P. Griffin, 124 (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1996), 127.
 19. Cathy Bayless Slusser, "The Birth of an Infant Society: The Hillsborough County Medical Association, 1895-1899." *Tampa Bay History* (Spring/Summer 1988): 4-5.
 20. "S.A. Hedberg Put in Charge and Will Have Force of men Start Digging at Once," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 8 November 1923.
 21. Keith Thompson, Weedon Island Preserve Manager, Personal communication to the author. 15 December 2003.
 22. Fewkes, *Preliminary Archeological Explorations at Weeden Island, Florida*, 3.



Dr. L.W. Weedon Stands By His Family on the Porch of the Caretaker's House on Weedon Island. *Photograph from the Florida State Archives*

a National Park.”²² With his application, Dr. Weedon placed his finger on the pulse of an emerging national movement to preserve natural landscapes and historic properties. Beginning with the acquisition of Wyoming’s Yellowstone Park in 1872, the federal government became the custodian of natural areas.²³ In 1875, Michigan’s Mackinac Island with its historic fort became the second national park.²⁴ Formally organized in 1916, the National Park Service acquired twice as many natural sites as historic ones because of the “scenic nationalism” that dominated the American ethos during the 1920s.²⁵

Dr. Weedon also may have been the first to connect the conquistadors of the early sixteenth century to the public memory of the City of St. Petersburg. As early as 1913, Weedon was champi-

23. John Bodnar, *Remaking America/ Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 170.

24. David A. Armour, *100 Years at Mackinac: A Centennial History of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission 1895-1995* (Mackinac Island, Michigan: Mackinac State Historic Parks, 1995), 7.

25. Bodnar, 170.

oning a St. Petersburg carnival to celebrate the landing of Spanish conquistador Hernando de Soto.²⁶ In an article, which ran on both sides of Tampa Bay in both the Pinellas edition of the *Tampa Tribune* and *The St. Petersburg Times*, Weedon cited historic accounts of the de Soto landing on the shores of Tampa Bay and insisted that St. Petersburg was the landing site of the expedition, "a company made up of the wealth, the culture, the daring chivalry, the flower of youth of old Spain."²⁷ At the end of a purple passage about the wonders of the landscape of Tampa Bay, Weedon suggested that the purported de Soto landing would seem a valuable asset to the "Tourist City" of St. Petersburg and recommended a yearly carnival to represent the event. The celebration took place on March 24, 1914.²⁸

With the clear intention of sculpting public memory by placing de Soto's landing on the western shore of Tampa Bay, Dr. Weedon echoed another national trend, the public commemorative activities initiated by U.S. business and commercial interests in the 1880s.²⁹ Dr. Weedon, born in Sandersville, Georgia, on April 27, 1860 and graduated from medical school at the University of New York in 1885, was a product of a generation that witnessed massive parades in the streets of Chicago and New York in 1892 commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the landing of Columbus.³⁰ In an attempt to enforce civic order, the celebrations were organized by business and civic leaders during the time of the rise of the industrial elite and intense class conflict.³¹ At Dr. Weedon's suggestion, the business leaders of St. Petersburg, a tourist city on the rise, evoked a sense of order and permanence as they connected their community's short history with the three-hundred-year history of the Spanish in La Florida.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, St. Petersburg became more urbanized with "a formalization of institutions, an inevitable breakdown of communal consensus, a

26. Leslie W. Weedon, M.D. "Tampa Historian Notes Discovery," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 January 1913.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Karl H. Grismer, *History of St. Petersburg/ Historical and Biographical* (St. Petersburg, Florida: The Tourist News Publishing Co., 1924), 164.

29. Bodnar, 31.

30. Grismer, 342.

31. Bodnar, 31.

quicken pace, and a growing economic and cultural dependence with the outside world."³² The city experienced its share of social unrest during this time of economic growth. Like other urban cities in the South, distinct class differences persisted, and Jim Crow laws kept black and white residents separated, with predictable negative results.³³

After World War I, a new era began for the Tampa Bay area, and a new note was played on St. Petersburg's "red violin." In contrast to the social turbulence of the rest of the country, St. Petersburg's sunshine and shores beckoned to postwar Americans, and the Sunshine City's Chamber of Commerce hired a new promoter named John Lodwick to promote the city's many physical and historical attributes.³⁴ In 1923, the Weedon family sold its property to the Boulevard and Bay Land and Development Company, headed by Eugene M. Elliott, a high-powered salesman whose advertising and publicity campaign for stock sales on behalf of developer George S. Gandy had raised the funds necessary to begin the construction of the first bridge that would connect Tampa and St. Petersburg.³⁵ Before the completion of the Gandy Bridge, located less than a mile from Weedon's Island, Elliott began his next promotional campaign by visiting the Smithsonian's Bureau of Ethnology at the end of the summer of 1922; and five days after the sale of Weedon's Island, Dr. J. Walter Fewkes arrived in St. Petersburg to begin a preliminary survey of the island's mounds.³⁶

John Lodwick, publicity camera in his hand and hours of reading about the "ancient tribes of Florida" in his head, was on the boat with Elliott to promote St. Petersburg as Dr. Fewkes got his first glimpse of the shell mounds through his field glasses.³⁷

32. Arsenault, *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream 1888-1950* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1996), 120.

33. *Ibid.*, 129-132.

34. *Ibid.*, 186-187.

35. Harvey L. Wells, Pinellas County Historical Commission, Unpublished letter to Walter P. Fuller on file at Pinellas County Heritage Village, 1 February 1966, 1; Pinellas County Deed Records, Deed Book 162, 3 November 1923, 196; Grismer 1950, 215, 252.

36. Fewkes, *Preliminary Archeological Explorations at Weedon Island, Florida*, 4; "Noted Archaeologist Here to Dig into Shell Mounds," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 6 November 1923.

37. "Dr. Fewkes Makes a Second Visit to Shell Mound Here," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 7 November 1923.

According to a reporter, Lodwick and Fewkes struck up a conversation about the merits of their cameras, and by the evening, Fewkes was addressing the attendees at a smoker given by the St. Petersburg Yacht Club.³⁸ In his informal talk, Fewkes suggested that he might find artifacts in the mound on Weedon's Island that would be as significant as the cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde National Park. Fewkes noted that the restoration of Mesa Verde and the construction of roads encouraged many tourists to visit the park in Colorado each year. He intimated a similar scenario might follow his study on Weedon's Island.

From the end of World War I until early 1923, the cities in the Tampa Bay area experienced an influx of winter visitors, and a rise in real estate prices. The work begun on the George S. Gandy Bridge just north of Weedon's Island in 1922 was completed by the fall of 1924, providing an opportunity for tourists to travel to Weedon Island from Tampa.³⁹ Elliott completed the circuit for tourists from St. Petersburg with the construction of scenic Elliott Boulevard. The curving shoreline road connected the St. Petersburg's North Shore section, the Brightwaters area, and Shore Acres with Elliott's "Florida Riviera," the bluffs of Papys Bayou, and the Gandy Bridge.⁴⁰

On the Tampa side of the bay, the post-World War I real estate boom brought newly affluent visitors to the area aboard yachts, railroad coaches, and automobiles. The so-called Tin Can Tourists, who invaded Tampa by automobile in great numbers in late 1919, founded their formal organization, Tin Can Tourists of the World the following year in De Soto Park. Before the automobile era, De Soto Park, located at Palmetto Beach, was a popular recreational stop for the trolley and had beautiful picnic grounds and a fishing dock. Across Hillsborough Bay from the park on the Interbay Peninsula was Ballast Point, another favorite trolley stop. Ballast Point offered an open-air dancing pavilion and theatre, bath house, and restaurant.⁴¹ With the completion of the Gandy Bridge, Tin Can Tourists could cross Tampa Bay for 75 cents plus

38. Ibid, 7; "Expert Talks Shell Mounds," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 7 November 1923.

39. Grismer, 251-252.

40. E. M. Elliott and Associates, *St. Petersburg Times*.

41. Grismer, 215, 249-250.

10 cents per passenger to visit the new amusements that Weedon Island had to offer.⁴²

Elliott's development plans for the Weedon peninsula expanded upon the amusements on Hillsborough Bay and included a pavilion with porches fifty feet above the water, a lookout tower, "gentlemen's estates," a hotel, two golf courses, a yacht club, bridle and motor paths, and a park bearing the name of Narváez, de Soto's predecessor and the first conquistador to set foot in the Tampa Bay area.⁴³ In those days, a horse and rider could cross the Gandy Bridge for 25 cents to make use of the bridle paths.⁴⁴

World War I also ushered in a new national interest in archaeology as the membership of the National Geographic Society grew from 900 in 1899 to 750,000 in 1920 to more than a million by 1930. All articles in the society's magazine between 1917 and 1918 were related to the war, and free copies were sent to American troops fighting in Europe. Through the photographs of the magazine, members of the society could see the war up close; and after the war they continued to read romanticized and appealing articles about geography and travel.⁴⁵

The modern science of archaeology was still in its infancy, with most archaeologists describing and classifying finds with their new methodology. However, around World War I, archaeologists shifted their focus to the study of the newly identified cultures and sites, and to research that included culture classifications.⁴⁶ One year after Howard Carter caught his first glimpse of "the wonderful things" in the flickering candlelight of King Tut's tomb,⁴⁷ Jesse Walter Fewkes focused his binoculars on the mounds blanketing Weedon Island, and *National Geographic* readers were transformed

42. Sallie Parks, "Friendship Trail Bridge is Steeped in History." Pinellas County Parks Articles (December 1999), (<http://www.co.pinellas.fl.us/bcc/articles/Parks1299CBA.htm>) (17 November 2003).

43. E. M. Elliott and Associates, *St. Petersburg Times*.

44. Parks, 2.

45. Joan Gero and Dolores Root, "Public Presentations and Private Concerns: Archaeology in the Pages of National Geographic," in *The Politics of the Past*, ed. P. Gathercole and D. Lowenthal, 19-37. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 22-26.

46. Gordon R. Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff, *A History of American Archaeology* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Company, 1993), 96.

47. Nicholas Reeves and John H. Taylor, *Howard Carter Before Tutankhamun* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), 9.

into armchair travelers by the exciting discoveries displayed through "America's lens on the world."⁴⁸

The Smithsonian Institution, organized in 1836 by an act of Congress, was founded as "an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men [sic]." Gardiner Greene Hubbard, who was a regent at the Smithsonian and the guiding light of the National Geographic Society, adapted the same credo to the National Geographic Society's "increase and diffusion of geographic knowledge."⁴⁹ Beginning in 1923, the Smithsonian's excavations on Weedon Island provided a chance for many Tampa Bay residents to leave their armchairs and drive or sail a short distance to see an excavation in progress. It was an unprecedented public archaeology project for the Tampa Bay area and included picnics in Narváez Park where a speaker's stand and seating for 500 people were available for tourist organizations. An appointee of Fewkes, Dr. Matthew W. Stirling of the Smithsonian National Museum, began his work on Weedon Island by pitching a tent and erecting an enclosure for the excavation to protect the highly publicized site and its artifacts from looters. During the excavation hundreds of visitors flocked to the peninsula, escorted by the staff of Elliott's Boulevard and Bay Land and Development Company. Among the many groups that traveled to the excavation by boat was the fledgling Memorial and Historical Society of St. Petersburg, with founding President Mary Eaton on board.⁵⁰

The Boulevard and Bay Land and Development Company set up three exhibits for the Smithsonian in downtown St. Petersburg, two in their offices at 516 Central Avenue and 549 Central Avenue, and one in the Williamson botanical gardens located at Fifth Avenue North and Beach Drive.⁵¹ Fewkes, Stirling, and other excavators addressed onlookers at Weedon Island, and Fewkes prepared special lectures held Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons at the Williamson property adjacent to an Indian

48. Howard S. Abramson, *National Geographic: Behind America's Lens on the World* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1987).

49. *Ibid.*, 36.

50. "Two Big Picnics Arranged For Weedon's Island Soon," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 11 January 1924.

51. "Local Mounds Are Richest in Relics of a Past Race," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 16 January 1924.

52. "Fewkes Delivers Address on Weedon's Island Discoveries," *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 March 1924.

midden just north of the modern Vinoy croquet garden. These informal talks included a time for St. Petersburg residents and visitors to ask questions in a "query box," thereby satisfying the two-pronged goal of diffusing information about the artifacts to the public as soon as they came out of the ground, and promoting the public value of the real estate from which the artifacts were excavated.⁵² In a letter to Fewkes, Stirling declared that Elliott's publicity made the "population into 70,000 'archaeologists' "and that his exhibit had "more visitors in a day than the national museum has in a week."⁵³ Fewkes found the enthusiasm in St. Petersburg "very refreshing" and thought that their work was a "magnet" that would "draw the attention of many visitors to Florida."⁵⁴

According to the Fewkes Report, Elliott's company demolished Dr. Weedon's residence and out-buildings on the highest shell mound and built a pavilion and a tower in their stead.⁵⁵ The pavilion was constructed with elevated porches and a dining portion that overlooked the mangrove "Venetian Islands" near the Gandy Bridge.⁵⁶ Dr. Fewkes began his investigation by cutting a trench running north into the center of the large shell mound, which supported the pavilion. The workmen recovered few artifacts and found no evidence of native dwellings, but they discovered a burial area about 1,000 feet northwest of the highpoint of the mound.⁵⁷ By March 1923, a building had been erected to house an exhibit of the artifacts unearthed from the mound complex.⁵⁸

During the Smithsonian's excavation, the national strains of public commemoration, scenic nationalism, and the romance of

53. Correspondence from M. W. Stirling to J. W. Fewkes, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 18 December 1923, Records of the BAE, Correspondence 1909-1950, Box 33, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

54. Correspondence from J. W. Fewkes to M. W. Stirling, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 22 December 1923, Records of the BAE, Correspondence 1909-1950, Box 33, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

55. Fewkes, *Preliminary Archeological Explorations at Weedon Island, Florida*, 4-5.

56. "Dance Celebrates Passing \$1,250,000 Mark in Sales," *St. Petersburg Times*, Article on file at the St. Petersburg Museum of History, n.d.

57. Fewkes, *Preliminary Archeological Explorations at Weedon Island, Florida*, 5-6; Correspondence between M. W. Stirling and J. W. Fewkes, Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 27 December 1923.

58. "Dr. Fewkes to Speed Work in Weedon's Island Excavations," *St. Petersburg Times*, 6 March 1924.



J.W. Fewkes Takes a Close Look at the Excavation on Weedon Island, *Photograph From the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution (01363600)*

archaeological exploration infused the visitor's experience of the Weedon landscape. And by the spring of 1924, the developing technology of movies further commemorated the discoveries made on Weedon Island and extended the reach to audiences nationwide. Articles in the *St. Petersburg Times* noted the newsreels featuring Dr. Stirling and Dr. Fewkes. Both newsreels were made by Chicago cameraman R. K. Peck for distribution across the United States and to the home cities of tourist societies, whose members appeared on the reels shot on Weedon Island.⁵⁹ The following year Dr. Stirling marveled:

it is something of a new procedure to record excavation work on the 'movie' film. But the public has become so interested in archeological work recently, especially since the discovery of King 'Tut's' tomb, that persons unable to see such undertakings personally are anxious to get a first-class 'second-hand' view at their favorite theaters.⁶⁰

Stirling and his assistants, along with Elliott and members of his organization, were given the privilege of seeing themselves on screen in a sneak preview of the newsreel in St. Petersburg's Rex Theater the day before the grand opening of the Narváez Park Cafe and dancing pavilion on Weedon Island.⁶¹ The topical sheet of the film described five scenes:

Showing pottery, still in ground, partially uncovered; scientists working in excavations, showing methods used in uncovering finds; removing pottery from original burial place; close-up of one of the specimen [sic] recovered; crowds filing through woods on path alongside of mound; same crowd gathered around excavation watching scientists at work; showing stratification of mound and scientist [sic] at work carefully uncovering the bones of some of the prehistoric people; close-up of Dr. M. W. Stirling of the National museum, Washington, D. C., who is working in co-operation with the Smithsonian Institution and his staff, John Drake, E.L. Reichard and S. A. Hedberg; tropical jun-

59. Ibid; "News Reel Will Show World Weedon's Island Discovery," *St. Petersburg Times*, 2 February 1924.

60. "Scientists to Excavate Old Indian Mounds," *St. Petersburg Times*, 18 January 1925.

61. "Dance Celebrates Passing \$1,250,000 Mark in Sales," *St. Petersburg Times* Article on file at the St. Petersburg Museum of History, n.d.

gle, untouched by modern civilization as it was probably at the time these prehistoric people roamed the island.⁶²

The newsreels encapsulated the subsequent mythology that was transferred to the memories of thousands of visitors and citizens of their native cities. Eugene Elliott's promotional acumen lay in his ability to tap into the big stories emerging on a national level and apply them to a piece of land on the outskirts of an emerging tourist city. Although his development scheme was ultimately a financial failure, Elliott succeeded in integrating the elements of history, archaeology, and landscape into the cultural memory of Weedon Island. The trained eye still can detect the soft depressions cut into the sand at the site by the shovels of the excavation teams. A fishing pier, at the location of the bridge built across Riviera Bay and the bed of the paved road along the west crescent of the bay mark Elliott's part in the peninsula's story.

But it was the prehistoric Weedon Islanders who built the mounds and crafted their distinctive signature pottery. It was their "striking"⁶³ ceramics, complete with punctations, spirals, and symbolic figures, that attracted the admiration and study of the Smithsonian for three field seasons of excavation.

Weedon Island was to become the type-site for the significant Weeden (alternate spelling) Island Culture that existed along the Florida Gulf Coast into north Florida, Georgia, and Alabama between 1000 and 1800 years ago. As the Weedon Island mounds were opened, a total of 465 graves of prehistoric Weedon Islanders were recorded, and the mystery of a vanished culture was added to the community's memory of the place.

The late Dr. Gordon R. Willey of Harvard's Peabody Museum, who first synthesized the Weeden Island Culture based on the pottery and a unique ceremonialism, addressed the Florida Anthropological Society at Fort Walton Beach 75 years after the Smithsonian's excavations.⁶⁴ To the new generation of archaeologists, Willey posed a new set of questions and ideas about the

62. "News Reel Will Show World Weedon's Island Discovery," *St. Petersburg Times*.

63. Correspondence from M. W. Stirling to J. W. Fewkes, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, D.C., 5 January 1924, Records of the BAE, Correspondence 1909 – 1950, Box 33, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

64. Gordon R. Willey, *Archeology of the Florida Gulf Coast*, Miscellaneous Collections, Vol. 113 (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1949), 396-451.

exotic-looking pottery first recorded on Weedon Island. Willey detected a definite connection, inspired from the pottery traditions of Native Peoples in Louisiana and Mississippi, but he asserted that "for whatever reasons, the Florida natives ran wild with those ceramic traditions once they got them over here."⁶⁵ A science fiction writer as well as an archaeologist, Willey scripted the following scenario to the archaeologists assembled.

What were the liberating, energizing factors that operated here for Weeden Island Gulf Florida Potters? This is one of those questions that archaeology....can't give a really scientific answer to; at the same time, it's a question that intrigues us. Maybe it has something to do with the soft life—the climate, the abundant provender from the sea....All in all, I think the Florida Gulf Coast during the Weeden Island I Period would have been the best place and time to be a pre-Columbian Indian. Later, things changed....I am glad that I had the opportunity to be one of those who began the task of sorting and ordering the data that you, I trust, will be interpreting in ever more adventurous ways.⁶⁶

Indeed, significant adventurous interpretations by Native Peoples, archaeologists, and the surrounding community have continued to interpret the lifeways of the First Weedon Islanders at the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. The wall curving around the center's classroom incorporates a distinctive Weeden Island Culture design, possibly an aquatic bird in flight, and the interactive Virtual Tour of Artifacts housed in the exhibits hall interprets artifacts from the perspective of Seminole students from the Ahfachkee School in Big Cypress, of Pinellas County archaeologists, and of Dr. Brent Weisman of the University of South Florida.⁶⁷

65. Gordon R. Willey, "Inconsequent Thoughts and Other Reflections on Florida Archaeology," *The Florida Anthropologist* 52(3) (September 1999): 202.

66. *Ibid.*, 202-204.

67. Sheila K. Stewart, "Creating the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center," *The Florida Anthropologist* 56(4) (December 2003): 293-294; P. E. Kolianos, S. K. Stewart, and B. R. Weisman. "Virtual Tour: An Interpretive Journey/ Bringing Weeden Back to Weedon," Paper delivered at the 60th Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Archaeological Conference, November 15, 2003; "The Virtual Tour of Artifacts." <<http://www.weedonislandcenter.org>> (August 2005).

By 1925, Elliott's development company was in trouble along with other projects in the Tampa Bay Area, as the real estate boom began to shrivel and finally went bust in the spring of 1927.⁶⁸ Local businessman L.W. Baynard Sr. later recalled that by 1925 Elliot already had a tax lien on his holdings filed by the federal government.⁶⁹ J. Kennedy Block, the realtor promoting the nearby Rio Vista development, bought controlling stock in the Boulevard and Bay Land and Development Company and turned Elliott's observation tower and his "old casino" into the San Remo Club.⁷⁰ A handsome colonial style building with a new dance floor and "dazzling display of electric lights," the club opened its doors on February 10, 1926, featuring French and Russian cuisine served to the strains of an exotic band of Russian folk singers and dancers.⁷¹ However, the nightclub became another casualty of the bust and closed its doors soon afterwards when the development company fell into the hands of the First National Bank at Tampa and the property that encompassed the mounds returned to Dr. Weedon.⁷²

By 1927, a few families lived on the peninsula, and cabins for a construction camp had been built on the opposite end. Weedon Island had become the haunt of bootleggers and was the site of a brawl and a murder on February 4th of that year. According to reporter Dick Bothwell, a shack in the construction camp was burned late that night and a bloodstained ax and human remains were found among the smoldering ruins.⁷³ Willie Cole, a soft-spoken black man who worked in nearby Rio Vista, discovered the flames and reported the fire to camp superintendent. Upon investigation, the superintendent discovered the dismembered body of a white man in the wreckage of the shack. Although not initially a suspect in the murder and arson, Cole was charged and convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.⁷⁴ Granted a new trial on the basis of insufficient evidence, Cole eventually pleaded guilty

68. Arsenault, 198, 252.

69. Dick Bothwell, "St. Petersburg's Mysterious Island Part II," *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 August 1957.

