



Freedom, Opportunity and Hope – The Legacy of Ybor City and Tampa

The public/private Ybor City mural project was designed and produced under the artistic direction of muralist Michael Parker, supported by community volunteers and art students from Hillsborough Community College Ybor Campus. The mural covers 12,000 square feet of surface area, the largest outdoor original artwork in the state of Florida. www.yborartproject.com

The design incorporates three integrating themes and six individual messages reflecting the experience of the Ybor National Historic Landmark District, past and present. The integrating themes are:

- **The Journey through Life:** At the far left, an immigrant family stands at the beginning of their American journey. An uncertain starting point of great hope and great risk. As the viewer scans from left to right, the scenes accelerate in tempo and complexity, as does life, to a critical point at the center where past and present pressures and destinies merge. Continuing right of the center point carries the viewer through a reflective phase and ultimately to the peace and security of home and family.
- **The Conflict between Tradition and Progress:** Many of the people depicted in the mural faced hard choices between clinging to the past or reaching for tomorrow. The internal conflicts include the tension between Spanish and Cuban citizens during the Cuban Revolution, the struggle for equality among the black population, the changing role of women, the class conflict between management and working class and the desire to stay near home while at the same time hungering for new experience and opportunity.
- **The American Experience:** Throughout this mural shine the values of our nation – a place people from many nations came to enjoy freedom – a place people from many nations came to find economic opportunity – and a place people from many nations came to secure hope for future generations. There is no better example of successful assimilation of vastly different cultures within the United States. This is a legacy to treasure.

Note that the most prominent faces in the design are two young women. The artist and the community who contributed their thoughts felt strongly that the piece illustrate that our rich heritage is more than a story hidden in books or museums and cataloged as “the past.” It is rather a foundation upon which we stand today – a very human story continuing to unfold through the living, as can be seen just a few blocks to the north in the everyday activities of Ybor City, our National Historic Landmark District.



Section A: Opportunity! The start point for our journey into an uncertain future

1. **“El Reloj”** – This iconic clock regulated activity within the Ybor City community. It drove the rhythms of the factories as well as the cycle of everyday life. Today the restored clock tower graces the top of the **J.C. Newman Cigar Factory** at 2701 North 16th Street (just north of I-4). In this mural El Reloj represents the patterns of a working class town (or the challenges of regimentation in a Latin community!) as well as the urgency associated with knowing there are only so many hours in a day – or a life.
2. **Tampa Skyline**: The modern skyline at the left extreme of the mural is an echo of the actual Tampa skyline about a mile to the West. It represents the inseparability of greater Tampa with Ybor City. It was the opportunity to work in Ybor’s **cigar factories** that brought thousands of immigrants to fuel regional development. As Tampa moves into the future, the historic district will remain an integral part of the downtown area, connected to Channelside via Adamo Drive.
3. **Immigrant Family**: The grouping represents the vulnerability, anxiety and optimism of those who left everything familiar behind in the hopes of building a better life. The family represents a fundamental desire of all mankind for freedom, security and opportunity -- the promise of America. The image is taken from the **“Immigrant Statue”** in Centennial Park across from the **Ybor Museum** on 8th Ave.
4. **Ship**: The ship represents globalization from the early 1800’s, a sweeping evolution that has accelerated to the present day. As travel increased, cultures began blending more, foreign wars involved more nations and economies and markets became more interdependent. Ybor City and Tampa were discovered by an international fruit company from New York in search of **guava**. The cigar industry that made Ybor City and Tampa the Cigar Capital of the world was based on leaf arriving from Cuba by ship, with finished products departing by train. Teddy Roosevelt’s **Rough Riders** staged from Tampa on the way to Cuba because of the ship/train convergence. Across the street from this mural is the **Port of Tampa** – currently the largest cargo port in the state of Florida.