70. "Opening of San Remo Club at Weedon's Island Proves Instant Success," *St. Petersburg Time*, 12 February 1926.

71. *Ibid.*

72. Bothwell; "Weedon Tract Available For City Recreation," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 11 April 1928.

73. Bothwell.

74. "Willie Cole Gets New Trial," *St. Petersburg Times*, 12 February 1928.

to manslaughter, and his attorney negotiated a sentence of two-and-one half years, of which he had already served two years. Although no evidence of the burned cabin and the murder remain, the brief history of bootlegging, arson, and murder reflects the tenuous hold social institutions had on the island. If the ready conviction of a black man for the murder of a white man reinforced southern racial history, no trace of the events remains on the landscape of the island. However, the next stage of Weedon Island's story involved the new technologies of flight and film, which have left lasting impressions both on the land and in the cultural memory of Pinellas County.

The possibility for air travel first appeared in St. Petersburg in 1912, when residents scanned the skies to find the source of an unfamiliar whirring. The buzz came from the engine of a Curtiss biplane flown by Leonard W. Bonney, the first pilot to fly over the city.⁷⁵ It had taken nine years since the Wright brothers' successes at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, for aviators to reach St. Petersburg, but by the following year, the St. Petersburg Board of Trade had invested in a "flying boat," the first contracted airline in the world.⁷⁶ The new St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line provided air service between Tampa and St. Petersburg. Piloted by Tony Jannus, the *Benoist* airboat crossed the waters of Tampa Bay for two round trips daily. After a scant five months the novelty wore off, and the airline closed its hanger.⁷⁷

Fifteen years later, in September 1929, Fred V. Blair, an associate of E. M. Elliot, announced his plans to establish an airport in St. Petersburg for land and sea planes. In October, Blair began the construction of runways, a hanger, and a dock on Papys Bayou for seaplanes.⁷⁸ With the completion of the Grand Central Airport and its offices, observation tower, and pilots' sleeping quarters, Blair and Company had opened the sky around Weedon Island for tourists and visitors to the Tampa Bay area.⁷⁹ To commemorate the opening of the airport on January 8, 1930, pilot Harold McMahon landed on Weedon Island with the *Northern Star*,

75. Warren J. Brown, *Florida's Aviation History* (Largo, Florida: Aero-Medical Consultants, Inc., 1980), 38.

76. *Ibid.*, 71.

77. Arsenault, 143.

78. "Private Company Plans to Build Immense Airport," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 18 September 1929.

79. "Local Airport Orders Hangar," *St. Petersburg Times*, 28 December 1929.

America's largest passenger plane at the time. McMahon was greeted by a large crowd gathered to catch a glimpse of the giant aircraft. Like the prehistoric people who watched the graceful spirals of the birds impressed in effigy upon their pottery, hundreds of admiring spectators gazed at the graceful landing of the huge aircraft. Among the upturned faces on the island were Mayor Arthur R. Thompson of St. Petersburg, Mayor D. B. McKay of Tampa, and Mayor H. H. Haskin of Clearwater; the tri-city delegation attended a reception held afterwards at the Vinoy Park Hotel and hosted by Blair and Company.⁸⁰

On the heels of the Grand Central Airport dedication, Horace Albright, Director of the National Park Service (NPS), along with his associate director Arno Cammerer and E. K. Burlow, an assistant to the Secretary of the Interior, made a trip to Weedon Island to consider the site for a national memorial park dedicated to Hernando de Soto.⁸¹ Not surprisingly, William L. Straub, a progressive activist and champion of St. Petersburg's downtown waterfront,⁸² chaired the local committee on the national park project. Also on the committee was Walter P. Fuller, vice-chairman of the city planning and zoning board whose interest in local history would lead him to publish three books on St. Petersburg.

Mayor Thompson and a group of Pinellas County officials met with the committee and Albright over dinner at the Vinoy Park Hotel to discuss how to proceed with the designation. Albright recommended that the city or a group of individuals should acquire the property and then turn it over to the federal government for development and maintenance. Dr. Weedon had offered to sell the property to the city of St. Petersburg for recreation purposes two years before, but at the time of their meeting with Director Albright, city officials still had not acted upon his "unofficial" offer to buy the approximately 400 acres, including an old orange grove, and a group of buildings.⁸³

When Dr. Albright made his 1930 trip to Florida, he was in the process of expanding the political base of support for the NPS. Highly influenced by the national trend toward historic

80. "Blair Stages Luncheon for Three Cities," *St. Petersburg Times*, 9 January 1930.

81. "Park Officials Make Inspection of Weedon Isle," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 17 February 1930.

82. Arsenaault, 85-87.

83. "Weedon Tract Available For City Recreation," *St. Petersburg Independent*.

celebrations, Albright had begun moving the NPS towards historic preservation and the systematic interpretation of military and pre-historic sites.⁸⁴ At the same time, Albright was impressed with the foliage and rare plants found on Weedon Island and ordered a National Park botanist named "Mr. Bumpas," [sic] who was conducting research in the Everglades, to study Weedon's Island as soon as he finished his research in south Florida. A *St. Petersburg Times* article states that the mounds and artifacts from the Smithsonian excavations as well as the "botanical growths," "bay, and bayou" were deeply interesting to Albright and his group.⁸⁵ "Mr. Bumpas" was Dr. Herman Carey Bumpus, a naturalist who had been the first director of the American Museum of Natural History from 1902-1908, and who had left a later position as President of Tufts college in 1918 to become involved with the National Park Service.⁸⁶

During his early work with the NPS, Dr. Bumpus conceived of the notion of trailside museums and personally supervised their development, the first at the Glacier Point Lookout Station in Yosemite. Natural history shrines were also Bumpus' brainchildren. In his philosophy, which provided the foundation for interpretive centers throughout the United States, the surroundings of museums were the exhibits, and the museums served as sources of the information, providing maps, guides, and books about the surroundings. Natural history shrines were erected to give the visitor information about interesting phenomena nearby.⁸⁷ In 1930, the National Parks Commission of the Department of the Interior recommended that Weedon Island should become a national shrine upon approval by executive proclamation. The dreams of these early proponents of Weedon Island seemed close at hand.⁸⁸

However, beginning in the spring of 1930, the St. Petersburg tourist trade entered a period of decline, and there were hundreds of mortgage foreclosures, as depression followed the stock market crash in October 1929. By April 1930, two months after Albright's

84. Ibid.

85. Lillian Blackstone, "Experts Coming to Make Survey of Island Here," *St. Petersburg Times*, 2 March 1930.

86. "Herman Carey Bumpus." Recreation, Park & Tourism Sciences, Texas A & M University, Pugsley Awards <www.rpts.tamu.edu/pugsley/Bumpus.htm> (27 January 2004), 1-3.

87. Ibid.

88. John W. Falconnier, "Weedon Island to Become Shrine." *Florida's Woods and Waters* (1930), 10-12.

visit to Weedon Island, St. Petersburg's bonded indebtedness per capita became the second highest in the nation. By May, the city was forced to default on its own bond payments,⁸⁹ and the de Soto Shrine was never built by a city too poor to purchase the land. Ironically, it is possibly fitting that Weedon Island never received recognition as de Soto's landing spot, because no archaeological evidence has been found to verify contact between the indigenous Weedon Islanders and the early expeditions of the sixteenth century conquistadors Narváez and de Soto.⁹⁰ However, these connections have persisted in local folklore.⁹¹

Amazingly, in the atmosphere of scarcity that descended on St. Petersburg, Fred Blair continued to develop the Grand Central Airport on Weedon Island and established the Gulf Coast Airways in August of 1931.⁹² In the same year, Eastern Air Transport contracted to fly out of Grand Central and began making four trips each day from Daytona Beach to St. Petersburg. Mail was delivered via Pitcairn Mailwings, and Curtiss Kingbirds were added to the fleet for passenger service.⁹³ Today, only the foundation of the Mediterranean Revival style office and a low mound of rubble overgrown with tall grass lie on the surface to remind the passersby of the old airport. Blair continued to promote his air shows until St. Petersburg foreclosed on the property in 1941 due to the back taxes owed.⁹⁴

In 1933, the island entered a new phase of its history when Blair convinced Aubrey Kennedy, veteran movie director, to transplant his movie productions to the old San Remo Club on Weedon Island.⁹⁵ As part of the Kennedy's permanent motion picture

89. Arsenault, 255. Payments did not resume until 1937.

90. Jerald T. Milanich and Charles Hudson, *Hernando de Soto and the Indians of Florida*. (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1993); Jeffrey M. Mitchem, "Redefining Safety Harbor: Late Prehistoric/Protohistoric Archaeology in West Peninsular Florida" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1989), 50.

91. Jeff Klinkenberg, "Uncivilized—And Better For It," *St. Petersburg Times*, 17 February 1988; Keith Thompson, *The Weedon Island Story* (Florida Department of Natural Resources, Division of Recreation and Parks, 1992); *Weedon Island Preserve Resource Management Plan/Final Report*, 1, 5. Brown, 208; "Gulf Airways Opened Here," *St. Petersburg Times*, 21 August 1931.

93. Brown, 147.

94. "Airport Property To Be Foreclosed For City Taxes," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 6 August 1941.

95. R. M. Markham, "Local Developer Joined Deadrick In Plan To build Film Center," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 29 July 1933.

development scheme, he founded Kennedy City, converting the San Remo Club into a studio for his first film *Chloe* and building a sound stage of steel construction for his second film, *Playthings of Desire*.⁹⁶ Among the performers in *Chloe* were white actresses Molly O'Day and Olive Borden, black actress Georgette Harvey, and black actor Jud Smith.⁹⁷ The erratic storyline of the first movie filmed on Weedon Island was fraught with racism and sexism and included images of Georgette Harvey in a top hat and the frenetic dancing of her black voodoo followers around a blazing fire, while a confused Chloe, played by Olive Borden, was tied to the trunk of a fallen tree helplessly awaiting her impending sacrifice.

On May 30, 1933, Buster Keaton joined the group, arriving at the Grand Central airport on an Eastern Air Transport passenger plane.⁹⁸ Keaton, famous for his porkpie hat, came to Kennedy City to work on a film called *The Fisherman* after starring in the successful MGM film *What No Beer?* In February of the same year, MGM had handed Keaton his walking papers because of his heavy drinking and difficult personality. So, like many transplanted Floridians in search of the Florida dream, he moved to St. Petersburg to start again.

During his first week in town, Keaton completed the outline of the plot for his film and by June 2, he had signed a contract to produce two or three pictures a year with a three-year option. During the same week, as excavation for the foundation of a new sound stage commenced, Mayor Henry W. Adams presented Keaton with the keys to the city at a large gathering in Williams Park, complete with speeches, singers, and bands. St. Petersburg celebrated his appearances around town, but the actor spent much of his time posing in publicity shots with his co-star Molly O'Day, watching the filming of *Chloe* and *Playthings of Desire*, and waiting for the sound stage to be completed. On June 17, 1933, Tallahassee received the articles of incorporation for his Flamingo Film Company and the new studio was completed later in the summer.⁹⁹

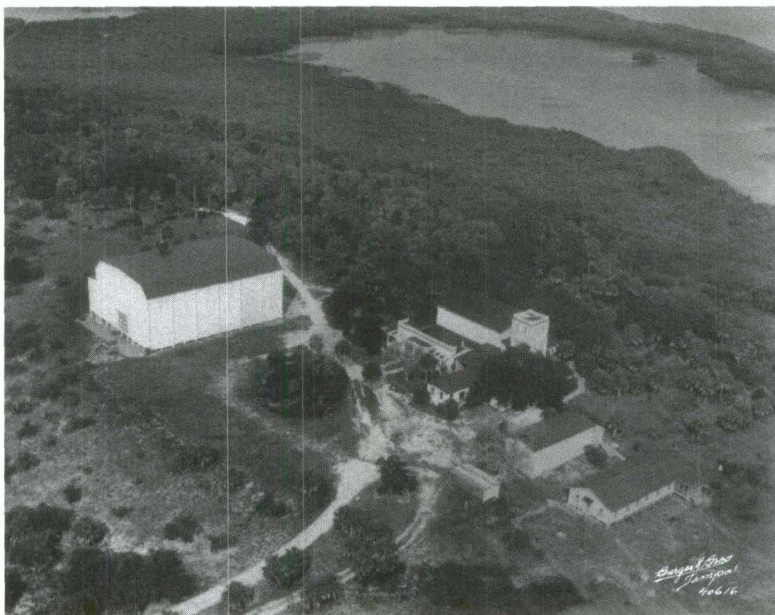
During his stay in St. Petersburg, Keaton moved his wife and brother into the J.L. Younghusband residence on Snell Isle and

96. "Movie Studio Will Be Built," *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 June 1933.

97. "Film Player Arrives Today to Work in Kennedy Picture," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 19 May 1933.

98. Christopher Carmen, "The Florida Fiasco," *The Keaton Chronicle* 2 (4) (Autumn 1994) : 2.

99. *Ibid.*, 1-3.



Kennedy City/Sun Haven Movie Studios on Weedon Island. Photograph Courtesy, Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System

contracted to play third base with the Coca-Cola Kids, a local baseball team. Drawing a large crowd, he played his first game on June 14, but the Kids “lost three to two to the always tough Poinsettia Dairy team.”¹⁰⁰ On one occasion, Keaton appeared at Williams Park and \$500 was offered to the person who could make him laugh. The poker-faced actor rose to the challenge and did not crack a smile.¹⁰¹ However, Keaton never rose to the challenges of making movies on Weedon Island and left the Sunshine City on July 26. In a statement released on August 14, he officially severed ties with Kennedy Productions, citing financial misrepresentations and difficult working conditions. He never filmed *The Fisherman*.¹⁰²

The following day, the *St. Petersburg Times* announced the reorganization of the movie project at Weedon’s Island by T. C. Parker Jr. who had been the chairman of the board of directors of the

100. Ibid, 3.

101. Bothwell.

102. Carmen, 3.

Kennedy holding.¹⁰³ Parker bought out Kennedy's interests including the rights to *Chloe* and *Playthings of Desire*, and established the Sun Haven Studios, Inc. to begin filming *The Hired Wife*. Featuring the photography of Mack Stengel, shots of the "scenic beauties of St. Petersburg" and shots across the bay near Sun Haven City, as it was now called, *Playthings* opened at the Capitol Theatre on September 2, 1933.¹⁰⁴ The film starred James Kirkwood, Linda Watkins, Molly O'Day, and Josephine Dunn in the story of a man who is the plaything of his own desires and who dies as a result of his passion. Along with a review of the sneak preview the night before the premiere, photographs of crowd scenes were printed with the names of local St. Petersburg residents recruited for the film.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the same promotional technique of filming St. Petersburg faces, first used in the newsreels of the late 1920s to bring tourists to the Sun City, was employed again to drum up interest in the Sun Haven's motion picture.

WSUN Radio broadcast the premiere, staged with the glamour of a Hollywood opening night and featuring a personal appearance by Molly O'Day, music played by a popular accordionist, and songs by a "negro [sic] sextet."¹⁰⁶ Sun Haven Studios completed its third and final film, *The Hired Wife*, in the fall of 1933, but the glamour and hoopla were cut short when the IRS foreclosed on the studio property, confiscated all three films, the new sound stage, and the production facilities because of a "tax liability."¹⁰⁷ About the same quality as late night TV movies, Sun Haven's pictures were "three pictures which everyone involved preferred to forget," but the memory of the stars and the ill-fated studios on Weedon Island persisted in the public's memory of Weedon Island like a melody lingering among the abandoned buildings.¹⁰⁸ The Sun Haven Studio buildings burned or were torn down, waiting investigations by historical archaeologists in the future.¹⁰⁹

103. "Parker Reorganizes Movie Project At Weedon Island," *St. Petersburg Times*, 15 August 1933; "T.C. Parker, Chairman of Kennedy Corporation Board, Is Engineer, Sportsman and World War Vet," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 29 July 1933.

104. "Picture Shows Scenic Beauty," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 2 September 1933.

105. "Another Scene From 'Playthings of Desire' Which Has Premiere at Capitol Tomorrow," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 1 September 1933.

106. "Picture Shows Scenic Beauty," *St. Petersburg Independent*.

107. Carmen, 3.

108. Bothwell, 5.

109. "Mystery Blaze Sweeps Studio," *St. Petersburg Times*, 25 December 1937, 1; "Old Movie Studio Destroyed by Fire," *St. Petersburg Times*, 26 June 1963, 1B.

Even as Weedon Island's dreams of celluloid glory faded, the archeological treasures buried in the ancient mounds offered another opportunity for economic development. In December 1933, another big name in the field of archaeology, Froelich Rainey traveled from the Peabody Museum of Yale University and set up headquarters at the Palm Court Apartments to study the Indian mounds of the Tampa Bay region and to look into "establishing a scientific branch of that institution [Peabody Museum]." ¹¹⁰ Rainey, a Yale University graduate student, was following in the footsteps of Matthew Stirling, who had become the chief of the Smithsonian's Bureau of American Ethnology upon Fewkes's death in 1930.

In March and April of the previous year, Stirling had conducted his first systematic survey of the Tampa Bay mounds to investigate the possible links between the prehistoric peoples of the Florida Gulf Coast and the West Indies. ¹¹¹ He continued his fieldwork during the following February, March, and April, excavating the Safety Harbor burial mound, while the United States National Museum surveyed archaeological sites in the Dominican Republic. ¹¹² The Smithsonian's work on Weedon Island and in the Tampa Bay area in the late 1920s eventually became a stepping stone for developing investigations in the Caribbean region. Although Rainey did not establish a research branch in the Tampa Bay area, he followed the emerging research interest in the Caribbean and conducted pioneering fieldwork in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands during the mid-1930s. ¹¹³

110. "Yale Man Digging in Indian Mounds on Weedon's Isle," *St. Petersburg Independent*, 11 December 1933.

111. "Prehistoric Mounds in the Vicinity of Tampa Bay, Florida." *Explorations and Field-work of the Smithsonian Institution in 1929* (City of Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1930) : 183-186.

112. "Summary of Archaeological Work in the Americas During 1929 and 1930." *American Archaeology Series No. 5* (Washington, D.C.: The Pan American Union, 1930): p.35-37.

113. In 1947, Rainey was appointed director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, from which he established the popular television series "What in the World." Best described as a parlor game, the show popularized anthropology and archaeology and brought them into the living rooms of armchair adventurers for fourteen years. "Froelich Rainey Biography." *American Museum of Natural History Anthropological Archive*, (<http://anthro.amnh.org/anthropology/FindAid/Rainey>) (February 4, 2004); "What in the World: the Original TV Show @ University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology." *University of Pennsylvania Museum What in the World? News and Reviews*, (<http://www.upenn.edu/museum/Games/wahtworldreviews.html>) (February 4, 2004).

In the early twentieth century, Weedon Island's complex historical landscape intersected with national and regional cultural and economic developments that exploited Tampa Bay's Native American heritage, rode the wave of Florida's tourist boom, and incorporated the latest technology of flight and film. Often simultaneously reaching for the ancient and the new, the Weedon Island ventures failed to bring the financial success their promoters envisioned. Nevertheless, because the national connections promoted during the Florida boom combined with the unintentional preservation resulting from the foreclosures of the ensuing bust, the Weedon Island Preserve continues to be a place of cultural pride today where visitors go to remember its unique past. In fact, during the first decade of the twenty-first century, Pinellas County's Department of Environmental Management built a new type of mound on Weedon Island. The baskets and shell tools that the First Weedon Islanders used to build their mounds were replaced with dump trucks and bulldozers, packing the soil that supports the elevated foundation of a cultural and natural history center. Dedicated on November 2, 2002, the center officially opened its doors on December 26 of the same year with the general mission to "create a better understanding and appreciation of the rich cultural history of the preserve and the natural systems that supported this cultural development."¹¹⁴ The educational goals of the center include working with indigenous peoples to enhance mutual understanding and deepen the interpretation of the past through programs and exhibits. Like the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, which opened September 21, 2004, the center on Weedon Island has become part of another national story, a "circling back of American history on itself," with the placement of the history of native peoples back into the public memory of Tampa Bay.¹¹⁵

As today's visitors to the preserve walk the sandy soils tamped by human feet through the ages, the mechanized sounds of St.

114. Sheila K. Stewart, "Weedon Island Preserve Education Center/Sky-Land-Water, June 4, 2001; Weedon Island Preserve Education Center Building and Exhibits Program/Weedon Island Preserve Sky-Land-Water, July 6, 2001. Copy on file at the Environmental Lands Division of Pinellas County Department of Environmental Management

115. W. Richard West, Jr., "The National Museum of the American Indian: Cultural Redemption and Reconciliation in the 21st Century/ Remarks on the Occasion of the First Occupancy of the National Museum of the American Indian." National Press Club, Washington, D.C., 15 January 2004.

Petersburg's streets subside. Hikers can hear the cries of seabirds and the conversation of fishermen wading in the shallows. From the vantage of a kayak or canoe, they might catch a glimpse of the distinctive silhouette of a Roseate Spoonbill in flight or of an Osprey with a fish squirming in its talons. From the boardwalk lookouts, one still can enjoy the quiet pleasure of mingling thoughts with the gentle lapping of bay waters or take in the view over the mangrove canopy of Riviera Bay from the observation decks of the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center. Through the exhibits and programs of the center, the community continues to interpret the past movements of settlement and preservation across the landscape of Weedon Island.

Corrections:

The staff of the Florida Historical Society apologizes for the following errors on pages 295 and 296 of the Fall 2005 issue of *The Quarterly*. (1) On page 295, the number of counties is published as sixty-six. That's wrong. There are sixty-seven counties in the Sunshine State. We knew that, but gremlins.... (2) On page 296, the Zip Code for the Society's address is published as 32933. That's wrong. It is 32922. We also knew that. (3) The Society's telephone number is listed on page 296 as "680-1971," but, once again, that's wrong. It is (321) 690-1971. Thank you.

Nick Wynne, PhD
Executive Director

A Splendid Idea in China Turned Sour in Florida: The Rise and Fall of the Florida Splendid China

By Wenxian Zhang

Although Florida had been promoted as a tropical paradise to people with health concerns since the granting of statehood in 1845, the Sunshine State did not become a top vacation destination for thrill-seeking Americans until Disney World opened its doors in the early 1970s. Disney's appearance spawned several other major theme parks, including Sea World and Universal Studios, and some smaller attractions such as Wet and Wild. Florida Splendid China joined the ranks of Central Florida's regional theme parks in 1993. A high profile project, it represented one of the first and largest joint investment ventures between the United States and the People's Republic of China. The theme park, optimistically conceived yet poorly researched, well-executed but improperly managed, never took off in the competitive market of Central Florida. Political controversies and demonstrations plagued the park during its ten-year history, and it finally fell victim to the region's struggling tourism business following the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The history of Florida Splendid China was linked to the original miniature attraction in Shenzhen, China. Designed as a public relations showcase to promote tourism in China, the amusement park located near Hong Kong was the brainchild of

Wenxian Zhang is Associate Professor and Head of Archives and Special Collections at Rollins College in Orlando, Florida.