Section B: Diversity, Assimilation and Harmony

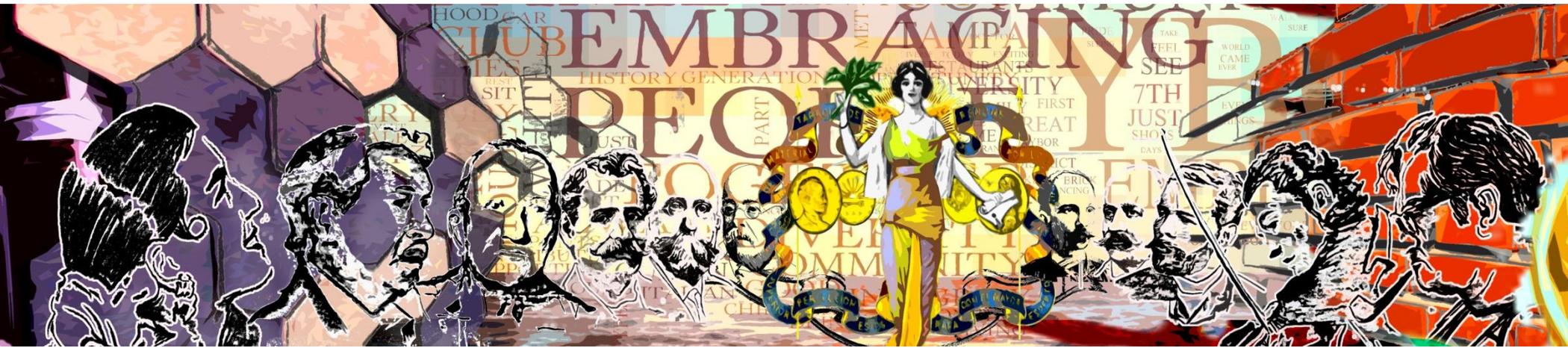
Nowhere else in the United States can we find as compelling a story of the blending of so many different people and cultures into one society. While individual traditions were preserved in the different social clubs and families, everyone coalesced into one community on the floors of factories, city streets and dance halls. This tradition of acceptance and tolerance continues today on the streets of Ybor City.

1. **Equalizer:** The bars of the equalizer represent the many different cultures, races, and personalities that blended on the streets of Ybor City. This is often called the “*paella*” signature of Tampa’s Latin Quarter. The equalizer also emphasizes the strong role that music and the arts played in spicing up life in a working class town. Music and dancing were the attraction to the chaperoned events regularly conducted within the individual social clubs. The ***Cuban, Italian, Centro Asturiano and Marti-Maceo social clubs*** in Ybor City are still operating and open to the public.
2. **Trademark Ybor City Streetlights:** The line of streetlights illustrates the “paseo” or walk through city streets that was a tradition combining fresh air and exercise with the opportunity to mingle with one’s neighbors. The streetlight design remains today as a trademark image of Ybor City. The “*Septima Walk*” along 7th Avenue and appeal of the “paseo” or café atmosphere remains a signature of Ybor City, in various configurations depending on the time of day or night.
3. **European Presence:** Although considered the “Latin Quarter,” much of Ybor City’s retail activity was run by Europeans from Germany, Romania, Hungary and other countries. These immigrants, largely of the Jewish faith, operated the groceries, haberdasheries, furnishing stores and eateries of the industrial town. Many buildings, such as the ***Buchman*** building depicted here, still reflect that heritage. Descendants through generations remain actively engaged in the business of the district.



Section C: Each of Us Can Achieve – Adversity Overcome in the Past, Present, and Future

1. **Dr. Frank Adamo**: Dr. Adamo is the American hero for which Highway 60 (1st Avenue) is named. Born in Ybor City to an immigrant Italian family in 1893, Frank worked in the cigar factories before ultimately becoming a doctor and joining the Army. He survived three years of captivity in Japanese POW camps after the fall of Corregidor during WWII and is credited with a treatment for gangrene that saved countless limbs and lives. Dr. Frank Adamo epitomizes compassion and service and is a historic example of what can be achieved within a lifetime with hard work and sacrifice. His gaze is to the left of the image – to our past.
2. **The Face of Today's Challenges**: The center profile illustrates the humanity, compassion and service exemplified by Frank Adamo in a contemporary context. Today's sons and daughters of Tampa are reaching for education at Hillsborough Community College, the University of South Florida, the University of Tampa and other local academic and tech training centers. Many serve the community through outreach programs and community service organizations. A talented few contributed to design and produce this mural. This image represents today's youth working to make the most of their talent and potential.
3. **Tony Pizzo**: "Mayor" Pizzo illustrates the power of vision and leadership to inspire citizens to rise above their current situation and reach for a better tomorrow. Known best for his love of Ybor City and vivid description of what Tampa could become in the future, Tony Pizzo was role model and motivator for people aspiring to improve themselves and their community. Read his **1952 vision** for Ybor City at www.yborartproject.com . "Mayor" Pizzo looks off to the East – toward our future.



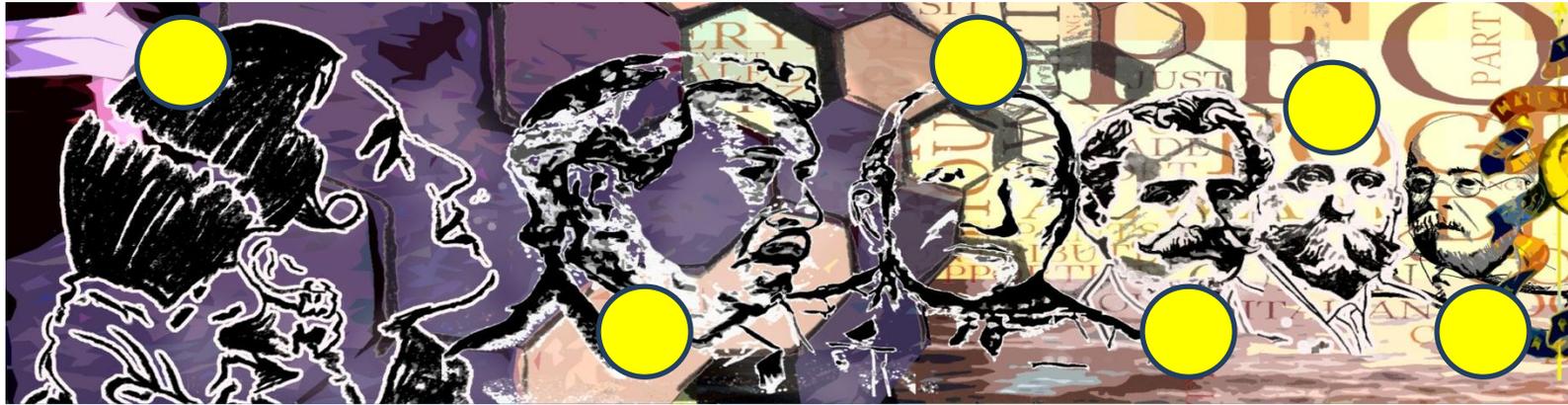
Section D: Personalities of Ybor City – A Salute to Our Heritage

This section highlights exceptional personalities who gave form and flavor to the Cigar City. The images are outlines rather than full portraits to suggest that although these lives have passed, their impact endures. Some were craftsmen, some were business people, some were community leaders and some were all. Those left of center were “Builders and Designers.” Those to the right of center were “Activists and Artists.” Surrounding the images are the traditional bricks and hexagonal stones of Ybor and the word collage comes from the strongest themes associated with Ybor City in current social media. The central figure is a collage of historic cigar labels and resembles the scales of justice – an illustration of the decisions we all have to make in the critical central time of our lives when we choose our destiny.

There are 11 personalities represented here. The choice of who to honor was undertaken through a series of community workshops and student research and ultimately determined by the artist. The work is not a formal history but rather an artistic expression combining elements of history and past/present human experience.

There are many other individuals worthy of illustration within the composition, but only a handful could be included as representatives of the many who gave our community form, substance and humanity. Surely many lively debates will center on the “final 11” and the many other notable personalities equally deserving of the honor.