Ma Zhimin (Ma Chiman),¹ general manager of China Travel Service (CTS) Ltd. Listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange, CTS was the largest tourism firm in Mainland China owning travel agencies, theme parks, and performing arts groups. Many believed that the Chinese government held a majority of its stock. In 1989, Ma reflected on the conception of Splendid China: "During my trip to Europe in 1985, I visited the famous Madurodam "Lilliputian Land" in Holland when an idea came to me and I was thinking how great it would be if we could build a miniature scenic spot in which China's renowned scenic attractions and historical sites could be concentratedly displayed so that people could admire and know more about China's beautiful scenic wonders, splendid history and culture as well as various national customs and habits in a shorter time."² With sufficient funding from CTS, the idea quickly turned into reality.

Opened in November 1989 with an admission price of approximately \$11, the original Splendid China was an immediate success in Southern China, attracting more than 3.5 million visitors in its first year and recouping all its original investment. In November 1991, Ma opened the Chinese Folk Culture Villages nearby, where visitors could tour replicas of twenty-one villages representing twenty-four of China's fifty-six nationalities, including Mien, Yao, Hmong, Uyghurs, Bai, Mongols and Tibetans. Shortly afterward, a 119-acre park, the Window of the World, was constructed beside Splendid China, featuring models of 118 famous world sites including the Eiffel Tower, the Egyptian pyramids, and the Kremlin. The cluster of theme parks made Shenzhen a top tourist attraction in China. In 1992, Deng Xiaoping, the 88-year-old Chinese leader, toured Splendid China in a golf cart, further enhancing the park's prestige.³ It was during this trip to Southern China that Deng made his famous speech advocating the acceleration of China's privatization effort following the economic collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union.

Under Deng, acquiring wealth became a positive goal in the nominally Communist country, and Splendid China served as a

-
1. Chinese names in this article are spelled in the standard pronunciation—Hanyu Pinyin, and listed with last names first following Chinese customs.
 2. Ma Chiman, Liu Chiping and Au Lai Wa, *Shenzhen Splendid China Miniature Scenic Spot* (Hong Kong: China Travel Service, 1989), 3.
 3. Stephen Magagnini, "China in Three Hours: Amazing!" *Sacramento Bee*, 3 October 1993, sec. TR1.

shining example. Its huge success made CTS leaders very confident and eager for business expansion. Florida Splendid China was conceptualized within this framework. The new business venture, as described by the magazine *Economist*, signaled China's headlong plunge into western-style capitalism.⁴

Frank and Josephine Chen owned the land on which Florida Splendid China would be built. Josephine Chen, who emigrated to the United States in 1968, had built a fortune through real estate development. During a 1986 trip to Central Florida, she bought a barren strip of 560 acres located off U.S. Highway 192, just west of the Disney property. After visiting the original Splendid China in Shenzhen, Josephine Chen began to consider a similar park in Florida. For the Chens, the Splendid China park would be the centerpiece of a larger development project that would be their legacy. On land adjacent to the park, they planned a housing development that would include nearly 500 single-family houses with a price range of \$100,000 to \$250,000, 240 condominium apartments, 1,400 hotel and motel rooms, 900 restaurant seats and more than 300,000 square feet of shopping space.⁵

The proposed Florida Splendid China park was a 50-50 joint venture between CTS and Chen's family business, the Florida-based American Eastern International (AEI), with a total investment that eventually reached over \$100 million. Under their agreement, AEI provided the land and management services for the park, while CTS supplied the building materials, the architects, and the personnel. In the venture's first public announcement on August 21, 1991, George Chen, a computer dealer and transplanted Los Angeles businessman recruited by his parents to run the project, outlined a 76-acre theme park that would attract tourists from Asia as well as Florida school groups and Disney visitors in search of something different. "We think it's going to be unique enough that it's going to be a complement to Disney or Sea World," he predicted and noted, "It's a static park rather than a dynamic park. It's [a] pensive, walk-through kind of thing."⁶ Although George Chen refused to estimate the cost of the project, he valued the replicas alone at \$40 million.

4. "Chinese Culture: Prettified," *Economist*, 331.7863 (14 May 1994): 92.

5. Susan Jacobson, "Park Would Bring China Closer," *Orlando Sentinel*, 21 August 1991, sec. D1.

6. *Ibid.*

Citing reports from economic and marketing consultants, Chen was confident in the future success of the proposed theme park. Optimism for the Florida Splendid China project rested on the success of similar attractions that featured miniatures of famous shrines or cultural icons. Miniature parks in Europe, for example, drew approximately one million visitors annually. Market studies of similar sites convinced the partners that the new attraction would be successful in Orlando. "We could make every mistake in the books and still come out ahead," predicted Chen.⁷ In addition to American tourists, he expected the park to attract Chinese visitors through CTS-arranged charter tours. Chen hoped the project would divert some Chinese travelers from their primary U.S. destinations of New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco and bring them to Central Florida.⁸

The competition for tourists' time in Central Florida has always been fierce, and industry analysts believe that the toughest market to crack may not be the top tier of theme parks such as Disney World and Sea World, but the secondary market. While the largest parks compete for visitors from around the world, the smaller, less expensive attractions pursue the "leftovers," tourists who come for Disney, but then have a few spare hours afterward. According to a market expert, a new theme park 'will have to be unique. It must be so different, so appealing and set a such a price that people will have to say, 'I've just got to get over there to see what this is all about.'"⁹ Despite industry studies indicating that the region had reached its limit, the partners believed a well-financed and well-executed park, one they could afford to keep operating through the usually tough first years, could succeed. Although a small British-themed park named Little England failed to materialize fully in the early 1980s,¹⁰ Chen and CTS remained confident that the variety of tourists visiting Orlando annually made Central Florida an ideal location for their planned attraction.

Intended to be both a tourist attraction and an advertisement for travel to the real China, Florida Splendid China was conceived

7. Ibid.

8. Mary Murphy, "Work Progresses Splendidly on China Theme Park," *Orlando Sentinel*, 23 May 1992, Osceola, sec. 1.

9. Vicki Vaughan, "Themed Out? New Attractions Pouring in Despite 'Saturated Market,'" *Orlando Sentinel*, 16 September 1991, Central Florida Business, sec. 1.

10. Ibid.

by its developers as an "outdoor educational museum."¹¹ According to George Chen, visitors to the attraction would have the experience of a National Geographic tour of China. "It is a journey to China, similar to *Gulliver's Travels* to Lilliput. We want the visitor to discover and experience the history, culture and customs of China, which date back 5,000 years."¹² Unlike Disney World and other area attractions designed for entertainment and family fun, Florida Splendid China would use culture and history as its key themes. From the outset, the partners clearly understood that the new park would be "somewhat more passive and reflective compared to Walt Disney World, leaping dolphins, performing whales, thrill rides and fireworks in the sky."¹³ But as Chen explained: "If you want to do an attraction at the doorstep of Disney, you need to complement them, not compete with them. We hope to appeal to some of the families that go to Disney."¹⁴

In designing the park, AEI and CTS aimed at providing visitors a genuine experience of China. Chen promised the restaurants of Florida Splendid China would offer the true Chinese cuisine that one would find nowhere else in America. To ensure guests a total Chinese experience, the partners planned to populate the park with Chinese entertainers, acrobats, Mongolian wrestlers, and martial arts experts. Furthermore, in response to the dark images associated with the recent suppression of student demonstrations in China, the Central Florida project sought to cast China in a more favorable light and "show off some of the positive things of China culture."¹⁵ The park would serve as a showcase for Chinese culture and a microcosm of the real China, reflecting the country's ancient history, cultural heritage, scenic wonders, diverse lifestyles, and artistic and architectural accomplishments. Unexpectedly, this public relations rationale generated many of the controversies associated with the attraction and made people question the justification for the park and the ownership of the Chinese company. Although several critics denounced CTS as a government-funded

11. Susan G. Strother, "Laying the Groundwork for Chinese Attraction: \$80 Million Park Expected to Open in '93 Near Disney," *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 December 1991, sec. B1.

12. Ike Flores, "Park Shows China on a Small Scale," *Miami Herald*, 28 June 1993, sec. 1B.

13. Magagnini, *Sacramento Bee*, 3 October 1993, TR1.

14. Strother, *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 December 1991, B1.

15. Flores, *Miami Herald*, 28 June 1993, 1B.

travel agency, the general manager insisted that his company was a private entity which brought its own funds to the project. He asserted that the only Chinese government support came in the form of necessary permission to create replicas of sites such as Beijing's Forbidden City and Tibet's Potala Palace.¹⁶

On December 18, 1991, a number of Florida state officials attended the groundbreaking ceremony for Florida Splendid China. Grey Farmer, Florida Secretary of Commerce, declared that the project represented the largest Chinese investment in the state.¹⁷ Barry Kenney, Florida's Director of Tourism, believed the park would foster better relations between the United States and China, and possibly lure more foreign investment from other Asian countries.¹⁸ With this optimistic outlook for a bright future, construction began in earnest in 1992.

Constructing Splendid China proved to be a unique Chinese and American experience that exposed Americans to the Asian work ethic and introduced Chinese workers to American culture. Some 120 prominent Chinese artists were recruited to the United States to work on the exhibits. To fulfill the requirement of both the Chinese and American governments, each worker had to file a three-inch-thick stack of immigration documents. No women were included, and most men were masters in their artistic fields, including calligraphy, painting, stone carving, bonsai sculpting, and pottery.

Each work day began right after breakfast. The Chinese artisans worked until noon and went back to their dormitory for lunch and a nap until 2:30, then returned to the construction project until 6:30 or 7 pm.¹⁹ Although their work style seemed unconventional to Americans, they convincingly proved their effectiveness to their critics. When they started work on the Great Wall exhibit, American contractors projected a 12-month construction period. But it required only seven months to finish the project. Paid at the American union wage scale, Chinese workers lived on-site in a

16. Agence France Presse, "China in Miniature Opens in Florida," news release, 15 December 1993.

17. Strother, *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 December 1991, B1.

18. Annie Tin and Susan Strother, "A Splendid Attraction and a Big Challenge," *Orlando Sentinel*, 12 December 1993, sec. A1.

19. Frank Langley, "East Meets West: George Chen Offers a Grand Tour of Central Florida's Newest Attraction, where Chinese Artisans Have Re-created the Great Wall and Other Fascinating Landmarks of China's Past," *Orlando Sentinel*, 10 October 1993, Florida Sec. 9.

customized, air-conditioned trailer park until the job was completed. To ensure work productivity and lessen homesickness, two chefs were brought from China to prepare workers' meals, and a recreation area provided a television, VCR, and a wide assortment of Chinese-language videos that included everything from music programs to soap operas. The rooms where workers slept were equipped with bunk beds for two, four, and six men; George Chen occupied one of the beds.²⁰ He also bought each of the artisans an annual pass to Walt Disney World, and trips to the Magic Kingdom, Epcot Center, and Disney-MGM Studios were frequent.

Every province of China would be represented in the meticulously designed layout of the Florida project. Included among the leading exhibits was the Great Wall of China (comprising six and a half million one and two inch bricks, one-sixteenth the original size) and a full-size reproduction of a 1200 A.D. street scene in Suzhou, a Chinese city known as the Venice of the Far East. Some of the structures were assembled without nails, balanced by their own weight using the mortise and tenon method. However, local building codes demanded nails, which were added despite the fact that such buildings had been standing in China for hundreds of years. Much of the construction and tens of thousands of figurines were built on a scale of 1 to 15—everything was handcrafted, carefully detailed and sculpted by Chinese artists. There was no mass production, no fiberglass, no colored concrete. Reporters visiting the construction site were astounded by the craftsmanship and the marvelous attention to detail that was given to the tiny structures. The workmanship was so exacting and the colors so enticing that one easily became absorbed in the construction. As Chen explained: "We are using individually glazed, kiln-fired tiles, teakwood, gold leaf, granite; some of the carvings are done under magnifying glass. The domino-sized bricks are terra cotta. We even imported stones from Lake Taihu, which are very valuable. We want to capture the sense of excitement and feeling of Marco Polo's journey to China."²¹

Since authenticity was the trademark of the park, and great emphasis was placed on construction details, the escalating project budget became a frustrating issue for developers. George Chen

20. Ibid.

21. Flores, *Miami Herald*, 28 June 1993, 1B.



Splendid Florida's Great Wall of China. The wall was constructed brick by brick by Chinese craftsmen. The dragonfly on top of the stick in the foreground provides a sense of the scale of the structure. *From the personal collection of Dr. James Yu*

reflected as the park was being prepared for business: "When we undertook this project, we were under the impression that our total budget would be about \$12 million. Of course, we knew there would be overruns, and we expected to as much as double that figure. The red flags began waving when the figure reach \$50 million, and we are now exceeding \$100 million. I only wish I had enough money for all the bottomless holes and unending stream of wants and needs. I am responsible not only to my family but also to my partners in China."²²

A year into construction, the owners were persuaded to invest another \$20 million to make the attraction more exciting. Several new features were designed to enhance the overall experience: a 150-seat movie theater was constructed near the park's entrance to introduce visitors to China's history in preparation for their journey through the miniatures. A 1,000-seat amphitheater offered live shows, including Mongolian wrestling, kung fu

22. Langley, *Orlando Sentinel*, 10 October 1993.

demonstrations, and performances by dance troupes. Shortly before the park opened for business, two additional major investments were made: an adjacent tract of twenty-six acres was purchased for \$3.9 million, and the nearby Days Inn Maingate West Hotel with 365 rooms was acquired for \$8.1 million.²³ The goal was to offer tour packages that would include accommodations, recreation and admission to the theme park.

During the construction phase, a number of problems arose between the partners and between CTS and federal authorities. It became increasingly apparent that CTS and the Chens differed in their perceptions of the park's goals, and rumors circulated that negotiations were underway for CTS to buy out the Chen family interests. At the same time, although state and local governments had approved the project, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) remained concerned that some of the laborers might have been tapped by the Chinese intelligence services to spy on the nearby Cape Canaveral military base and the Kennedy Space Center. An unscheduled, midnight inspection was conducted to ensure that large containers imported from China did not contain high-tech equipment.

Despite those troubling signs, the project moved forward. The park planned to employ between 300 and 400 people. Half would be Chinese entertainers, tour guides, chefs, and artisans who would provide authenticity and maintain the structures. In the end, the attraction brought approximately 550 jobs to the local economy, 250 of which were part-time employment. Four hundred jobs were held by Central Floridians and 150 were Chinese entertainers and crafts specialists. Once construction began in December 1991, nearly 2,000 local contractors, surveyors, landscape architects, electricians, and rock sculptors were hired to work on the project, with half of the \$100 million investment spent on labor costs. By the first year of operation, the park had become a top taxpayer in Osceola County.²⁴

As the construction work wound down, management focused on the park's ability to attract "educated" tourists, people who

23. Annie Tin, "Splendid China Builder May Add Nearby Resort: China Travel Services Is Considering Buying More and Building Hotels Next to the Soon-to-Open Theme Park," *Orlando Sentinel*, 7 December 1993, sec. C1.

24. Annie Tin, "New Park Is Splendid for Tax Rolls: Osceola Looks East—for China—for Some of the Goodies Walt Disney World Brought to Orange," *Orlando Sentinel*, 17 December 1993, sec. D1.

would most appreciate the park's offerings. In late November 1993, the theme park kicked off its \$500,000 introductory campaign with a motorized billboard telling the story of the grand opening.²⁵ The marketing campaign included television, radio, newspaper, and magazine coverage and a bus painted in Splendid China graphics. While an elaborate marketing strategy targeting potential visitors from Europe, South America, Japan, and other foreign countries might prove useful in boosting attendance, Chen's original estimate of three million guests a year already seemed overly optimistic. Six months before the opening, projected attendance figures were revised downward to more than one million visitors in the first year.²⁶ On the eve of the park opening, Ma Zhimin, chairman of Florida Splendid China, still expressed confidence in regard to the future of the attraction, citing the large numbers of American, European, and Latin American tourists who visited the state annually. He further hoped that the park's miniature sights would persuade more people to visit China in order to experience the real thing. Despite such public expressions of optimism, by opening day, the projected target for the first year of operation had been revised downward again to 500,000 – 750,000 visitors.²⁷

A final challenge for the new park was to set an appropriate price structure for admission. The original suggested price was one-half to one-third of the Disney admission, which would place it in the \$11 to \$16.50 range. However, with mounting project deficits, and after some deliberation, the admission price was set at \$23.55 for adults and \$13.90 for children under thirteen years of age. In addition, there was a charge of \$5 per person for a guided walking tour, and \$9 for a tour by golf cart. Since the 76-acre park was packaged as a half-day attraction, some industry observers raised eyebrows over what they viewed as a full-day theme park price. Market experts also warned that the miniature re-creations of Chinese landmarks provided a more passive experience than many vacationers were prepared for, and park managers would have to contend with a basic lack of American understanding of

25. Theme Park Breaks Splendid Campaign," *AD Week*, 29 November 1993, Southeast edition.

26. Ike Flores, "Park Shows China on a Small Scale," *Miami Herald*, 28 June 1993, sec. 1B.

27. Jack Schnedler, "The Great Wall Is Coming to Central Florida," *Chicago Sun Times*, 17 October 1993, Travel, sec. 2.

Chinese culture. To many Americans, China meant Communism, egg rolls, or the 1989 massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.²⁸ Nonetheless, the partners remained convinced that the park would draw crowds of “educated” travelers more likely to appreciate the “beauty that’s all its own.” When Florida Splendid China finally opened its doors, the local newspaper, the *Orlando Sentinel*, dubbed the region’s newest theme park “a \$100 million gamble.”²⁹

On Saturday, December 18, 1993, hundreds of public officials, local dignitaries, and special guests attended the grand opening ceremony. Through his emissary Charles Wright, Governor Lawton Chiles proclaimed December 18th Splendid China Day. Former U.S. President Richard Nixon, Florida Governor Chiles, Nobel laureates C. N. Yang, T. D. Lee, and C. C. Ting, former Secretary Alexander Haig, U.S. Representatives John Mica and Bill McCollum, and Orlando Mayor Glenda Hood served on the honorary opening day committee. Chinese President Jiang Zemin, former President Yan Shangkun, Premier Li Peng, and Chinese Ambassador Li Daoyu sent their congratulations on the inauguration of the park. Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen and three other Chinese government officials attended the opening ceremony. President Jiang’s remark, “Let the world learn more about China” was chosen as the park’s mission statement. Qian Weichang, vice chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, commented on the occasion: “Chinese culture does not only belong to the Chinese people, it is the common wealth of people of the world. An opening China needs to know more about the rest of the world, and the world needs to know more about China as well. The Splendid China Theme Park, reflecting the characteristics of Chinese culture and ideology, can serve as window of Chinese history and culture.”³⁰

On the following day when the theme park officially opened for business, more than 3,000 tourists and Central Floridians flocked to the new attraction.³¹ Across the country, newspapers

28. Tin and Strother, *Orlando Sentinel*, 12 December 1993, sec. A1.

29. Ibid.

30. Ming Djun, “Splendid China Takes Root in U.S.,” Xinhua News Agency news release, 18 December 1993.

31. Annie Tin, “The Public Gets to See the Splendor: Florida Splendid China Opened to the Paying Public Sunday and Drew More than 3,000 Visitors, Surpassing Expectations,” *Orlando Sentinel*, 20 December 1993, sec. A1.

praised the new attraction. The *Chicago Sun Times* commented: "There are no rides and no glitz, but there is a marvelous immersion in Chinese culture and history, including performances by 165 of China's top entertainers."³² The *Houston Chronicle* noted: "Strictly from a visitor's standpoint, Splendid China is a remarkable achievement . . . Attention to detail is mind-boggling . . . Throughout its 76 acres, the facility is awash with color and beauty."³³ The New Orleans *Times Picayune* called the attraction an "exquisite, monumental work,"³⁴ The *Tampa Tribune* enthused, "Walking among even miniature replicas of Chinese landmarks, one begins to feel a figure in a Chinese painting—a tiny part of an expansive space, a pinpoint in a timeline 5,000 years long,"³⁵ One reporter noted: "from an artistic point of view, much of Splendid China is so good it really doesn't belong here. There are no rides, no light shows, no water slides, no monsters, no trips to outer space at this park. You're supposed to walk through it quietly and admire it. Set against all the other thundering tourist attractions of Central Florida, Splendid China shines like a small jeweled Faberge Easter egg in the middle of Jurassic Park."³⁶ Complaints about the malfunctioning sound system, cold food, and too few activities for children were lost in the amazement that characterized the impressions of most visitors.

Amid the enthusiasm, one news release caught the attention of the tourist industry. Two weeks after being recognized as a "mover and shaker" in Central Florida, George Chen of the American Eastern International abruptly sold his half interest in the theme park for \$26 million to China Travel Service.³⁷ On January 15, 1994, an announcement cited philosophical differences over how to run the attraction as the cause of the split that

32. Joan Dunlop, "Splendid China: No Glitz, But Marvelous Miniatures," *Chicago Sun Times*, 3 April 1994, Travel, sec. 3.

33. Harry Shattuck, "Splendid Florida: Splendid China Is State's Latest Offering," *Houston Chronicle*, 15 May 1994, Travel sec. 1.

34. Millie Ball, "Florida's China is Splendid," *Times Picayune*, 16 April 1995, Travel sec. 3.

35. Cindy Rupert, "Park Recreates Splendid China Landmarks," *Tampa Tribune*, 31 July 1994, Travel sec. 4.

36. Michael Browning, "A Splendid China Setting Florida's Newest Theme Park a Small and Elegant World," *Miami Herald*, 19 December 1993, sec. 1A.

37. Annie Tin, "New Order: China Controls Central Florida Theme Park. The Communist Nation Becomes Sole Owner of Florida Splendid China After U.S. Partner Pulls Out," *Orlando Sentinel*, 15 January 1994, sec. A1.

left CTS the sole owner of Florida Splendid China. Two years later, Chen reflected on the experience of dealing with his Chinese partners: "We were banging heads a year before we opened. We already felt that the bureaucracy was overwhelming. It was a tremendously frustrating experience."³⁸ According to Chen, their differences existed in almost every area, from CTS reluctance to bid out certain construction projects to Chinese views on marketing, including the rejection of his proposal to put a shop in the Orlando International Airport. Unable to reconcile his entrepreneurial instincts with the slow, bureaucratic approach of his Chinese partners, Chen bailed out only days after the park opened for business.

The split notwithstanding, the new attraction continued operation. To boost park attendance, Florida Splendid China early offered ticket discounts. A half-price special was offered to all visitors during the opening week, and in the spring of 1994, Florida residents who purchased a full-price ticket at \$23.55 gained unlimited return visits through Memorial Day. After several weeks of trial operation, CTS claimed that business had been good: week-day attendance averaged 1,000 visitors per day, and as many as 2,500 came to the park on weekends.³⁹ However, by the end of the first year, park administrators were admitting publicly that the new attraction had not met its 1994 goals. Park president Zhang Yuanxing noted: "While we had disappointments in the number of guests we welcomed, we take comfort in knowing that we shared this disappointment with every other attraction in Central Florida, due to an extremely depressed tourism year."⁴⁰ In spite of the difficult market conditions, management vowed to improve the park environment, boost its marketing efforts, and do a better job of communicating China's story to visitors.

Splendid China's problems began at the top. Although several Americans served on the board of directors and held many of the administrative positions associated with the park's management, the chairman and general manager were Chinese. The park

38. Christine Shenot, "Splendid China Turns Up Flash to Lure More Elusive Cash: The Park has Been Tough to Market to Tourists Who Are Drawn Here by Disney's Fantasy Appeal," *Orlando Sentinel*, 14 January 1996, sec. A1.

39. Meredith Gavin, "China in the USA," *China Business Review*, 21.2 (March/April 1994): 5.

40. Jill Krueger, "After Not-so-Splendid First Year, Park Pushes Marketing," *Orlando Business Journal*, 11.29 (23 December 1994): 8.

president had no background in tourism and spoke very little English. Meticulous attention to details characterized the construction phase of the project, but management failed to understand what it would take to lure Americans into the theme park. CTS stuck to its successful Shenzhen Splendid China blueprint and ignored the fact that the passive experience of a walk-through outdoor museum park had limited appeal to Central Florida tourists. Moreover, CTS complacently resisted the flashy, in-your-face advertising and promotions that dominated tourism in Orlando, considering those tactics undignified. One market advisor observed: "They hired the wrong kind of top executives, and they refused to listen to the consultants' advice after they opened."⁴¹

Although the attraction became known as a quiet park where visitors could stroll leisurely and enjoy the scenery, park management acknowledged that "the entertainment is our biggest draw. We needed more places for performances."⁴² Recognizing the need for more live entertainment, CTS approved an additional investment of \$3 million to build a new theater and replace a troupe of folk dancers with acrobats, jugglers, and martial artists. In connection with the celebration of Chinese New Year, the attraction extended operating hours, offered new discounts, and gave away a grand prize of a trip for two to China.⁴³ In 1995, the park opened its \$2 million Golden Peacock Theater with an acrobatic show.

CTS also made some administrative and marketing changes. Yu Jiannian, a Harvard-educated executive with a background in tourism, was appointed the new president, and Bob Morgan, a marketing veteran with twenty years of experience in theme parks, was named marketing director. As a result, new public relations campaigns were launched to broaden the theme park's appeal beyond its niche of older, more educated and affluent visitors. Fresh advertisements aimed at attracting the mainstream family market of Central Florida. Among other measures, the park offered a holiday two-for-one admission with a Sprite[®] coupon; negotiated a marketing alliance with Coca-cola[®] and Tsing Tao Beer; and offered discounts for special events such as the Chinese

41. Shenot, *Orlando Sentinel*, 14 January 1996, A1.

42. Leslie Doolittle, "Splendid China Adding Features to Please Visitors," *Orlando Sentinel*, 5 April 1994, sec. B5.

43. Business Wire, "Splendid China Welcomes Chinese New Year with Colorful Two-Week Long Celebration," news release, 24 January 1995.

New Year's celebration and a kite festival. The attraction sponsored many martial arts and karate competitions,⁴⁴ and park managers made an effort to enhance the attraction's appeal for school and youth groups, conventioners, and senior citizens. Advertisements promoting "Splendid China Learning Adventures" appeared across the state. As a result of these efforts, business increased approximately fifteen percent over the earlier figures.⁴⁵ Although management stabilized, and the park seemed to be headed in the right direction, the fundamental problem of a mismatch between what the attraction offered and what tourists looked for when they came to Orlando remained.

To the unpleasant surprise of the park managers, food service also presented a problem. According to a quote by Confucius that appeared on the attraction's brochure, "a man cannot be serious enough about his eating, for food is the force that binds society together." Although park management made genuine efforts to bring authentic cuisine to Central Florida, Americans were apparently not ready for exotic Chinese dishes; initial responses were lukewarm at best. Jellyfish was compared with shredded plastic by an *Orlando Sentinel* restaurant critic. The whole, boned grouper, he said, tasted as if it had arrived on a slow boat from Asia. Roast duck was greasy and fatty, squid snapped back, Mongolian beef was salty, and the vegetables in Buddha's delight were soggy and flavorless.⁴⁶ As the attraction continued to struggle, food services deteriorated further. In 1998, one journalist sniped: "If the restaurant I ate at served authentic Chinese food, then I feel sorry for the billion Chinese who eat this stuff every day."⁴⁷

Early problems did not dissuade park officials, and CTS remained committed to the Central Florida tourism market. On May 5, 1994, it was reported that CTS had paid a record \$15 million in a cash transaction to add 274 acres to its land holding for

44. George Diaz, "Theme Park Has Splendid Karate Competition," *Orlando Sentinel*, 14 November 1994, D13.

45. Christine Shenot, "Splendid China's Fortune Is Beginning to Improve: Theme Park Learning to Bill Itself as a Secondary Attraction," *Orlando Sentinel*, 5 February 1996, Central Florida Business, sec. 9.

46. Scott Joseph, "Not a Splendid Experience: the Cafeteria-Style Restaurants Inside Splendid China Deliver Meals with Little Flavor," *Orlando Sentinel*, 18 February 1994, Dining sec.; "Semi-Splendid Dining," *Orlando Sentinel*, 20 February 1994, Florida sec., 18.

47. Mike Thomas, "Splendid Isolation," *Orlando Sentinel*, 23 August 1998, Florida, sec. 19.

future development in conjunction with the Florida Splendid China park.⁴⁸ Although attendance figures lagged behind expectations, park officials confidently entertained a number of ambitious proposals for expansion. One proposal added a luxury hotel, which would offer its customers tour packages to Florida and the theme park; another idea proposed the construction of an Asian trade center, which would feature an exhibit hall for Asian goods and an office complex for Asian and Western companies engaged in East-West trade.⁴⁹ Upon completion, with 500,000 square feet of space, 200 showrooms, and 400 exhibition booths, the proposed \$50 million trade center would be nearly one-and-one-half times the size of the Orlando Arena and would mark over \$200 million of total investment by CTS in the Central Florida economy.⁵⁰

In 1996, CTS presented a modified proposal to state and county officials. The master plan included an Asian Trade Center with one million square feet of space, plus a 75,000 square-foot culture village as a natural extension of the park, and a 70,000 square-foot Hong Kong Village mixing shops, restaurants, and entertainment. In addition, the plan called for the construction of 100 villas, 360 single family time-share units, and hotels with a total of 1,000 rooms.⁵¹ As late as 1997, CTS remained enthusiastic about its 20-year massive expansion plan for Central Florida.⁵² Nevertheless, a top official cautioned: "We need to walk before we run," noting that future development would be monitored carefully as the needs of the existing park changed.⁵³

Disney Chairman Michael Eisner was among the high-profile visitors to Splendid China. In August 1996 when Eisner and his

48. Annie Tin, "China Buys Osceola Land for \$15 Million; the 274-Acre Tract Along U.S. Highway 192 Adjoins the Florida Splendid China," *Orlando Sentinel*, 5 May 1994, sec. B1. The price tag of \$54,700 per acre was the highest price paid per acre on a tract that size in the history of Osceola County.

49. Leslie Doolittle, "Asian Trade Center in the Works as Neighbor to Florida Splendid China," *Orlando Sentinel*, 10 May 1994, sec. B1.

50. Annie Tin, "Splendid China Unveils Plans for Trade Center: the Center, 2 Miles from Walt Disney World in Osceola County, Will Cost \$50 Million," *Orlando Sentinel*, 11 May 1994, sec. B1.

51. Robert Sargent, Jr., "Splendid China May Expand Trade Center, Restaurants, Shops Part of Proposed Park Additions," *Orlando Sentinel*, 6 April 1996, sec. B8.

52. "More Splendid?" *Orlando Sentinel*, 11 August 1997, CFB sec. 2.

53. Robert Sargent, Jr., "Splendid China Targets Families with Expansions, Animal Shows; AAA Members Can Buy a Pass to Cypress Gardens, Fantasy of Flight, Splendid China and Bok Tower," *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 January 1997, Special sec. 9.

top executives toured the neighboring Chinese theme park, rumors spread that Disney wanted to acquire a panda for its Animal Kingdom and sought CTS assistance with the Chinese government. Another rumor speculated that Disney wanted to collaborate with CTS in the development of a theme park in China. Some even claimed that Disney was considering the purchase of Splendid China at whatever the asking price in order to ease relations with China that had been damaged by a Disney movie about the Dalai Lama.⁵⁴ Although the rumors proved to be groundless, the theme underlying the gossip was the public perception of close business ties between CTS and the Chinese government.

At the beginning of the summer tourist season in 1996, the theme park underwent some sudden changes. President Yu Jiannian returned to Hong Kong along with Vice President Wu Xian and General Manager Ma Qimou. Yang Guang was named the new president over the park, the Gateway Tours that owned Days Inn Gateway West on Highway 192, and CTS Investments Inc. (USA), the development company that held the 400-acre expansion area adjacent to Splendid China.⁵⁵ The move was seen as a step to reduce bureaucracy and consolidate the decision-making process. To further trim operating expenses, Yang fired the park's comptroller and director of administration who disagreed with management changes, and cut the marketing staff from twelve to seven.⁵⁶ Moreover, in order to give the park more exposure in the competitive market, hours were extended to 11 pm, and the front courtyard, renamed Chinatown, was designated as an area where visitors could shop, dine, and watch performances without paying admission fees.⁵⁷ However, after five months and \$400,000 in advertising, park officials reconsidered as the promotion only attracted people to the free area staffed by independent vendors.

Hoping to break into the region's lucrative family market, management added animal shows and miniature cities carved out of ice

54. Paul Dillon, "Eisner's Splendid China Visit Sparks More Splendid Rumors," *Orlando Business Journal*, (20 December 1996): 1.

55. Leslie Doolittle, "Splendid China Chooses New Leader," *Orlando Sentinel*, 20 May 1996, Central Florida Business, sec. 3.

56. Jill Jordan Spitz, "Splendid China Streamlines Staff: Several Employees Have Left the Attraction As It Tries to Become More Efficient," *Orlando Sentinel*, 29 August 1996, sec. B1.

57. Christine Shenot, "Even-More-Splendid China in a New Marketing Strategy: The Park Opens Its Courtyard Free of Charge for Chinatown," *Orlando Sentinel*, 20 July 1996, sec. B1.

to attract children and families.⁵⁸ In addition, the park teamed up with Cypress Gardens, Fantasy of Flight, and Bok Tower to offer a new multi-pass for members of the Automobile Association of America (AAA).⁵⁹ When the park partnered with Tiger's Eye Productions in Oviedo, Florida, to present exotic animals, including lions, tigers, leopards, and pythons, the admission price was raised for the first time in the park's history to \$28.88 per adult.⁶⁰ With a renewed concentration on entertainment, good Chinese food, and a "very relaxed cultural experience," the ticket price covered park admission, a refurbished show, and dinner. Visitors could pay a reduced price of only \$16 for dinner and a show.

Despite the changes, by 1998, attendance showed no substantial improvement, and the park continued to lose money. The *Tampa Tribune* called the attraction a dose of tranquility, a place of serene reflection or a meditation garden; sporadic visitors felt it was a peaceful place to see.⁶¹ But the *Orlando Business Journal* described the theme park as a "ghost town."⁶² And a *Orlando Sentinel* columnist called it "Central Florida's forgotten theme park." The sarcastic journalist described the attraction as either too real or too fake; calling himself an everyman as shallow as one of the miniature ponds, he claimed he would rather be blown away by "Twister" than visit Splendid China.⁶³ The situation further deteriorated in 1999, as attendance dropped to a few hundred patrons per day. The attraction was losing a reported \$9 million annually, although park management insisted it was "very close to breaking even."⁶⁴ A year later there was still no upturn in sight. Daily attendance dropped to 200 per day, most of them senior citizens, and even a drop in admission prices failed to improve matters.

With 160 full-time staff on payroll and more than half of its multi-million-dollar investment loan still outstanding to the Bank of China, rumors circulated that the attraction was up for sale. In May

58. Jill Jorden Spitz, "Splendid China Revamping Park to Lure Families: The Chinatown Area Will Be De-Emphasized in Favor of Big Cat Shows and Tiny Ice Sculptures," *Orlando Sentinel*, 28 December 1996, sec. C1.

59. Robert Sargent, Jr., *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 January 1997.

60. "Splendid China Raising Prices," *Orlando Sentinel*, 5 February 1997, sec. B1.

61. Philip Morgan, "The Pace Is Slow at This Educational Exhibit in Theme Park Land," *Tampa Tribune*, 16 April 1999, Baylife sec. 1.

62. Bob Mervine, "Splendid Spin on Resort: Bull from the China Shop?" *Orlando Business Journal*, 19.5 (6 September 2002).

63. Mike Thomas, *Orlando Sentinel*, 23 August 1998.

64. "Intelligence," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 162.19 (13 May 1999): 8.

2000, Massachusetts-based Brookhill LLC struck an agreement for the park at a bargain price of \$56.5 million. However the deal quickly fell through when word of the sale and the possibility that the park would be razed for housing sparked angry protest among Chinese both in China and the United States.⁶⁵ The park's top executive, Yang Guang was summoned back to China and mysteriously disappeared; reportedly he was being held under house arrest for mismanaging the park's finances.⁶⁶ Although some industry insiders claimed that he spent park proceeds on himself rather than on maintenance, others believed that Yang was a scapegoat for his bosses' business mistakes. Around the time Yang was negotiating to sell the park, the CTS chairman in Hong Kong came under investigation by Beijing and was also quickly replaced. Disgruntled by the chaos, Brookhill sued to force the sale. However, the suit stalled in the Osceola Circuit Court as the company's attorney could not get Yang back to the United States for deposition.⁶⁷

Following the aborted sale, CTS renewed its commitment to the theme park. Cao Xiaoning, vice president of entertainment at Shenzhen Splendid China, was appointed president and CEO of the Florida attraction.⁶⁸ Cao, a ballet dancer, who eventually moved into choreography and management, determined to turn the troubled park around. With a reduced staff of 90 employees, the workaholic chief ordered everyone to perform some maintenance duties in addition to their job requirements; employees from performers to managers, including the CEO, were assigned sections of the park for grounds keeping duties.

Cao planned to convert the park into a show-based attraction with a \$2 million upgrade and sponsor a series of events including the reunion of former U.S. diplomats to China, a gathering of American families with adopted Chinese children, and international martial arts festivals and performances. The park also sent performance groups to other parts of the country to promote Chinese

65. Alan Byrd, "Splendid China Slated for Sale: Negotiations Involve Chinese-Owned Theme Park, Land and Hotel," *Orlando Business Journal*, 16.53 (26 May 2000); Alan Byrd, "Not-so-Splendid Suit Follows Failed Park Sale," *Orlando Business Journal*, 17.10 (4 August 2000).

66. Alan Byrd, "Where in the World is Yang?" *Orlando Business Journal*, 17.23 (3 November 2000); Byrd, "Theme Park to Get 'Splendid' Makeover," *Orlando Business Journal*, 17.39 (16 February 2001): 3.

67. Cynthia Barnett, "Forbidden City," *Florida Trend*, 44.2 (1 June 2001): 48.

68. Alan Byrd, "Orlando Business Journal," 17.39 (16 February 2001).



Trolley Ride at Florida Splendid China. Note the few patrons, an indication of the poor attendance. Photo from the personal collection of Dr. James Yu

culture and the Florida attraction.⁶⁹ With the renewed effort, attendance gradually rose from fewer than 100 patrons per day to a daily average of 300—an improvement, but still some distance away from the break-even point of 500 per day.⁷⁰ But, a year later, Cao was replaced by Lin Bochun, former managing deputy general of CTS.⁷¹

The effect of frequent changes in management and direction and the low-morale among employees that accompanied poor attendance were evident in the physical landscape. Peeling paint gave some replicas a shabby appearance, and dozens of figurines were broken or toppled over. Grass pushed through cracks in the sidewalks, and many of the kiosks had been abandoned. The few remaining staff members congregated around the entrance and talked to one another.⁷² The attraction was so shoddily managed,

69. Adrian McCoy, "Splendid New Year," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 19 January 2001, Arts & Entertainment, sec. 29.

70. Cynthia Barnett, *Florida Trend*, 1 June 2001.

71. Keith Miller, "Big Trouble in Splendid China Part of the Past," *Amusement Business* 113.28 (16 July 2001): 14.

72. John Lee, "American Dreams: If You Wish It Was Christmas Every Day, Or Want to Do China in Miniature, There's Only One Place to Go," *Guardian*, 8 June 2002, Travel sec. 10.

one reporter described his disappointing visit to the park in stark terms: "these potentially magical reproductions are as one-dimensional as the park's poorly written guidebook."⁷³ Clearly, the management problems had become so severe, it was unlikely anyone could save the doomed attraction. To make matters worse, the attraction became embroiled in conflicts that undermined its cultural goals.

Like any other business, tourism is not immune to controversy: Columbus Day celebrations have been criticized for years by Native Americans, and Florida's Sea World is called an "abusement park" by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Several years ago, when Disney announced its intention to build a new American history theme park in Virginia, cultural historians expressed their concerns about what they perceived as the "cleaning up" of historical facts. Likewise, it was debatable whether Chinese history should be presented as theme park material, and controversy materialized in the opening days of the attraction. Despite a considerable number of studies and extensive preparation, no one evidently anticipated the controversy that emerged over the park's rendering of the Potala Palace, the official residence of the Dalai Lama. Furious over the exhibit of the Tibetan palace, the Washington, D.C.-based International Campaign for Tibet claimed that Splendid China had whitewashed history and demanded removal of the replica.⁷⁴ The Florida Splendid China management refused to remove the replica and insisted that the park was not constructed in order to make a political statement, but to promote cultural understanding. Unappeased, the Tibetan group proceeded with its planned opening-day protest, labeling the park as part of a Communist plot.

On Sunday, December 19, 1993, several Buddhist monks staged a demonstration outside the park, holding signs reading "End Chinese Genocide in Tibet!" and "No Communism in Kissimmee!" Four monks paid admission and quietly walked through the park to the Potala Palace, where they stood in silent prayer and wept. The protestors became an attraction themselves as a throng of reporters

73. John Lee, "Not-so-Splendid China," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 24 July 2002.

74. International Campaign for Tibet, "Chinese Propaganda Theme Park Opens in Florida: 'Splendid China' Promotes Idyllic Image of Tibet and Other Cultures," news release, 6 November 1993; Gus Constantine, "China Tries to Change Its Image Over Rights Violations in Tibet," *Washington Times*, 16 November 1993.

and photographers followed them past the exhibits.⁷⁵ A spokesman later commented: "We feel the inclusion of the Potala Palace hides the atrocities the Chinese have committed in Tibet. We feel it is a false attempt to beautify something that is totally ugly."⁷⁶ From the perspective of the demonstrators, the park was nothing more than a propaganda device that used fantasy and entertainment to improve China's image. By demonstrating against the theme park, the group hoped to draw attention to the issue of Tibet and to dissuade the State of Florida from sponsoring school group visits to Splendid China. According to the protestors, patronizing the recreation of China's past would subsidize the Communist regime: "We would hope that the state of Florida would not spend taxpayers' money to indoctrinate American schoolchildren with what is essentially a propagandized view of Chinese history."⁷⁷

Although the number of demonstrators was small, the controversy and protest received widespread media coverage⁷⁸ and some

75. Laura Griffin, "Newest Attraction Attracts Protesters: Buddhist Monks and Others Quietly Protest the Opening of Splendid China Near Orlando," *St. Petersburg Times*, 20 December 1993, sec. B1; Ann Bakkalapulo, "Pickets Greet China Theme Park's Opening," *Tampa Tribune*, 20 December 1993, sec. A1.

76. Browning, *Miami Herald*, 19 December 1993, 1A.

77. Ibid.

78. Karen Haymon Long, "Buddhists Plan Demonstration China Park," *Tampa Tribune*, 30 November 1993, Florida/metro, sec. 1; "New Florida Theme Park Stirs Controversy Over Tibet Exhibit," *Houston Chronicle*, 5 December 1993, Travel sec. 10; Cathy Hainer, "Re-creating China: Discerning between Propaganda, History," *USA Today*, 9 December 1993, sec. D6; Cable News Network, "China Theme Park in Florida Criticized by Tibetans," news transcript, 17 December 1993; David Holmberg, "Is Central Florida Ready for Splendid China?" *Palm Beach Post*, 18 December 1993, sec. A1; Annie Tin, "Buddhists Want Tibet Out of Park," *Orlando Sentinel*, 18 December 1993, sec. A14; Annie Tin, "Theme Park Takes Bow as Activists Create Row," *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 December 1993, sec. B1; Ike Flores, "Checking Out 5,000 Years of History: the Splendid China Theme Park Near Orlando Opens to the Public Today, But Not Everyone Is Overjoyed About It," *Tallahassee Democrat*, 19 December 1993, sec. B7; Al Levine, "Looks Like China? It May Be Florida: New Park Packs Great Wall, Forbidden City and Controversy Into 76 Acres," *Atlanta Constitution*, 19 November 1993; "China Theme Park Not so Splendid, Protesters Say," *Bradenton Herald*, 19 November 1993; "New Florida Theme Park Based on Chinese History Opens to Protest," *New York Times*, 20 December 1993, sec. A14; William Booth, "Park's Tibetan Display Draws Buddhist Protest: Miniature Palace Creates Huge Controversy," *Washington Post*, 23 December 1993, sec. A3; "Hands Off Tibet, Activists Say of Florida's Chinese Theme Park," *Seattle Times*, 26 December 1993, sec. K5; Gren Mauel, "Florida Park Irks Rights Campaigners," *South China Morning Post*, 31 January 1994, Business sec. 2; Mike King, "Florida's Miniature Version of China is Splendid, But Should You Visit?" *Montreal Gazette*, 26 February 1994, sec. I3.

heated responses. One reader expressed her "great sense of loss at seeing the Potala Palace in a place called 'Splendid China.'" ⁷⁹ Another person angrily commented: "While I understand China's desire to promote tourism, I find it hard to believe that Orlando is allowing itself to be part of China's ploy to legitimize its invasion of Tibet . . . It's as if Saddam opened a park to promote Iraqi tourism and included Kuwait as one of its provinces."⁸⁰ A local resident wrote: "Though China may indeed be beautiful, its splendor is stained with the blood-red blotches of the massacres of its sons and daughters. Somehow I doubt that is of focus in this theme park. I guess Orlando really is fantasia."⁸¹ While the *Miami Herald* staff dubbed the attraction the "torturers theme park," the *Economist* described the controversy as "Chinese Culture: Prettified."⁸² The widely publicized controversy attracted supporters from all walks of life. Adam Yauch, of the rock group Beastie Boys, spoke against the park at his performances.⁸³ One sixteen-year-old student asked: "Why should Florida schools send students to see Chinese propaganda?"⁸⁴ A Clearwater teacher petitioned the school board to ban field trips to the attraction.⁸⁵ The son of a Flying Tigers pilot argued, "The Potala Palace of Splendid China is a gory trophy of war. It has no business on American soil."⁸⁶ Upset by the "sanitized, doll-house version of China," one newspaper columnist declared: "What they need here is Tiananmen Square—miniature tanks squashing little ceramic students."⁸⁷

In addition to the Tibetan protest, some Mongols and Mongolian Americans also resented their culture being presented

79. Julie Hodges, "Sad Over Splendid China," *Orlando Sentinel*, 21 December 1993, sec. A18.

80. Scott Meikie, "Tibet Is Splendid, But It Isn't Part of China," *Orlando Sentinel*, 12 December 1993, Florida, sec. A18.

81. Kendra Musselle, "Bloodied Splendor," *Orlando Sentinel*, 30 December 1993, sec. A22.

82. "The Torturers' Theme Park," *Miami Herald*, 18 December 1993, Editorial sec. 34A; "Chinese Culture: Prettified," *Economist*, 331.7863 (14 March 1994): 92.

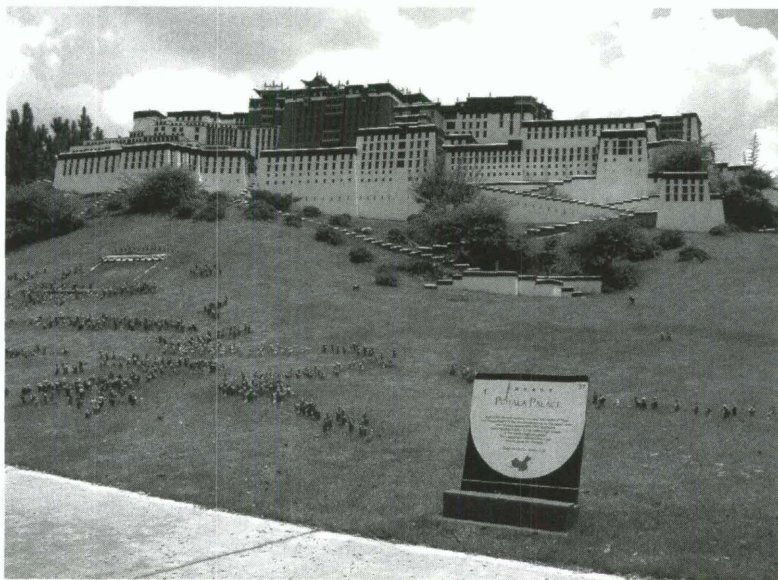
83. John Bankston, "Splendid Mess: On the Anniversary of an Uprising, Park Miniatures Still Incite Big Debate," *Orlando Weekly*, 9-15 March 1995.

84. Elizabeth Churchward, "Letter to Editor," *Tampa Tribune*, 30 December 1993, sec. A14.

85. "Teachers Rally Against Splendid China," *St. Petersburg Times*, 6 November 1995.

86. Daniel R. Baisden, "Letter to the Editor: Theme Park Ignores Oppression," *Savannah Morning News*, 30 November 1993.

87. Mike Thomas, *Orlando Sentinel*, 23 August 1998.



Florida Splendid China's Miniature Replica of Potala Palace. *Photo from the personal collection of James Yu*

as a Chinese tourist attraction.⁸⁸ Next to Genghis Khan's mausoleum exhibit, porcelain figurines showed a Mongolian wedding ceremony and a jousting tournament. All together some twenty ethnic and religious minorities from Mongols to Muslims were represented in the Florida theme park. Human rights groups charged that the park portrayed a false picture of social harmony and contentment among China's persecuted religious and ethnic minorities. A spokesperson remarked: "It's an outrage that they would use religion and minorities in a theme park to entertain Americans, when in fact they are destroying these groups in China."⁸⁹ The extensive media coverage highlighting Chinese conflicts with Tibetan and other minorities no doubt affected park attendance figures. Protesters claimed the park was not placed in attention-rich Florida simply to make money; it was a political

88. Laura Griffin, "New Park, Old Controversy," *St. Petersburg Times*, 12 December 1993, sec. B1.

89. Larry Rohter, "China Becomes Theme Park, But Cultural Debate Remains Real," *New York Times*, 9 January 1994, sec. I.12.

statement. In addition to their opposition to several replicas featured in the park, human rights groups also voiced their displeasure over the apparent role of the Chinese government in funding the attraction, claiming that CTS was a "quasi-government "corporation, a viewpoint shared by some visitors.⁹⁰ Recognizing the park as principally an educational experience and acknowledging the unprofitable nature of such exhibits, one visitor commented: "I don't know who else besides the government would sponsor this, because it's obviously not a profitable enterprise . . . You wonder how long they can keep it up."⁹¹

Amid the mounting controversies, another concern was raised regarding the treatment of the park's 150 Chinese worker, most of whom were entertainers or artisans. An anonymous letter in the *Central Florida Future* asserted that performers were "treated like animals."⁹² Several park employees stated that their activities and ability to move around freely after work were "regulated." While management claimed that park employees lived in the company-owned Days Inn for convenience, some believed the living arrangements reflected a fear that workers might defect and request political asylum.⁹³ In 1998, one group of protesters reported that they had assisted several Chinese workers in their escape from the park and in securing political asylum in the United States.⁹⁴ Three of the Chinese workers were identified as former dancers from the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of Western China. Another report asserted that as many as forty-two Chinese employees had escaped from the park.⁹⁵

Faced with criticism and protests, park managers insisted that Florida Splendid China was intended to generate tourism in China, and that the attraction was not a political park. "There is a

90. William Booth, "Theme Park Not Splendid to Tibetans: China-Sponsored Exhibits Called Misleading," *Chicago Sun Times*, 25 December 1993, sec. 5X; John Ackerly, "China Theme Park Under Fire," *Times Picayune*, 21 April 1995, sec. B6; Mike Schneider, "China-Themed Park Draws Protesters to Front Door," *Ocala Star Banner*, 22 March 1999.

91. Philip Morgan, *Tampa Tribune*, 16 April 1999.

92. "Human Rights Violations Deprive Entertainers at Splendid China," *Central Florida Future*, 10 January 1995.

93. Larry Rohter, *New York Times*, 9 January 1994.

94. Lesley Clark, "Controversy Is a Theme of This Park: Protesters Say Florida Splendid China Is Actually a Propaganda Tool Owned by the Chinese Government," *Orlando Sentinel*, 18 March 1998, sec. B1.

95. Kenneth Timmerman, "Florida Splendid China," *American Spectator*, 32.3 (March 1999): 28.

lack of understanding overseas of China,” commented Ma Shimin, and he hoped the attraction would be “a way for people of the world to better understand China.”⁹⁶ The park’s public relations director stated: “To a certain extent, Florida Splendid China was a victim of politics between China and the United States. Some people, unfortunately, still have a Cold War mentality—anything related to China is bad.”⁹⁷ According to another park official, “The recent tensions between the U.S. and China make the cultural exchange more important than ever. Both the East and the West have advantages and disadvantages. The only way the human race can go forward is to learn from each other. That’s what Splendid China Florida is about.”⁹⁸ CTS claimed the theme park was designed to be neutral, and the Potala Palace was selected as one of the visual highlights because of its architectural beauty and its historical and religious significance. George Chen also defended his parents’ motivation in presenting something beyond the stereotypical images of Chinese as chefs and shop owners. Moreover, through its experience with the park, he believed that the Chinese government could learn about American freedoms and ideals: “Anything that piques the interest of people and gives them the opportunity to judge is good. [The protest] brings forth attention on this issue that may put political pressure on China. In the end, the truth will come out.”⁹⁹

To rebut early criticisms published in the *New York Times*, Pan Xinliang, the managing director of CTS USA, wrote a letter to the paper. He adopted the standard management view that the park was strictly a cultural and tourist attraction, built to introduce Americans to China, and promote tourism and cultural exchange. He further noted the historical fact that Tibet had become part of China during the Tang Dynasty 1,000 years ago, and claimed that his employees were happy to have the opportunity perform and experience life in Central Florida. As the park had generated jobs for Americans who constructed the attraction and were employed in running it, he asked, “Why deprive children of a learning experience in the name of politics?”¹⁰⁰ Rejecting Pan’s argument, a

96. Ike Flores, *Tallahassee Democrat*, 19 December 1993.

97. Philip Morgan, *Tampa Tribune*, 16 April 1999.

98. Cynthia Barnett, *Florida Trend*, 44.2 (1 June 2001).

99. Laura Griffin, *St Petersburg Times*, 12 December 1993.

100. Pan Xinliang, “Leave Politics Behind at China Culture Park,” *New York Times*, 5 February 1994, sec. I.20.

Columbia University professor of religion responded with a letter to the *New York Times*, claiming that "Tourist spectacles like the Splendid China theme park in Kissimmee, Fla., may be legitimately criticized if they obscure a contested history, whose victims, like the Tibetans, continue to suffer through loss of national autonomy and repressive alien regime."¹⁰¹

While the debate raged in the press, various groups continued their protests at the park. In March 1996, a crowd of Taiwanese Americans organized a demonstration outside the attraction to protest China's stance toward the island.¹⁰² During this event five students from the Students for Free Tibet formed a human chain to block the park's entrance and were handcuffed and taken to the Osceola County jail.¹⁰³ A year later T. J. Norbu, elder brother of the Dalai Lama, led another demonstration in front of the attraction, accusing China of showing off its conquest of Tibet, Mongolia, and eastern Turkestan. Fed up with the protests, the park's management refused to respond.¹⁰⁴ After China cracked down on the Falun Gong religious movement, its practitioners joined the picket line.¹⁰⁵

In time, the protesters became better organized. Among the several groups regularly voicing their opposition to the theme park, the Citizens Against Communist Chinese Propaganda (CACCP) stood out. Originally named the Citizens Against Backyard Communism, the group was headed by Jack Churchward, a former U.S. Navy technician from Clearwater, Florida, who converted to Tibetan Buddhism in the 1980s.

101. Matthew Kapstein, "Chinese Trace Claim on Tibet to Mongols," *New York Times*, 19 February 1994. Among all the criticisms of the theme park, the most comprehensive denunciation came in 1999, when Kenneth Timmerman published a lengthy article in the *American Spectator*. A frequent contributor to the conservative publication, Timmerman traced the early history of the park, interviewed protesters, and vigorously condemned the mission of the attraction.

102. Associated Press, "Seventy-five People Protesting China's Aggressive Stance," news release, 16 March 1996; Susan Jacobson, "Seventy-five at Theme Park Protest China," *Orlando Sentinel*, 17 March 1996, sec. B3.

103. Beth Foushee, "Protest Target Splendid China: Missile Test Near Taiwan Prompt a Demonstration at the Theme Park," *Tampa Tribune*, 17 March 1996, Florida/ Metro sec. 4.

104. Jim Stratton, "Dalai Lama's Brother Protests at Theme Park: Splendid China Sugarcoats China's Ties to Areas That It Rules, Demonstrators Say," *Orlando Sentinel*, 13 October 1997, sec. C1.

105. "Clarifying the Truth at Floria's 'Splendid China' Theme Park," news release, Falun Dafa Clearwisdom.net, 2 August 2002.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, the CACCP set up a web site, appealed to Florida School Boards not to send schoolchildren to the theme park, and complained to the U.S. Department of Justice that Splendid China had not registered as an agent of a foreign government as required by the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938. The group wrote to the park's management offering to suspend demonstrations in return for negotiations on five contested exhibits. As the proposal went unanswered, CACCP routinely organized protests on politically significant days, attracting approximately a dozen people each time. Sometimes only two or three protesters showed up, as happened on the 40th anniversary of the Tibetan conflict with the Chinese government. Nevertheless, the protesters managed to keep their issues in the media. CACCP centered its protest on the alleged false representations fostered by the park exhibits and deliberately avoided the promotion of hatred or the advocacy of an anti-China position. The group effectively used students, seniors, and mothers with babies to catch public attention and generate sympathy.¹⁰⁶ According to their own figures, CACCP organized fifty demonstrations in a ten-year span. In addition, the group videotaped statements in front of contested exhibits and launched a letter-writing campaign. Churchward believed the attraction functioned as a "lightening rod for public criticism and [a] rallying point for the opposition." He claimed that the protests sponsored by the CACCP "were the ultimate nail in the coffin that closed Florida Splendid China."¹⁰⁷

Though protesters claimed responsibility, tourism analysts denounced the protesters' claims and countered with depictions of culturally complacent American vacationers: "Your typical visitor is not interested. Cultural curiosity would completely compensate for any concern about oppressed people."¹⁰⁸ In reality, the attraction fell victim to the erratically recovering tourism industry in Central Florida, a situation that was exacerbated by management's poor decisions. As described by Mike Schneider, the park's demise "marked the latest in a Darwinian shakeout in Central Florida's tourism market, where only the biggest and strongest have survived two years of stagnant growth since the Sept. 11

106. Alan Byrd, "Protesters to Park: Not so Splendid China," *Orlando Business Journal*, 16.29 (17 December 1999).

107. Jack Churchward, "Chinese Theme Park Incited Anger Instead of Amusement," *Insight on the News*, 10 May 2004, Fair Comment sec. 51.

108. Cynthia Barnett, *Florida Trend*, 44.2 (1 June 2001).

terrorist attacks.”¹⁰⁹ By the time the park closed on December 13, 2003, it had a skeleton work force of forty employees, half of whom were performers who would return to China. The original \$100 million investment was valued at only \$12.8 million by the county property appraiser’s office.¹¹⁰ According to a news release issued by the park: “This determination [the closing of the park] was reached primarily due to the continued downturn in the tourism economy, as evidenced by the closing of other tourism-dependent businesses in the area. Despite several years of attempting to achieve successful theme park operations, the company has concluded that it would no longer continue to incur significant losses.”¹¹¹ After a decade of struggling for its niche in the competitive tourism market, the theme park finally joined the ranks of Central Florida failed attractions that included the Jungle Land Zoo, Movie Rider, Wild Bill’s Dinner Theater, Haunted Mansion, Guinness World Record Experience, the Masters of Magic, American Gladiators, and Cypress Gardens.

On the last day of business, the park attracted approximately 750 visitors, although attendance had dropped to fewer than 200 people per day before the announcement of the park’s closure.¹¹² Some of the final visitors expressed sadness at the closing. “It’s a

109. Mike Schneider, “Splendid China Shuts Down While Other Parks Thrive,” *Miami Herald*, 4 January 2004, sec. 6B; Mike Schneider, “China Theme Park Unable to Survive in Stagnating Florida,” *Vventura County Star*, 18 January 2004, sec. Escapes, 6; “Chinese Theme Park Closes After 10 Years,” *San Jose Mercury News*, 18 January 2004, sec. 3H; Mike Schneider, “It’s the Survival of the Fittest in Florida,” *Houston Chronicle*, 18 January 2004, Travel sec. 6; Mike Schneider, “One Theme Park Closes As Others Thrive, Splendid China Visitors Say Park Not Well Maintained,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, 19 January 2004, sec. 2D; “Florida Theme Park Just Couldn’t Compete,” *Guelph Mercury*, 24 January 2004, sec. H10; Mike Schneider, “It’s Feast or Famine at the Theme Park,” *Hackensack Record*, 25 January 2004; Mike Schneider, “Theme Parks Thinning Out: Sept 11 Fallout Still Being Felt Across Florida Vacation Spots,” *Windsor Star*, 31 January 2004 sec. F4; “Only the Strong Survive,” *Vancouver Province*, 1 February 2004, sec. B20; Schneider, “Survival of the Fittest: Some Florida Theme Parks Fold, Others Flourish,” *St. John’s Telegram*, 7 February 2004, sec. E3.

110. Mark Pino, “Splendid China Loses Tourism Fight: A Theme Park on U.S. Highway 192 Featuring Miniature Versions of Chinese Landmarks Has Closed Its Doors for the Final Time,” *Orlando Sentinel*, 31 December 2003, sec. J1.

111. Mike Schneider, “Splendid China Theme Park to Close Today: Few Visitors, Bad Economy Cited as Reasons for Closure,” *Tallahassee Democrat*, 31 December 2003, sec. B5; “Economics Close Controversial Theme Park,” *Mobile Register*, 31 December 2003, sec. B5.

112. Dennis M. Blank, “Chinese Theme Park Near Orlando Closes,” *New York Times*, 25 January 2004, sec. 5.3.

pity. It's a big park, beautiful, but it's a wasted investment," a Delaware couple with children commented.¹¹³ A season-ticket holder from Mount Dora stated: "I think a lot of people don't even know it exists, but once you see it, you can see how special it is,"¹¹⁴ Another woman noted, "It's different than just entertainment here. You come away from here with a bigger understanding of history."¹¹⁵ The spokesperson for the Kissimmee-St. Cloud Convention and Visitors Bureau remarked: "Every trip there was a good one. I enjoyed the opportunity to tell the media we had something of that culture here. It was a plus for us."¹¹⁶ A Vietnamese American observed on the park closing: "In anything Asian, there is a part of us in there."¹¹⁷ A retired Illinois couple described their experience: "We loved it more than Disney or Sea World. We are crushed that it is closed . . . It was about the culture of China; there was no propaganda that we saw. Most displays dealt with ancient China. We went away from the park with a good feeling that was more about the Chinese people than the government."¹¹⁸

After China entered the World Trade Organization, CTS reportedly decided to liquidate its non-core businesses, like Florida Splendid China, and concentrate extensively on its domestic market.¹¹⁹ After searching for a year to find a suitable buyer for the defunct theme park, the company put the attraction on the auction block. By that time, a year of neglect had taken its toll: bonsai trees were ragged, weeds had overgrown the flower beds, algae clogged the peaceful ponds, and cracks marred the curving tile roofs. In addition, three hurricanes had toppled trees in the gardens, and thieves and vandals had trashed some exhibits.¹²⁰

113. Jerry W. Jackson and April Hunt, "Splendid China Closes Today After 10 Years: Dwindling Attendance, Significant Losses Blamed," *Orlando Sentinel*, 31 December 2003, sec. C1.

114. April Hunt, "A Last Chance, Then It's Time to Move-on: An Appreciative Crowd Bid Farewell to Splendid China on the Park's Last Day," *Orlando Sentinel*, 1 January 2004, sec. C1.

115. *Ibid.*

116. Mark Pino, *Orlando Sentinel*, 31 December 2003.

117. Willoughby Mariano, "Chinese Treasures Find New Homes," *Orlando Sentinel*, 10 December 2004, sec. C1.

118. Marvin G. Cotner, "Selling Off a Theme Park: Auction Continues at Splendid China," *Osceola News Gazette*, 10 December 2004.

119. Cynthia Barnett, *Florida Trend*, 44.2 (1 June 2001).

120. Willoughby Mariano, "Bidding Farewell to Splendid China: Park's Small Wonders Are on Auction Block from Goldfish to the Great Wall, a Kissimmee Attraction Is Up for Sale," *Orlando Sentinel*, 6 December 2004, sec. A1.

The final bargain-basement sale was handled by Lakeland auctioneer Randy Kincaid.¹²¹ Kincaid's company spent six weeks cataloging 40,000 items that many artisans labored over two years to create. More than a thousand people previewed the site, and several hundred potential buyers, including theme park operators, restaurant owners, private collectors, and curious individuals, registered for the auction. All the items, including the replica of the Great Wall, were sold within three days, and successful bidders had sixty days to remove their "as is" purchases from the park.¹²² While some regretted that they had not visited the park before its closing, a few made last-ditch efforts to save the most notable exhibit, the Great Wall of China.¹²³ However, regrets and eleventh-hour efforts had no effect, and park officials issued a final statement on the closing of the attraction: "To our friends and supporters, we express extreme regret that this action has become necessary."¹²⁴

Several factors contributed to the failure of Florida Splendid China. CTS management certainly bore the major responsibility for the theme park's demise. It is ironic that the managers of a park constructed for the promotion of cultural understanding failed to understand the tourist culture of American society. Their successes in managing the original park in Shenzhen did not prepare them for operating an American theme park in the highly competitive market of Central Florida. They failed to recognize that vacationing Americans would choose thrills over cultural enlightenment and stuck to their blueprint. However, unlike the dominant position CTS enjoyed in China, the company was competing as one of the region's many second-tier attractions, and the passive experience of a walk-through outdoor museum park had limited appeal to Central Florida tourists. CTS's fundamental error was the construction of a park based on their own notions of entertainment rather than a careful study of American tastes. Focusing on the details of workmanship during the construction phase, attraction managers paid little attention to what it would

121. Mariano, "Wonders of China, ' Could Be Yours," *Tallahassee Democrat*, 9

122. Randy Diamond, "Want a Bargain on Beijing? Here's the Auction for You. Everything Must Be Sold at Splendid China Park," *Tampa Tribune*, 9 December 2004, Moneysense, sec. 1.

123. Willoughby Mariano, Wall's Great Fan Chunks It Online: A Man Sells Pieces of Splendid China's Great Wall Replica in a Bid to Save It," *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 February 2005, sec. B6.

124. Mark Pino, *Orlando Sentinel*, 31 December 2003

take to get Americans into the theme park. The park's advertising and marketing campaigns were poorly sustained and largely ineffective.

Day-to-day operations also suffered from poor management. Frequent change of managers made it impossible to develop successful long-term strategies. Allegations of corruption marred relations between CTS and AEI. George Chen, resentful of what he saw as high-handed action by CTS, described the Chinese managers as paranoid and dictatorial. He publicly revealed that he had been pressured to provide high-paying jobs and work visas to children of high-ranking officials, and claimed that many of the jobholders could not speak English and were not qualified to work at the park.¹²⁵

More than a year after the park closing, CTS sold 366 acres of land and the Days Inn Maingate West Hotel to Rolling Oaks Investment Properties LLP for a reported \$40.2 million.¹²⁶ After ten years of struggle, Florida Splendid China regrettably disappeared. Although it had signaled China's headlong plunge into western-style capitalism, by any standards, the attraction had been a complete failure. Labeled as the state's most troubled theme park, associated with passive attractions, poor management, and continual protests, it represented not only one of the most disastrous overseas investments ever made by a Chinese company, but also a major fiasco in the history of Florida tourism.

125. Cynthia Barnett, *Florida Trend*, 44.2 (1 June 2001).

126. Jack Snyder, "Splendid China Land Sold: A Group Led by Daryl Carter Acquires the 366-Acre Property for More Than \$40 Million," *Orlando Sentinel*, 19 May 2005, sec. C1.

Book Reviews

The Handbook of North American Indians. Vol. 14, *Southeast*. Edited by Raymond D. Fogelson. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004. xvi + 1042 pp. Preface, maps, tables, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$72.00 cloth.)

Documentation of the Indians of the Florida Keys & Miami, 1514-1765. Edited by Gail Swanson. (Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing Group, 2004. 136 pp. Maps, illustrations, index. \$12.95 paper.)

Different in scope and effect, these two books reveal the growth of scholarship and interest in southeastern Indian history. In the *Southeast* volume of *The Handbook of North American Indians*, readers will find a comprehensive synthesis of current historical and anthropological interpretations of the Indian past and present. Published under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institute, this volume will remain a standard text for years to come. It is hard to imagine a single work replacing it. The tone and intent of this work contrasts sharply with *Documentation of the Indians of the Florida Keys & Miami, 1514-1765*. A primary source reader with a narrower scope, this volume offers the means for students and general readers to understand how the Native American past can be reconstructed.

In *The Handbook of North American Indians*, Raymond Fogelson and the Smithsonian Institution have provided the definitive reference work for anyone interested in southeastern Indians. This impressive volume is expansive in scope and the entries are almost uniformly outstanding. It covers the entirety of the region's history from its Early Holocene Period more than 10,000 years ago to the more modern issues of cultural persistence, gaming, and the pur-

suit of self-determination. Each chapter is written by a noted scholar—mostly anthropologists and historians, with the former outnumbering the latter. The result is a text that provides local details as well as a broad view of the themes that have united the region.

This volume of *The Handbook of North American Indians* is an invaluable resource for scholars and should be a standard addition to any academic library. It includes chapter-length explorations into the divergent histories and cultures of the five major southeastern nations—Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole. It also includes chapters on many smaller tribes in the historic era as well as the chiefdoms of the prehistoric era. Although most of the volume is arranged according to tribe or nation, the book also includes several “special topic” chapters on subjects such as exchange and interaction, music, mythology, Native Christianity, and African Americans in Indian society. The result is coherent mosaic of the Southeast.

Several themes emerge from the volume, none of which will surprise readers familiar with southeastern ethnohistory. The story of cultural persistence connects the experiences of modern Seminoles with those of the Indians in the Early Woodland Period. Trends across space are equally compelling, as disease, trade, missionaries, warfare, and slavery shaped the histories of all the southeastern peoples. The same can be said for the traditions and beliefs that defined and united the Southeast into a somewhat coherent cultural milieu. At the same time, the volume details the vast range of distinctions within the region. Kristen J. Gremillion’s chapter on “Environment,” for example, carefully and effectively balances the climatic and topographical differences within the region with the environmental features that defined the region as a whole.

Despite the generally superior quality of the essays in the *Southeast*, there are a few interpretive inconsistencies. The historical tone and content of Claudio Saunt’s “History until 1776” and Gregory Dowd’s “The American Revolution to the Mid-Nineteenth Century” contrast sharply with the relevant sections in Willard B Walker’s discussion of the “Creek Confederacy Before Removal.” Some of their differences may have resulted from their backgrounds in different disciplines, but others point to a generational divide. This is most apparent in the discussions of the Red Stick War. Walker’s description of “assimilated mixed blood chiefs” (p. 390) recalls the mid-twentieth century interpretations of Angie

Debo and Grant Foreman rather than the modern interpretations of Joel Martin, Saunt or Dowd. This interpretive divide results from the process that produced the final version of the volume. Fogelson and the Smithsonian originally began planning the handbook in 1970. Although many of the chapters were assigned and some drafts were completed, the volume was never published. Fogelson revived the project in 1999 and Jason Baird Jackson as an associate editor, and the current volume took form. Several of the original authors remained on board (including Walker), and all of the essays underwent revisions in order to take advantage of recent interpretive and empirical findings and to meet contemporary standards of scholarship.

Readers interested in Florida will find much to appreciate in the volume. The prehistory sections by Jerald T. Milanich and William H. Marquardt are uniformly superb and provide a detailed overview of the archaeological record. The historical sections are equally inviting, especially the chapters on "Seminole Maroons" by Kevin Mulroy and the "Florida Seminole and Miccosukee" by William C. Sturtevant and Jessica R. Cattelino. Florida also appears elsewhere, especially in relation to the modern resurgence of Indian identities. The volume contains a brief description of the non-recognized Florida Tribe of Eastern Creeks and of the Pine Arbor Tribal Town near Bruce, Florida. At the same time, readers will be surprised to learn that the Creeks were not in Florida. This is stated in multiple places in the volume, with several authors concluding that Creeks became Seminoles when they entered Florida.

Swanson's *Documentation of the Indians of the Florida Keys & Miami, 1514-1765* provides a somewhat dated and arbitrary look at the history of south Florida's Indian population during the Spanish period. An often overlooked topic in southeastern history, the history of the Florida Keys frequently gets lost in the academic abyss that falsely separates the history of Florida from the Caribbean. Unfortunately, this volume does not address or resolve this issue. The author provides a 40-page historical chronology of the region organized by year. At times, this section feels like an outline or list of events—some events are covered with detail while others receive a brief mention—and it is unclear if the author intended for the outline to be comprehensive.

The centerpiece of the volume contains a mixture of 13 primary and secondary sources on the period. These documents, which are written and explained from the vantage point of the

Spanish conquistadors, missionaries, and diplomats, include an excerpt from the sixteenth-century memoir of Do d'Escalante Fontaneda, a 1573 petition to enslave the South Florida Indians, a description of slave traders and pirates written by Swanson, and some archaeological findings. All of the primary sources have been published and translated elsewhere, while the secondary sources are non-academic essays written by Swanson. Furthermore, it is unclear what method the author has used to select the various sources or topics covered. Instead, Swanson tends to cover issues and events where "truth is stranger than fiction" (p. 75). Had the author included an introduction to the volume or an overview of the state of scholarship on the topic, these issues could have been addressed.

Although the volume incorporates interdisciplinary findings, Swanson's bias toward telling the Spanish rather than the Native story permeates the volume. The final source "Archaeology: The Settlements a Millennium Ago," for example, begins with a statement that reveals the author's bias toward written historical rather than archaeological sources. "Anything about the area 1000 years ago has to be only an educated guess, and could be a very wrong guess at that, for North America's people north of Mexico development no permanent way to record their history." Swanson continues by asserting that "The European invaders from about 1500 on are the ones who recorded the people of Florida they encountered. Before that, historians are out of it, and archaeologists can only reason and suggest" (p. 102). Such a comment asserts that the written word provides the only verifiable means toward understanding the past, but it betrays the methodological advances of ethnohistorical scholarship. As a result, the volume is not appropriate for classroom use.

The distinctions between these two volumes illuminate the value of the *Southeast* volume. Although the discussion of the Tequesta in south Florida and the Indians of the Keys is much shorter in Milanich's essay in the *Southeast*, it is a superior summary. In less than a page, Milanich outlines elements of the Native social and diplomatic world, topics ironically left unexplored in the more specialized volume. For this and other reasons, readers should avoid *Documentation of the Indians of the Florida Keys & Miami* and obtain a copy of the *Southeast*.

Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas: Restoring the Links. By Gwendolyn Midlo Hall. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. xxii, 225 pp. Dedication, acknowledgements, preface, appendix, illustrations, maps, charts, notes, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

Much has changed in the history of slavery in the two decades since Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* first appeared. Scholarly works in the fields of both the Atlantic world and West Africa have fundamentally revised the way we think about the early modern world. Hall countenances these changes in her latest work *Slavery and African Ethnicities in the Americas*, but insists that much work remains to be done. She explains the purpose of her latest contribution to the study of the African Diaspora in the preface: "This book challenges the still widely held belief among scholars as well as the general public that Africans were so fragmented when they arrived in the Western Hemisphere that specific African regions and ethnicities had little influence on particular regions in the Americas" (xv). Hall gathers evidence from familiar primary sources and new and important electronic databases on the slave trade to prove how African ethnicities profoundly impacted the Americas.

At the opening bell, Hall comes out swinging. Assessing the evolving historiography of slavery, she repudiates the new conventional wisdom regarding African involvement in the Atlantic slave trade and provides plenty of evidence to support her view that Europeans bear responsibility for both instigating and perpetuating the international traffic in African men, women, and children: the majority of Africans whom Europeans enslaved in the New World were free people in Africa, and many of them resisted their own enslavement as well as that of their neighbors; in parts of Africa slavery existed neither in the language nor traditional social practices prior to European contact, and nowhere were Africans familiar with the oppressive and lethal form of slavery that Europeans introduced. Further distancing herself from the current literature, Hall laments the devastating impact of the slave trade on West African life. By both depriving Africa of its people and flooding it with increasingly effective firearms and addictive agents like alcohol and tobacco, Europeans started a chain reaction that reverberates today.

African ethnicities survived the Middle Passage, in spite of its

horrors. Europeans kept detailed records of the people they considered property, and in their effort to make sense of hundreds of disparate ethnic groups often left the critical assignment of African ethnicity to Africans themselves. Slave masters and traders throughout the Americas asked enslaved Africans to indicate their "nation." Consequently, these men and women testified to their own ethnic identification. In addition to these declarations, which in many cases survive today in French- and Spanish-language archives, enslaved Africans recorded their ethnicities in court documents and newspaper advertisements for runaways. The proliferation of these self-identifications among enslaved people throughout the Americas illuminates important linkages with Africa that neither the Atlantic Ocean nor generations of forced labor severed.

The book's thesis depends largely on an enlightening discussion of "clustering." Africans shut the doors of some coastal trading points in the face of Europeans and kept others wide open. Europeans did not arbitrarily select captives from random locations along the African coast—they targeted specific ethnic groups and called repeatedly at the same port. The result was a succession of migratory patterns that affected the clustering of ethnicities in the Americas. Enslaved Africans embarked from the African coast and disembarked along the American littoral beside men and women who shared the same ethnicity, or at least understood the same culture and language. Both Europeans and Africans benefited from this homogenization. Slaves worked more efficiently and lived more comfortably alongside people they readily identified and communicated with. The phenomenon of clustering reveals itself in the demography of the slave trade. Hall writes, "although Africa is a huge continent with many different peoples, only some of them were involved in the Atlantic slave trade, and relatively few African ethnicities were brought to the Americas in significant numbers" (57). Hall focuses on four points of origins of enslaved Africans: Upper Guinea, Lower Guinea, West Central Africa, and Mozambique. Privileging Africans' self-identification at the expense of Europeans' imposed categorizations she traces the path of ethnic groups from each of these regions to their final destinations in the Americas. Clusters were everywhere: Wolofs, Biafaras, and Brans in Mexico and Peru; Minas in Colombia; Ibos in North America; Kongolese and Angolans throughout the Western Hemisphere, as these groups comprised nearly half of all enslaved Africans in the Americas.

Hall writes with a passion that is regrettably absent from much of the new literature of Atlantic slavery. There is a concern, however, that her strong advocacy of the databasing and quantification of the slave trade might encourage scholarship that lacks this pathos, which is necessary to explain the holocaust of slavery. Another concern is that while Hall admits the studying of African ethnicities is a daunting task for both students and novices, the book does little to assist readers in understanding the exact location from which African ethnic groups derived, and where they ultimately resided in the Americas. The maps, moreover, are a disappointment. These oversights make the book impractical for undergraduates and perhaps general readers as well. In spite of these shortcomings, however, one thing is clear. Hall commences the difficult process of hammering away at the stubborn image of the anonymous and generic American slave with no connection to Africa by insisting on the paramountcy of African ethnicity. This in itself is an accomplishment, though Hall readily admits, "This book is only the beginning" (165).

Matt Clavin

University of West Florida

The Atlantic Economy During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice, and Personnel. Edited by Peter A. Coclanis. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005. xix, 377 pp. Acknowledgments, introduction, contributors, illustrations, index. \$49.95 cloth.)

This volume includes thirteen essays originally presented at a conference exploring the emergence of the Atlantic economy. To the surprise and delight of the organizers and participants, most of the presenters opted to focus on groups or regions previously underappreciated rather than concentrating on the usual suspects, such as a particular empire or staple good. These essays aptly demonstrate this shift in the conceptual framework of Atlantic history, especially in terms of early modern commercial and consumer opportunities and practices. Although the authors acknowledge the empires, staple goods, and trade policies of the period, these concepts merely provide context in the collective project of decentering the metropolitan core in favor of examining people and activities on the margins of the Atlantic economy. Unfortunately, limited space prevents discussion of every essay's

contribution to a multifocal view of the Atlantic economy, though similar themes play out across most of the essays.

Several essays offer fresh examinations of groups that played a vital, though previously underestimated, role in the composition and organization of commerce by focusing on "the fluidity of the Atlantic economy, its casual borders, and its blurred lines" (xiii). April Lee Hatfield demonstrates how the cultural heritage of seventeenth-century Dutch settlers in the English Chesapeake allowed them to impact the local economy in unexpected ways. Indeed, in her exploration of commercial roles available to Dutch women, Hatfield is the only author to significantly incorporate women into the economic sphere, as traders or consumers. Several of the essays nod toward the importance of African labor in building and expanding the Atlantic economy, but Ty M. Reese takes a long look at free and unfree Africans and mulattos in the employ of English slave traders at the Cape Coast Castle during the second half of the eighteenth century. Other scholars have addressed the participation of the local African elite in the slave trade; Reese convincingly argues that other Africans benefited from the economic opportunities presented by English slavers and administrators who hired them as wage laborers. Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and Thomas Weiss strive to integrate Indians in the Carolinas into the Atlantic economy, using the trade in deerskins to demonstrate how Indians adapted to and benefited from their participation in the Atlantic economy, but they gloss over complications that arose. In contrast, Robert S. DuPlessis' examination of consumption patterns for cloth among English, French, African, and Indian consumers in North America more satisfactorily integrates Indians into the Atlantic economy.

DuPlessis provides perhaps the most convincing evidence for conceiving an integrated Atlantic economy that crossed borders of all kinds, jettisoning the more traditional view of empire-specific Atlantic economies. He illustrates a market for cloth "that largely ignored political and social boundaries both between the British and French empires and between colonies within the same empire" (77) by the 1760s. Of course, when presented as evidence of the emergence of an integrated Atlantic market this assertion demands to be challenged with evidence from other locales, such as the Dutch and their trade in the West Indies examined by Jan de Vries or the Spanish and their tobacco outpost in Cuba scrutinized by Laura Náter. To this end, Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert

strongly argues that Portuguese merchants viewed the Atlantic economy in much the same way the authors see it nearly three centuries later. They developed "multilateral circuits that integrated markets from different regions and economic sectors" by "establishing connections between, around, and through the putative boundaries established by the various states of the period" (160), though political and religious currents within the Spanish Empire eventually neutralized these reform-minded traders.

The emphasis on supranational trade in many of the essays creates a delicious tension with concepts of regional identity presented in others. While DuPlessis identifies increasing standardization in the textile market, David Hancock traces the growing popularity of Madeira wine, carefully noting regional differences in its composition and consumption. Although the "humblest drinker was aware of his connections to the wider world" (39), colonists who imbibed this beverage were "focused more on their own opportunities and needs" (61) than emulating the styles and practices of their mother country. Claudia Schnurmann echoes this sentiment and applies it to all sorts of goods in her examination of the role of regional American identities within the Atlantic trade.

On the whole, these essays represent a significant addition to our understanding of the Atlantic world marketplace. The authors deliver on the promise imbedded in the title, *Atlantic Economy* rather than *Atlantic Economies*, convincingly demonstrating that economic connections crisscrossed the Atlantic world without necessarily having an endpoint fixed at a European metropolitan core.

Carl Robert Keyes

Johns Hopkins University

Joseph Mills White: Anti-Jacksonian Floridian. By Ernest F. Dibble. (Cocoa, Fla.: The Florida Historical Society Press, 2003, 210 pp. Preface, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$23.95 cloth)

In his recent book on Joseph Mills White, Ernest Dibble brings into historical focus the life and contributions of a major figure in territorial Florida, one who has somehow remained outside the limelight shed on contemporaries such as Richard Keith Call or James Gadsden. In this Dibble and the Florida Historical Society are to be congratulated for finally doing justice to a man who argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, played an instru-

mental, if oblique, role in the start of the Second Seminole War, and had one of the most successful political careers of any Floridian in the 1820s and 1830s.

It is hard to say why Joseph White—a man who is simply everywhere in the written record of Florida's land claims and legal cases—should have remained obscure for so long. He was anything but obscure in his time. A noted and vocal opponent to the favorites of Andrew Jackson, he was a populist and a democrat who won most of his campaigns for elected office and most of his court cases. In an era when the Jacksonians hoped to stamp out every vestige of Florida's Spanish colonial past, White was noted for his fluency in Spanish, his study of Spanish law, and his defense of the landholding rights of former Spanish subjects. He left behind several precedent-setting land claim cases that influenced judicial thought at the highest levels. Besides this, he was hardly a silent man, but one of forceful opinions, expressed both in speech and in writing. Yet, as Dibble notes in his preface, this able and embattled legal mind was overshadowed in history by his wife, Mrs. "Florida" White, who seemed to capture the attention of the diarists and article writers of the times much more ably than her husband.

What readers will find in this work, then, is a rather interesting biographical essay not only about White but about his epoch. It is not a particularly personal look at the man. In comparison to White's business and political correspondence, his legal opinions, and his comments on affairs of the day, sources of personal reminiscences are fairly sparse. Dibble has made an interesting choice in organizing his book by making the chapters topical—they all take the form of "White and the Jacksonians" or "White and the Spanish land grants" or "White and the question of secession." On the one hand, this can be quite disconcerting, as the author does not always move through White's career in strict chronological order, and frequently has to backtrack or repeat himself to cover White's diverse activities in certain years. However, while this is perhaps not the best way to do biography, it is quite an intriguing way to look at major issues of the day, and White's role in them.

For instance, Dibble devotes a chapter to early feelings about union and secession in Florida in the 1830s (White came down firmly on the majority side, which supported union). The chapter serves as a reminder that 30 years before the Civil War, Florida was (as the author notes) "as impatient to break into the union as

South Carolina [was] to break out" (62). Again, in a chapter devoted to the Second Seminole War, Dibble highlights White's efforts in the late 1820s to meet directly with Seminole leaders and persuade them to migrate west. Indeed, if there is a shortcoming to this chapter, it is that Dibble dedicates only a small amount of space to Whites' days as delegate to Congress between 1825 and 1837—one of the most dynamic and unsettled periods in Florida's history. Other chapters cover White's close working relationship with Henry Marie Brackenridge, particularly in relation to programs to conserve and manage live oak resources in Florida, and, more significantly, also provide a detailed review of White's legal precepts and cases, and their impact on U.S. Supreme Court precedent. Dibble augments this discussion with a useful appendix that summarizes the cases and their decisions. Other appendices provide excellent supplements to the narrative and aid to future research—in particular one identifying the nature of Florida's colonial archive and another that lists White's published and unpublished works.

There are, of course, disadvantages to portraying someone's life in relation to specific topics. Readers will come away from this work with a fair sense of White's contributions to the public life of Florida. They may have more difficulty getting any sense of him as a person. Dibble does offer various commentaries about White. For instance, he highlights him as a man who "ran" for office while contemporaries "stood" for office. In other words, he was a forerunner of the canvassing, palm-pressing politician of later days. He notes that White had strong, prejudicial, but fairly common opinions about both Indians and blacks in Florida, and was a major advocate for Indian Removal. In contrast, White bucked the trends of his times by defending small landholders and former Spanish subjects from those who would divest them of their property. Unfortunately, these statements about White give little idea of what was at the core of his philosophy—of what existed in his background to prompt such strong predispositions. Dibble might have been justified in jumping into speculation to bridge the gap, especially as he is well-versed in such things as the books that White read. Indeed, the final chapter of the book is highly ironic. In it, Dibble tries to address the question of White the man and husband—and, for lack of material, ends up writing mostly about Ellen Adair "Florida" White, the wife and woman who once again manages to upstage her spouse on the historical landscape. Ultimately,

then, this is a book about White the public man and not White the private individual; but for those of us who want a new look at Florida's territorial period, Dibble should be thanked for bringing White, in any form, into the light of published history.

James G. Cusick

P.K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida

Union Jacks: Yankee Sailors in the Civil War. By Michael J. Bennett. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. vii, 337 pp. Preface, epilogue, tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

If there is one area of the American Civil War that remains significantly understudied it is the naval history of this conflict. It appears that this is a lingering problem dating back to the war itself. As one disgruntled veteran of the U.S.S. *Brooklyn* complained, "The sailors were the first in the war, the last out of it; and last 'in the hearts of their countrymen.'"(x) Michael Bennett seeks to remedy this.

Union Jacks is a sweeping study of the lives of common sailors in the Union Navy from 1861 to 1865. The author, an Ohio attorney with a Ph.D. from St. Louis University, grounds the story in four key themes: an examination of the everyday lives of sailors on board combat vessels, an analysis of the social roots of enlisted men to understand their motivations for service, a detailed study of the transition from landlubber to experienced seaman, and an effort to place the sailors' wartime service within the larger social and cultural issues of the Civil War. To accomplish this Bennett gathered a broad sampling of 4,570 common sailors who enlisted in the Union Navy at naval rendezvous for all four years of the war. He developed a statistical sample by "taking every twenty-fifth name from every rendezvous report from every rendezvous opened during the war," ensuring a broad and balanced analysis of a significantly understudied group. (xii) Unfortunately, the majority of these sailors did not leave written accounts of their experiences. Bennett managed, however, to unearth the letters, diaries, or journals of 169 sailors, many of which have never been used by scholars, and these men speak for the Jacks who comprise his database. The result is a fascinating, well-researched and informative book that builds on Robert M. Browning, Jr.'s studies of the

Atlantic Blockading Squadrons, Denis J. Ringle's *Life in Mr. Lincoln's Navy*, and Donald L. Canney's *Lincoln's Navy*, but sets a new standard for any future examination of the Union or Confederate navies.

The book takes a thematic approach, with chapters examining sailors' motivations for service and noting that few Tars had strong ideological convictions and that "practical circumstances" combined with racial, ethnic, or class issues inspired their service. Other chapters detail the difficulty of making sailors of men who had little, if any, experience at sea and break down the geographical experiences of sailors in the Blockading Squadron and those serving on the rivers of the Mississippi Squadron. Chapters 5 and 6 address social life on board ships, examining drinking, rioting, religion and health and shed light on the larger social and cultural traditions and transitions in nineteenth-century America.

Chapters 7 and 8 are two of the strongest in the book. Bennett does an excellent job of embracing the complexity of race relations on board, particularly between whites and former slaves. The limited acceptance demonstrated by white sailors, he argues, was the result of "basic empathy, pragmatism, and romantic racism." (160) Racial tensions never disappeared, though, and the interaction between the races was frequent due to the tight quarters on board, a situation soldiers in segregated camps frequently avoided. As in previous chapters, Bennett uses the sailors' actions to offer a broad commentary on the issues of race, class, and ethnicity in America during the Civil War.

Chapter 8, "My Youthfull [sic] Emagination [sic] of Hell: The Face of Battle for Union Sailors," concludes the book on a powerful note. It offers amazing detail into the sights, sounds, and smells of combat in the Union navy, following the style introduced in 1976 by John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*. Pushing beyond the physical descriptions of naval warfare, Bennett includes a comparison of how soldiers and sailors handled the psychology of combat and death. He argues that "Tars seemed to take every death hard, even when they did not like or know the deceased," and were puzzled by the way soldiers seemed to accept death, becoming hardened to it as the war continued. Part of this, Bennett theorizes, was because "sailors did not see the quantity of death that soldiers did," and because many of them had joined the navy thinking the life of a sailor would be "scar free," which left them totally unprepared for the experiences of combat. (202, 208) Indeed, Bennett makes

a strong case in this chapter and throughout the book that these were not the happy sailors at sea who appear in the studies of Ringle and Canney, but rather men who suffered under tremendous strain, difficult conditions, and repeated disappointments while playing an essential role in the Union victory in the Civil War.

Michael Bennett's *Union Jacks* makes an outstanding contribution to the fields of the American Civil War, U.S. Military History, naval history, as well as the history of race, ethnicity, and class in nineteenth-century America. It is recommended for classroom use as well as general readers.

Susannah U. Bruce

Sam Houston State University

Henry Adams and the Southern Question. By Michael O'Brien. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005. xiv, 199 pp. Preface, illustrations, notes, index. \$34.95 cloth.)

In this volume, originally one of the Lamar Memorial Lectures of Mercer University, a distinguished scholar of southern intellectual history examines Henry Adams' connections, personal and intellectual, to the South. Michael O'Brien asks what the South meant to Adams and what his views – particularly his notorious “slur” (xi) that “the Southerner had no mind; he had temperament” – meant to the South.

O'Brien begins by examining the surprisingly numerous entanglements of Adams and his New England family with the South. Then he assesses Adams' move to Washington, D. C., in 1877 and the “sustained intimacy” (59) that he established there with southerners such as Richard Taylor, L. Q. C. Lamar, James Lowndes of South Carolina, and Sarah Nicholas Randolph of Virginia. After analyzing Adams' treatment of the South in his historical and fictional writings, O'Brien discusses the relevance of the South to Adams' later works and the reaction of influential southern writers and thinkers to Adams' judgments. This book has little to say about Florida, which Adams rarely discussed except to condemn his grandfather's acquisition of the territory as an act of obeisance to the slaveholding oligarchy.

For most readers the latter chapters on Adams' writings and the reaction of southern intellectuals to him will be most important. The significance of the South would “mutate” (113) for

Adams in the years after his wife committed suicide, in 1885. Oriented in his early years to facts and reason more than to emotion and imagination, Adams later changed his priorities "when he came to think that the world made little or no sense" (113). In his later writings he looked to the South as embodying an important feminine side to culture, but first he gave great attention to the South in his early nine-volume history of the United States under Jefferson and Madison.

Critical of New England culture and living in Washington, D.C., Adams the historian emphasized the emergence of the nation rather than the peculiarities of its regions. In his telling, the South and southerners loomed large. Adams produced a outstanding literary portrait of Thomas Jefferson, judges O'Brien, and to Adams "the Jeffersonians had wished to produce 'a fresh race of men' and ventured 'a theory of democratic government which he and his associates attempted to reduce to practice.'" (109) They failed because they "overestimated human nature," (109) but Adams treated them favorably as patriots rather than as slaveholders, and the southern characters in his novels tended to represent "the lost world of George Washington" (110) rather than the an aggressive slaveholding oligarchy of the Civil War period.

In his later years, Adams "liberally abused 'the cotton planters'" (139) and was quite dismissive of southern culture. But O'Brien reminds his readers that in "the whole corpus of Adams's writing, there is scarcely a culture he did not find inadequate, especially in its intellectual capacities" (135). In fact, the South received some appreciation from Adams "as the feminine side of American culture" (132). A disillusioned Adams became more interested in the feminine side of culture after his wife's death, when he felt that the modern world had "lost its grip on the idea of order and surrendered to the confusions of multiplicity" (129). Adams then turned away from realism and "fell back . . . on the world of idealism—on art, poetry, religion, philosophy, &c'" (130).

Nevertheless, Adams' negative views of the South have been most clearly remembered, so why did twentieth-century southern intellectuals so often accept those judgments? O'Brien gives a number of answers. Some were "troubled by the direction of industrial modernity" and Adams "had fashioned the most compelling image in American prose of modernity's disorder." Others found him "available as a model for the elegiac patrician, a type

with which the postbellum South was much endowed" (146). In addition, the Civil War had robbed southerners of cultural authority and left them seeking a new role. In this dilemma "New Southerners came to concede that New Englanders had possessed the better minds" but argued "that Southerners had had the better hearts" (150). In this way "Southerners took Adams's slur and made it a cultural asset, though few noticed that he always meant more than a slur" (151).

O'Brien's book will reward those who are well-grounded in southern intellectual and literary history and others fascinated by Henry Adams. His focus on "the Southern question" contributes to a deeper understanding of Adams and does so by a path not often traveled.

Paul D. Escott

Wake Forest University

Henry Plant: Pioneer Empire Builder. By Kelly Reynolds. (Cocoa, Fl.: Florida Historical Society Press, 2003. 234 pp. Illustrations, works cited, about the author, index. \$23.95 cloth.)

The Plant System of Railroads, Steamships, and Hotels: The South's First Great Industrial Enterprise. By Greg M. Turner and Seth H. Bramson. (Laurys Station, Pa.: Garrigues House, 2004. 144 pp. Introduction, about the authors, illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cloth.)

The books under review offer welcome contributions to Florida history. While scholars have published numerous articles and several biographies about the Gilded Age land baron and developer of Florida's east coast, Henry Morrison Flagler, much less has been written about his west coast predecessor and competitor, Henry Bradley Plant. Both of these new works on Plant's life and career help place Florida's development into a broader context temporally and geographically. Beginning with descriptions of Plant's humble origins, both books chronicle his experiences as a nineteenth century entrepreneur—a career that spanned six decades beginning in the 1830s. Plant, a native of Connecticut, came of age as an employee of Cornelius Vanderbilt working on a steamship plying the waters of the Hudson River. He then entered the express package industry, a career choice that would eventually lead to his moving south. By tracing Plant's exploits in the

express package business, especially as he capitalized on new opportunities in the antebellum South, the authors effectively situate Florida's development during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries within America's broader transportation and communication revolution.

Each book approaches its subject from a distinct perspective. On one hand, in *Henry Plant: Pioneer Empire Builder*, Kelly Reynolds describes his biography as "somewhat restricted" in that he "attempts to tell the story of a businessman's life as a man." (ix) In *The Plant System of Railroads, Steamships, and Hotels*, on the other hand, Greg Turner and Seth Bramson "chronicle what Henry Plant created" (11). Thus, according to the authors' stated purposes, the books are complimentary in their depictions of Plant's accomplishments, and together tell a richer and more complete story.

The authors share an explicit admiration for their subject, both as a man and as an entrepreneur. Kelly celebrates Plant's "long lifetime of astonishing feats," explaining that, "his success as an entrepreneur followed from his success as a human being" (ix). Turner and Bramson introduce their book by quoting a public tribute to Plant, followed by an account of his funeral including quotes from his eulogy. They make clear their esteem for Plant, observing that his "personal life, like his corporate persona, were above reproach." Comparing Plant's life to a Horatio Alger story, Turner and Bramson conclude their Introduction by claiming their book offers "a lesson in entrepreneurship that time cannot tarnish or erase" (10). Both books are written for a general audience; the authors clearly state their intentions and give the reader what they promise.

Reynolds' narrative is most successful in its attempt to humanize Plant. This is a formidable task considering the scarcity of Plant's papers. Reynolds is forced to speculate—however reasonably—to fill in gaps concerning details about Plant's thoughts and intentions. The reader is persistently faced with such qualifiers as "it must have been," "quite likely," and "surely." Still, Reynolds has devoted much time and energy trying to get inside Plant's skin. For nearly a decade Reynolds has performed as Henry Plant in a one-man show. His intuitive sense of Plant comes through in his narrative. And combined with Reynolds' expertise as a professor of literature, *Henry Plant: Pioneer Empire Builder* reads like a novel.

One of the more intriguing aspects of the story Reynolds tells concerns the formidable stage in Plant's career as the southern

representative of The Adams Express Company. Moving to Augusta, Georgia, with his wife in 1854, Plant worked feverishly expanding the company's interests beyond Georgia into Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. As a northerner conducting business in the antebellum cotton belt, Plant seemingly honed his entrepreneurial skills in what Reynolds—as well as Turner and Bramson—depict as a land of untapped economic opportunities. And like other Gilded Age Robber Barons, Plant made the transition from ambitious employee to independent entrepreneur by capitalizing on the opportunities fostered by the Civil War. Reynolds argues that Plant never really became a southerner, even though he temporarily became a Confederate citizen, purchased a slave, and built his empire in the South. Reynolds offers the keen observation that Plant and his first wife Ellen never “invested in southern real estate,” (63) always living in hotels or their private Pullman car while in the South. Yet, contrary to Reynolds' claim that Plant always maintained “his status as an all-around ‘good fellow,’” (67) he avoided military service in either the Confederate or Union armies and escaped to Europe during the war, all the while protecting his own economic interests.

In *The Plant System of Railroads, Steamships, and Hotels*, Turner and Bramson recount in rich detail the story of Plant's business activities. They carefully move the reader from one business transaction to another, methodically recounting the creation of Plant's empire. Along the way, their text is peppered with maps, photographs, advertisements, contracts, post cards, and various other illustrations. The authors' choice of maps provides excellent geographic context and, together, the maps tell an interesting story on their own. Turner and Bramson offer a nice balance of text and illustrations that should enhance the general public's understanding of and appreciation for the role Henry Plant played in shaping the course of Florida's development, as well as his participation in transforming this nation from a rural and agricultural society to an urbanizing and industrial giant.

Henry Plant deserves the attention he has received from Reynolds, and Turner and Bramson. Each book, in its own way, makes for enjoyable and informative reading, particularly for a general audience interested in Florida history, southern history, or the era of steam power.

Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations. By David Fort Godshalk. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. Acknowledgments, introduction, conclusion, illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. xiv, 365 pp. \$59.95 cloth, \$22.50 paper.)

David Fort Godshalk, chair of the History and Philosophy department at Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania, has revised and expanded his 1992 Yale doctoral dissertation into this important monograph on southern race relations in the Progressive Era. A timely publication, since 2006 marks the centennial of the notorious Atlanta riot, this study focuses less on events in that fateful night of September 22-23, 1906, and more on its causes and consequences.

1906 Atlanta, a city of 155,000, was more progressive in its racial customs and laws than most other southern cities. It allowed leniency in its segregation ordinances, and even permitted the operation of several integrated saloons and brothels. It hosted a large black middle class; more than fifty black-owned businesses thrived in the downtown business area; and it served as a major center of black higher education and news media. As a railroad hub, it attracted industries, including the giant Coca-Cola Company. And people of both races came to Atlanta looking for jobs. Whites and blacks seemingly got along quite well in this symbol of the New South prior to the summer of 1906. Indeed, Atlanta was a model city until an "alleged crime wave" (35) hit that summer.

The primary cause of the Atlanta riot of 1906 was white fear of black rapists who, according to the local white papers and political candidates, freely roamed the streets of the semi-integrated downtown area of the city preying upon white women. Godshalk verifies a few isolated cases of such black sexual miscreants, but proves that race-baiting editors and politicians greatly exaggerated the threat in order to sell papers and win elections. The gubernatorial campaign of 1906 pitted local lawyer/newspaperman Hoke Smith against challenger Clark Howell, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*, and each candidate/journalist tried to outdo the other in sensationalizing the threat. Other local editors, including the famous Populist Tom Watson, intensified the racist rhetoric by offering rewards for the capture of black rapists and by creating a new version of the defunct KKK called the "News Protective

League" (47). Further inflaming the situation, Thomas Dixon's notorious novel, *The Clansman* (1905), which portrayed white men heroically lynching a black predator, had been performed recently on stage in Atlanta. Thus, the time was ripe for a real spectacle lynching or similar vigilante outburst.

In this flammable atmosphere, the sparks that ignited the riot were back-to-back alleged rapes on Thursday and Friday, September 20 and 21. Local whites first tried to lynch a black suspect in custody, but the police would not give them the satisfaction. Thereafter, a mob, which may have numbered as many as 600 white troublemakers, formed on Saturday night and initiated premeditated attacks on randomly-selected blacks at the Five Points. Mayor James Woodward arrived on the scene immediately and pleaded with the mob to stop. He ordered the fire department to disperse the attackers with blasts from fire hoses, but to no avail. The mob instead grew, spreading out and raiding several black neighborhoods on the west and south sides. Governor Joseph Terrell took military action to stop the rioters, but it was too little, too late. Although sporadic residual violence occurred for several days thereafter, the riot itself was basically a one-night event. In the end, no accurate body count could be determined, although estimates range from a low of 12 to a high of 250. Godshalk makes the conservative contention that "at least twenty blacks lay dead . . ." (1).

The long-term political and social consequences of the riot were many and notable, and Godshalk's examination of them is the most valuable aspect of this book. First, newly-elected governor Hoke Smith signed into law ballot restrictions which disfranchised all but four percent of potential black voters and called for strict enforcement of segregation laws, putting Georgia finally in league with the rest of the deep South on these racial issues. Secondly, Georgia became a completely dry state, shutting down all saloons—black, white, and integrated alike—putting it in the vanguard of the Progressive Era prohibition movement. Third, famed northern muckraker Ray Stannard Baker wrote the most influential *exposé* of his illustrious career, *Following the Color Line* (1908), on race relations in the South after investigating the causes of the Atlanta riot. Baker, in considering the riot an aberration caused by black crime, supported Booker T. Washington's accommodationist approach, thus propping up Jim Crow for years to come and dealing a serious blow to W. E. B. Du Bois and proponents of black resistance. Fourth, Du Bois, although temporarily stymied, rein-

vigorated his protest efforts and catalyzed the founding of the NAACP as a result of the riot.

A fifth consequence that Godshalk identifies was the tacit seal of approval Georgia public officials placed on the practice of lynching alleged rapists—a measure that allowed white vigilantes to vent their anger against an individual rather than the whole black population. Indeed, the next time white Atlantans demanded the blood of such a high-profile alleged rapist—the infamous Leo Frank case of 1913-1915—they got what they wanted. Sixth, the rebirth of the KKK in 1915, in Atlanta as opposed to somewhere else, was not by chance but the direct result of the racial antipathy stemming from the riot. Finally, local blacks such as the Reverend Henry Proctor of First Congregational Church and John and Lugenia Burns Hope of Atlanta Baptist (Morehouse) College led campaigns, without white help, to improve black neighborhoods and quality of life, instill morality, promote education, and support the revitalization of the black middle class in Atlanta, all of which paved the way for the arrival of a messiah in the form of Martin Luther King, Jr, a generation later.

Godshalk has written a page-turner which must be applauded for its readability and thorough documentation. It should find a ready audience not only in academe but also among readers in the general public.

Thomas Adams Upchurch

East Georgia College

Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920. By Paul Ortiz. American Crossroads Series (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005. Pp. 382. Acknowledgements, illustrations, tables, notes bibliography, index, \$27.50 cloth.)

There is probably no area of Florida history in more need of revision and reconceptualization than the African American past. At one time it seemed that black history in Florida was headed in groundbreaking directions. Joe Richardson's *The Negro in the Reconstruction of Florida, 1865-1877* (1965) came out at the same time as Joel Williamson's *After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877* (1965). Both studies were part of the first wave of revisionism that successfully challenged both U.B.

Phillips and William A. Dunning's views of slavery and black emancipation. Although Richardson's book and numerous journal articles were at the foreground of a new school of U.S. history and demonstrated the promise of a Florida topic informing an entire school of historiography, authors of Florida's black past since then have not been able to place the state within the dynamics of a contemporary interpretive framework. Thus the promise of future works on blacks in Florida leading to groundbreaking ideas that transcended local and state history never materialized. In *Emancipation Betrayed* Paul Ortiz offers a fascinating and contemporary paradigm that will no doubt force historians to understand again why African American life in Florida was so important.

Without being too critical, a more appropriate subtitle would have been "The Ignored History of Black Organizing." Although Ortiz fails to demonstrate that this history was hidden, readers will understand that African Americans in Florida vocally and overtly organized and demanded civil rights from the end of the Civil War through the presidential election of 1920, where Ortiz ends the story. Organization and protest took place in the face of white supremacy and racial intimidation. Thus, readers will recognize the openness of the civil rights activity and wonder why historians, civil rights activists, and the public ignored this history.

Ortiz wants readers to understand why and how African Americans organized to demand their rights of citizenship, but like current historiography, he refuses to portray the events as a tale of victimization. It is difficult to write about topics such as lynching, interracial violence, and terrorism without yielding to a sense of pity for the subjects under study; yet Ortiz demonstrates that one can tell a story of empowerment, agency, and uplift within an environment of racial hostility. Reminiscent of the work of Robin D.G. Kelly and Kenneth W. Goings, Ortiz addresses the methods by which African Americans controlled and participated in the world around them. The 1990s ushered in new approaches to African American history where black diversity of thought, gender issues, socio-economic status, and even ethnicity were examined with complexity and sophistication. Similar to works by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, Fon Louise Gordon, and Irma Watkins-Owens, Ortiz demonstrates that there was not one black community in Florida, but a diversity of thought, people, and action, divided by class, gender, and ethnicity. Finally, the author advances the idea that

the early fight against Jim Crow was part of a continuum of protest and resistance that culminated in the better-known protests of the 1950s and 1960s.

Although groundbreaking in a number of important ways, some minor flaws are worth mentioning. At times the author implies a unity of protest that may be overstated. For example, in his discussion of the streetcar protests of 1905, readers get the impression that there was one protest in two cities—Jacksonville and Pensacola. However, from this reviewer's reading of the same sources, the boycotts in Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Tampa appeared to be independent of each other. Ortiz generalizes the issues surrounding segregation and the streetcar protests, suggesting that multiple boycotts over several years were efforts to end segregation, when, more often than not, they were about negotiating segregation (121).

There are also some minor factual errors. Andrew Patterson, not J.E. Cashen, was the person at the center of the Florida Supreme Court case that declared the Avery Segregation Law unconstitutional. There were two failed attempts to bring the case before the court, and Cashen was the first; Patterson was the third, successful litigant (123). Additionally, the author erroneously names George W. Wetmore as the lawyer who defeated segregation in the Florida courts; it was J. Douglas Wetmore (136).

Readers might take exception to the author's overemphasis of the Great Migration as an outward movement of blacks from Florida to the North. World War I-era accounts focus on white fear of the black migration north with its adverse effects on labor. As a consequence, researchers sometimes incorporate a view that migration moved in one direction only. While Ortiz acknowledges migration into Florida, he places that analysis separate from the migration north in the text. Whether the black migration north was more important than the intra-migration is really a point of contention. Many scholars, such as Louis Kyriakouides, *The Social Origins of the Urban South* (2003), de-emphasize the northern migration and focus on the movement of rural blacks and whites to southern urban destinations, a demographic shift in which Florida also participated. Ortiz hints at this, but his traditional depictions of the Great Migration cloud his analysis on this important issue.

These minor points of criticism will not be noticed by readers

who do not have an intimate knowledge of this period of Florida history. Overall this book should be greeted with excitement and inspire future important works.

Robert Cassanello

University of Central Florida

Torches of Light: Georgia Teachers and the Coming of the Modern South. By Ann Chirhart. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005. Pp. xv, 334. Introduction, illustrations, epilogue, notes, bibliography, index. \$19.95 paper.)

Ann Short Chirhart covers enormous territory in her excellent new history of Georgia teachers in the first half of the twentieth century. *Torches of Light* argues that teachers helped usher in the modern South as they reformed the educational system in Georgia. In the process, Chirhart has much to teach us about Progressive reform, the New Deal in the South, southern women's history, the history of education, the early civil rights movement, and the history of religion in the South.

Chirhart begins the introduction to her book with Dorothy Oliver Rucker, and African American teacher, and Leonia Clark Williams, a white teacher. She points out the similarities of their teaching experiences in Georgia during the Great Depression—as well as the gulf separating them. Chirhart subsequently starts each chapter with Rucker and Williams, constantly reminding readers of the role race played in determining one's educational opportunities, despite the best attempts by equally dedicated teachers.

In 1900 Georgia had a public education system virtually in name only, with not enough schools accessible to the state's children, especially those living in rural counties. In the 1920s, reformers finally succeeded in changing that system, building schools, standardizing requirements, and educating teachers to meet new qualifications. But this transformation was not easy. Local officials clashed with state officials and with the national foundations that provided some of the funding. Furthermore, blacks and whites fought over segregation and the lack of resources provided to black schools.

One of the most interesting aspects of *Torches of Light* is the collective biography of Rucker, Williams, and other teachers drawn from Chirhart's oral interviews. Chirhart argues that black female teachers usually came from poor to middle class agricultural

families who valued education and pushed daughters to become teachers, an acceptable profession that freed them from agricultural or domestic work. White women also became teachers because it was one of the 'proper' professions open to women. Their backgrounds, however, tended to be somewhat more prosperous—the daughters of middle class farmers or professionals—than their black colleagues. Female teachers of both races were influenced strongly by their Christianity. Chirhart argues that "Teachers saw themselves as answering their calling, spreading God's word by serving him in their churches and classrooms" (70). Furthermore, as they pushed for more professional identity, black women "reject[ed] racist limitations," while white women resisted gender ideals that called for them to choose between marriage and a career.

School boards tended to choose teachers who fit their idea of a proper role model—that is, not only teachers who were known to them, but also teachers who were evangelical Protestants, and who had proven their upstanding character. When teachers and other education reformers pressed for education reform, including standard requirements and certification for teachers, they removed some of the power of local school boards to hire whomever they wanted. Yet, even with hiring changes, Chirhart points out that most teachers remained devout and continued to see their teaching as an extension of their religious duties, thus continuing the influence of evangelical Christianity in the public school system. This history is particularly interesting in light of recent debates over prayer in schools, the teaching of evolution, and the increase in home schooling by evangelical Christians.

Chirhart's central thesis is that teachers mediated the traditions of localism and evangelical Protestantism with the coming of the modern South and the economic and social transformations modernity wrought. Thus, the changes they fostered were not limited to their own professionalization. Both black and white teachers fought for better school facilities, increased funding, and more training for themselves. Yet, black women sought to improve conditions and opportunities for all African Americans by improving their educational opportunities, while white women focused more on training white boys and girls for professional jobs and wage labor. Because teachers were religious, they ensured that schools continued to promote traditional moral values, while at the same time, they embraced change by supporting individualism and

encouraging students to accept new opportunities in the paid labor force.

Torches of Light provides additional evidence of a long tradition of the African American struggle for civil rights that preceded the modern Civil Rights movement of the mid-1950s. Chirhart carefully mines the records of the Georgia Teachers and Educational Association (GTEA). She argues that when black teachers found it dangerous to belong to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and when that organization failed in the Georgia in the 1920s and again in the 1940s, educators continued their efforts to better conditions for African Americans through the GTEA. As the largest black organization in Georgia in 1950, the GTEA supported education reform because the group believed education was the key to opportunity. Moreover, they backed lawsuits for school equalization and endorsed voter registration.

Chirhart has written an excellent history of Georgia teachers that provides insight into many aspects of the South in the first half of the twentieth century.

Joan Marie Johnson

Northeastern Illinois University

Preface to Peasantry: A Tale of Two Black Belt Counties. By Arthur F. Raper. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936. Reprint, with a New Introduction by Louis Mazzari, Southern Classics Series, eds., John G. Sproat and Mark M. Smith. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005. xlv, 427 pp. \$14.95, paper.)

In the Series Editors' Preface, Mark M. Smith and John G. Groat offer a brief criteria for works included in the Southern Classics Series. For selection a book must contribute to a "... broad understanding of the region, timeliness in relation to events and moments of particular interest to the American South, usefulness in the classroom, and suitability for inclusion in personal and institutional collections on the region" (ix). For almost seventy years *Preface to Peasantry* has brilliantly fulfilled all those criteria. Its inclusion in the Southern Classics Series merely acknowledges what generations of scholars have taken for granted: Arthur F. Raper's study of these two "black belt" counties is foundational to understanding southern history.

Contemporary reviewers have the luxury of seventy years of accumulated scholarship, and thus find it easy to praise his study of two "black belt" counties in Georgia; the reviewers in 1937, had no such assurance of its future fame. Raper's contemporaries, long before any elements of hagiography had a chance to mar their objectivity, reviewed *Preface to Peasantry*, and pronounced it plausible, profound, and prophetic. They marveled at the pleasing use of graphs and charts that computed everything from poultry husbandry by race and ownership-status, to the relative consumption of patent medicines by the same categories. Arthur Raper told his sad tale in a winsome way. One example of the practical manifestations of the intrusive color-line was the ritualistic self-placement of blacks and whites around the community store stove. Such word pictures helped to give color and passion to Raper's dispassionate, repetitive, statistical barrage that assaulted the armor of those that would defend the economic system of the "black belt."

It is plain that the series editors need no help in defending their inclusion of *Preface to Peasantry*. This new edition offers at least two important considerations that will serve to make this volume even more useful. First of all, this classic work is now available at an affordable price. All of us who were too poor to buy the book when we first encountered it may find it now within our reach. Secondly, and most valuable, is the very excellent Introduction by Louis Mazzari. The author of a forthcoming biography of Arthur F. Raper, Mazzari offers an engaging picture of Raper post *Preface to Peasantry*. In this necessarily brief portrait of the development and maturation of Raper's career – described by Mazzari as that of "A Modern Realist in the New Deal South," Mazzari offers insights into Raper's personality and passion that he channeled into work that was scientifically reliable and socially profound.

Greene County was what the more prosperous Macon County, and by extension the rest of the South, soon would be; the very economic and social system protected by the New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Administration and local governments, ensured, according to Raper, the creation of an American peasantry. Raper invoked the notion of a regional economy and society of which both Greene and Macon counties were typical of the cotton South. For Raper the "... approximately 200 counties in which over half the population is Negro," (1) formed a "black belt" crescent from

Virginia to Texas. His use of the term "black belt" is problematic, since the designation "black belt" is used by scholars to define the rich agricultural plain that extends from North Carolina to East Mississippi. The topographical and agricultural designation existed prior to Raper's sociological definition, consequently the term has become one that connotes fuzzy boundaries and uncertain properties, rather than the crisp numbers of latitude and longitude which accurately and precisely define the black belt.

Raper saw the diminished productivity of the land and concluded that such deterioration was inevitable in the cotton South and was the prelude to total collapse of the plantation system and thus, the end of the American dream of a nation of yeoman farmers. Other scholars have relied upon Raper's methodology and his conclusions, especially the view that the "black belt" was typified by Greene and Macon counties. By extension, policy makers and scholars have applied what Raper learned from his efforts in Greene and Macon counties to the South as a whole.

So great has Arthur F. Raper's influence been on scholars, that the picture that he drew of his "black belt" from the hard data laboriously collected between 1927 and 1934, has been used by scholars as a sort of scholarly short-hand for communicating about the depression South. Unfortunately, despite the work of James C. Cobb, Jeanie Whayne, John C. Willis, John Solomon Otto, Nan Woodruff, and Robert Brandfon, scholars too quickly apply Raper's work on Greene and Macon Counties to places where neither the data nor the conclusions fit—as if the two counties in Georgia defined all the cotton South.

Finally, it should be noted that Americans of Raper's day were exposed to all degrees of rhetoric concerning the poor of the South. Americans had read of the hopelessly aberrant poor whites in Erskine Caldwell's novels. The Southern Tenant Farmers Union attracted the attention of the press to the delta, and the same year that Raper published *Preface to Peasantry*, James Agee and Walker Evans began their tour of the South. In 1941, the results of their travels, *Now Let Us Praise Famous Men*, further educated Americans about the "black belt." But it was Arthur F. Raper's solid research combined with a keen social eye and a restrained yet profound passion that made his work, almost alone of the works of the period, both well researched and well communicated. *Preface to Peasantry* still informs many research papers and theses; it also serves as a fine example of the skill to which all his-

torians should aspire. It is then, both relevant to modern studies and emblematic of what scholars do. It is, after all, a Southern Classic.

Fred C. Smith

University of Southern Mississippi

The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory. By W. Fitzhugh Brundage. (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2005. xiii, 418 pp. Dedication, acknowledgements, introduction, conclusion, illustrations, notes, index. \$27.95 cloth.)

The idea that we “construct” understandings about our past, though increasingly popular among academic historians, is not new. As early as 1949, George Orwell’s *1984* warned of a future where the government might “thrust its hand into the past and say of this or that event, *it never happened*.” It was all nicely summarized in a slogan: “Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present controls the past.” Orwell’s protagonist, a government employee, had the task of “correcting” old newspapers, so that they reflected the current “truth.” Infelicities were flushed down the “memory hole.” (Orwell, 32)

For all their new-found fascination with “memory,” scholars today struggle to match Orwell’s old insights. When Brundage doubts “fixed images of the past,” he echoes Orwell. (4) Brundage writes that white southerners overpowered black southerners to put forth their own highly racist memories of happy slaves and no black accomplishments (“*it never happened*”) into school text books, community celebrations, state archives, and public monuments. In broad outlines, the intellectual force of this book repeats David Blight’s more powerfully written *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American History* (2001). Blight posited rival visions of Civil War memory, including a white supremacist vision and an emancipationist vision.

Brundage reaches beyond Blight to examine the construction of southern archives, the “bulldozer revolution” that wiped out black communities in the name of urban renewal, and even recounts recent controversies over renaming southern landmarks. This book offers a fine and useful narrative, one that races over the entire southern landscape. The list of archives and libraries in the acknowledgments is impressive. But, at times, Brundage shrinks his vast narrative down to a more manageable scale. His chapter on southern

tourism looks at one city, Charleston, South Carolina. The bulldozer revolution chapter covers just two, Durham and Savannah.

Thinking of Orwell's *1984* might prompt a reader to wonder just what went down Brundage's memory hole. What did he erase from history? It is an infamous practice to criticize the author for the book he did not write, but in a book about past erasures it seems fair to ask what the current generation wants to forget. Brundage mentions World War I, but does not explore its impact or see it as causal of anything. Yet, Brundage observes that after World War I southerners' history became more commercial and less a matter of heartfelt patriotism. In that decade "'individualism and self-realization' threatened older norms of selfless service." (50) This is an important insight. A more careful look at the spectacle of "Western Europe destroying its youth in the trenches of blood-soaked fields" (102) and a consideration of its impact on American culture, might explain why southern neo-Confederate patriotism withered at that particular moment. All war, even the Civil War, lost popularity after Versailles. Brundage comes tantalizingly close to considering the possibility that this great cultural happening had some impact on his story, but never quite grasps it.

Brundage forgets what Orwell most wanted us to remember. While Orwell blamed historical forgetting on the state, Brundage never considers what role the national government might have played in mythologizing the South. Brundage's first chapter examines white southerners' commemoration of their heroic past, the preservation of the "moonlight and magnolias" mythology. Brundage insists that white women created the white South's past, observing that state governments offered little help and white southern men often stumbled. Brundage offers a striking example of this when he tells us that the United Confederate Veterans tried – and failed – to raise \$210,000 for a Jefferson Davis memorial. After the men raised a measly \$20,000. The United Daughters of the Confederacy stepped in and got the job done, "a striking testimony to the capabilities of the UDC" that "confirmed the organizational limits of the UCV." (49) In fact, the women didn't raise \$210,000 either. They collected \$70,000. (Did that include the \$20,000 already raised by the men? We don't know.)

What Brundage doesn't tell us is that during this period the United States Congress spent millions on Civil War memorials. In Vicksburg, a place curiously missing from both Blight and Brundage, local women tried to raise money to memorialize the

Confederacy, but their puny efforts could not hope to match the federal government's economic firepower. And, as federal officers built the Vicksburg National Military Park, the federal government pushed moonlight and magnolias with a vengeance, celebrating Confederate heroism and imposing segregation on park grounds (organizing separate black and white Fourth of July celebrations). The National Park Service even invented the false idea that Vicksburgers did not celebrate the Fourth of July – a fiction Ken Burns made famous in his television history and which Brundage repeats here, applying it to the entire South rather than to Vicksburg. When northern-born federal officers came to Vicksburg they sometimes found local whites seemingly indifferent to their Civil War history. The locals had to be ginned up. The federals did so, to promote the patriotism they thought necessary for the Spanish American War, World War I, and the New Deal. Promoting the whites' racist ideals served a federal purpose. Local whites' indifference suggests preserving a white memory of the past, in some instances, could matter as much or more to the US Government's purposes than to white southerners.

Brundage raises his most interesting issues on his last pages. Academics sometimes seem to think that there are no overarching truths and all "reality" is constructed. "Scientific" history now appears encased in quotes. "Objectivity" was never possible, just a "noble dream," as Peter Novick argued in his book by that title. All of this suggests that one truth has no forensic advantage over another; power alone determines which one gets accepted. Yet, in the South, as Brundage accurately points out, "Certain interpretations of the southern past are indefensible." (343) Slavery just was not a good thing. White supremacy should not be justified. These truths, Brundage seems to conclude, are not "constructed." They are scientific realities. Without the quotes.

Christopher Waldrep

San Francisco State University

Paradise Lost?: The Environmental History of Florida. Edited by Jack E. Davis and Raymond Arsenault. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005. Pp. xiv, Illustrations, forward, acknowledgments, introduction, contributors, index. \$59.95 cloth.)

Paradise? The word's best but only slightly less problematic synonym would be Eden, perhaps—a perfect landscape so lush

with edible bounty that labor is unnecessary, and so warm that folks might stroll about naked all year. Florida is the United States' own paradise, then, as every Yankee land-shopper has been reassured by every Floridian realtor for close to a century. But what of mosquitoes? Not to mention countless lurking vipers of several mean species, and the prehistoric monsters called alligators that feast upon pets and the occasional person? Except for one climbing, talking serpent, *Genesis* includes none of the above. Then there are killer hurricanes, tornadoes, tidal surges, and floods. Unbiblically, then, so-called paradise begs for certain rearrangements, protections, and improvements. Labor there must be, after all, especially agricultural (food for non-Floridians, presumably), so lakes and wetlands must be drained and dried. The piney woods of northern Florida do not suit Eden, either, so they ought to be replaced with palms. Crooked rivers—Kissimmee, Ocklawaha—slow drainage and commercial barge traffic, so must be made straight. Then, perhaps, paradise. Except it will be overcrowded, silted, poisoned with pesticides, transformed into non-indigenous ecosystems, and so on.

In this eloquent, sophisticated, invaluable new book, editors Jack Davis and Raymond Arsenault present all the paradoxes of paradise suggested above and more in one of the best introductions to a multi-authored collection I have ever read. Following are sixteen essays, including one by Arsenault, on hurricanes, and two by Davis, on the commercial slaughter of alligators and plume birds and on Marjory Stoneman Douglas. The sixteen are grouped into four parts—"Paradise Explored and Interpreted," which begins with Thomas Hallock's wise and engrossing interpretation of early Florida landscape writing; "Science, Technology, and Public Policy," including Arsenault, David McCally's able treatment of the Everglades, Gordon Patterson's fascinating brief history of anti-mosquito programs, and Christian Warren's survey of Florida citrus's strange recorded histories; "Despoilation," with three jarring chapters on animals slaughters, construction of the Tamiami Trail, and poor Lake Apopka; and finally "conservation and Environmentalism," featuring Florida's iconic Marjory Stoneman Douglas (by her biographer, Jack Davis), the losing struggles against Ciega Bay's dredging and filling, the loss and partial retrieval of Big Cypress Swamp, and finally, the saga of the Cross-Florida Barge Canal.

There is not a poorly-done chapter in this large volume; all are able and authoritative, not infrequently by historians and others who are principal investigators of their subjects—Davis on Douglas, for instance, McCally on the Everglades, Gordon Patterson on mosquito control, Bruce Stephenson on St. Petersburg and Ciega Bay, Charlotte Porter on William Bartram in Florida, and Dave Nelson on the New Deal Civilian Conservation Corps' rearrangements of nature to create comfortable and illusory public parks. Raymond Arsenault's essay on hurricanes' evolution as "public storms" is gripping as well as deeply informed. It is also illustrative of Arsenault's large role over the past two decades both in promoting and generating excellent historical geographies of the tense relationship between humanity and the rest of nature in Florida.

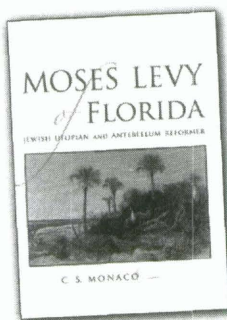
Yet this hefty book might well have been somewhat longer. For example: surely any environmental history of Florida must include a good chapter on Marjory Stoneman Douglas. Her many writings, most famously *The Everglades: River of Grass*, publicized her essential activism in conservation; so naturally there is such a chapter, and quite a good one, here. Another writer, however—Douglas' contemporary (whose life was less than half as long as Douglas') Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings—was to my mind the subtler, more versatile nature write; yet Rawlings is barely mentioned here. More important, arguably, is the near absence of Howard Thomas Odum (1924-2002). With his elder brother, Eugene P. Odum, H.T. Odum was not only an ingenious giant of ecosystem ecology (which dominated world ecological science from about 1950 through the '70s), but spent most of his illustrious career at the University of Florida.

One of his senior colleagues in the zoology department there was the beloved herpetologist Archie Carr (1909-1978), a globe-trotting authority on sea turtles. Carr is the subject of Frederick R. Davis's delightful chapter early in this volume, where Davis seems nonetheless rather uncomfortable in repeated reminders that Carr's important labors in African and Latin America included comparative allusions to Floridian turtles. Howard T. Odum traveled far, too; but he was the Florida-centric researcher—most famously at Silver Springs—also principal founder of the university's ecological research center, and not least, publicly engaged in contemporary environmental issues, especially Floridian ones. Odum appears only once, and briefly, toward the end of this

book, when Gordon Harvey (writing on Big Cypress Swamp) quotes him (from the late-1960s) condemning Florida's "culture of development" (351). Eugene Odum (who also died in '02) already has his biographer. Howard surely deserves one. Until his life and work are more generally known, however, *Paradise Lost?* will remain as complete and satisfying as any treatment might be.

Jack Temple Kirby

St. Augustine



Moses Levy of Florida

Jewish Utopian and Antebellum Reformer
C. S. MONACO

A radical reformist both abroad and in the antebellum South, Moses Levy founded the United States' first Jewish communitarian settlement in the wilds of the East Florida frontier. He also significantly advanced the state's agricultural development and public education. Monaco relates the full and fascinating extent of Levy's remarkable and underappreciated accomplishments.

"Monaco's brilliant research is bringing to light Levy as one of Florida's major personalities. A monumental contribution to southern and American Jewish history."

—Samuel Proctor, coeditor of *Jews of the South*

Southern Biography Series | Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Editor

Illustrated, \$44.95



LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY PRESS

(800) 861-3477 • Visit www.lsu.edu/lsupress to learn more about this and other great books!

EXPLORE FLORIDA'S PAST

A BOSNIAN DIARY



A FLORIDIAN'S EXPERIENCE
IN NATION BUILDING

Canaveral
Light

Don David Argo

Jacob Summerlin



King of the Crackers

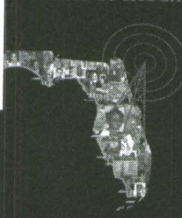
Joe A. Martinez, Jr. and J. Mark Martinez

THE ST. JOHNS
FROM THE MARSHLANDS
TO THE ATLANTIC



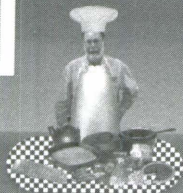
GEORGE F. AND "HOT LIPS" HARBELL
AND
JUNA UEBER

WEIRD FLORIDA II
IN A STATE OF SHOCK



ELIOT KLEINBERG

SOUTHERN COOKING
A MAN'S DOMAIN



Nick Wynne



The Popular Book Division
of the FHS Press



FLORIDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

435 Brevard Avenue
Cocoa, Florida 32922
(321) 690-0099

sales@floridabooks.net

Telephone orders & purchase orders accepted

<http://www.floridabooks.net/catalog/>

The Florida Historical Society

The Historical Society of Florida, 1856
The Florida Historical Society, successor, 1902
The Florida Historical Society, incorporated, 1905



FLORIDA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

OFFICERS

Robert A. Taylor, *President*
Samuel J. Boldrick, *Vice-President*
Theodore Van Itallie, *Immediate Past President*

José B. Fernández, *President-Elect*
Patricia Bartlett, *Secretary*

DIRECTORS

Benjamin Brotemarkle, Titusville
Mary Ann Brown, Jacksonville
Ted Burrows, Fort Pierce
Harold Cardwell, Daytona Beach
Ernest Dibble, St. Petersburg
Judy Duda, Slavia
Leonard Lempel, Daytona Beach

Tom McFarland, Merritt Island
Charles E. McPherson, The Villages
Jean McNary, Dade City
Debi Murray, Palm Beach Gardens
Richard Moorhead, Winter Park
Richard S. Prescott, Fort Myers
Larry E. Rivers, Tallahassee
Robert E. Snyder, Lutz

ex-officio:

David Paterno, Florida Historical Library Foundation
Perry D. West, Rossetter House Foundation

STAFF

Lewis N. Wynne, *Executive Director*
Barbara West, *Associate Director*
Debra T. Wynne, *Archivist*

Dating its origins to St. Augustine in 1856, the Florida Historical Society is the oldest existing cultural organization in Florida and serves as the only statewide historical society. The Society is dedicated to the preservation of Florida's past through the collection, archival maintenance, and publication of historical documents and photographs; to scholarly research and publication through the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, and a variety of awards for the researching and publishing of Florida history; and to public history, historic preservation, and youth education through *Journeys for the Junior Historian*, the Society's annual meeting, awards recognizing the teaching of Florida history, and the Print Shoppe—a book and gift store offering over five hundred texts in Florida history.

The Society's official headquarters and the Field Library of Florida History are located in Cocoa's historic United States Post Office, built in 1939. The Society's research library houses over eight hundred rare maps, six thousand volumes of Floridiana, and an extensive collection of documents relating to Florida history and genealogy. Further information about the Florida Historical Society may be found on the internet at (<http://www.florida-historical-soc.org>).