There are three complementary segments of this section. Each are highlighted in the pages that follow



Section D-1: Builders and Designers

1. **Adela Gonzmart:** Beloved “First Lady of Ybor City,” Adela was heir to the ***Columbia Restaurant*** family business, graduate of the Julliard School of Music and lifelong champion of civility and culture in the historic district. Born just a few blocks away from the restaurant, Adela achieved prominence as Founder of the ***Ballet Folklorico***, Washington Press Club Hispanic Woman of the Year in 1992, three-time president of the ***Ybor Chamber of Commerce*** and president of the ***Ybor City Museum Society***. The Columbia remains an Ybor institution.
2. **Dr. Henry Fernandez:** Five-term President of Ybor Chamber of Commerce and champion of Ybor City as a tourist destination. In 1957, after noting, “we have one great attraction that has gone unnoticed and undeveloped ... and that is Ybor City,” he led a team to New Orleans to discuss historic tourism with the ***Vieux Carre Commission***. Subsequent to this trip, he garnered support from Florida Representative Sam Gibbons to create the ***Barrio Latino Commission*** (BLC) in Tampa. The BLC remains the protector of the architectural integrity of Ybor City today.
3. **Arturo Fuente:** Founder of ***Fuente Cigar Company***, Arturo embodies the “never say die” persistence of “Cigar City” pioneers facing economic, political and natural disasters. Forced to rebuild repeatedly after depression, war and fire ruined the business he began in 1912, the Fuente family remains prosperous today in the US and Dominican Republic, with headquarters now in a historic Ybor City cigar building.
4. **Ignacio Haya:** Cigar industry pioneer along with New York partner Serafin Sanchez and fellow Ybor pioneer Vicente Martinez Ybor. Holder of Permit #1, Haya produced the very first cigar in an Ybor factory on April 13, 1886. He helped found and served as President of Ybor City’s first cultural social club, the ***Centro Español***. The Haya factory no longer exists but the Centro Español, rebuilt after a fire in 1912, remains.
5. **Gavino Gutierrez:** Civil engineer and close associate and friend of Vicente Martinez-Ybor who designed the layout of Ybor City and ***Tampa Heights*** for the cigar industry. Initially impressed with the Tampa area as perfect for the guava fruit industry, Gutierrez saw the value of a deep port, tropical climate, rail access and proximity to Cuba as key attributes of a cigar manufacturing center. Ybor and Haya, among others, agreed.
6. **Don Vicente Martinez-Ybor:** Venerable “Founder of Ybor City.” Decisive and aggressive, Ybor bought land, built his factory, started a land development office and founded the ***Cherokee Social Club***, where notables such as Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Warren Harding visited. Ybor’s cigar factory, the Cherokee Club and land office still stand (Scientology Center, El Pasaje and ***Don Vicente Hotel***, respectively).



Section D-2: The Central Figure

Commanding this section is a female figure with arms extended as if to represent the scales of justice. Her pose symbolizes choices we weigh in making life decisions. The handful of tobacco leaves in her right hand represent labor, industry, material wealth and possession - the security of home and employment. The scroll in her left hand represents education, aspiration, art, creativity, and exploration - growth, adventure and change. She is surrounded by words that are most often used today in conversation and social media about Ybor City. Elements of three different Ybor City cigar labels comprise this section:

1. **Haya Sanchez**: The four coins were on the label of the first cigar made in Ybor City.
2. **Hav-A-Tampa**: Founded in 1902, the Hav-A-Tampa brand came to symbolize the fusion of Tampa with the cigar industry. The company employed over 500 employees until closing in 2009, when federal taxes increased 800%. The Hav-A-Tampa cigar is still being produced – in Puerto Rico. The last remaining large scale cigar manufacturing company in Tampa is J.C. Newman Cigar Co. with about 150 employees. Executive VP Bobby Newman describes his company as, “last of the Mohicans.”
3. **Gonzalez Habano**: Contemporary label for Master Roller **Wallace Reyes** in Ybor City. Wallace recently entered the Guinness Book of World records for producing the world’s longest cigar. He may be found today in Ybor City where he hand crafts his cigars and lectures on the history of cigar making and Ybor City.



Section D-3: Activists and Artists

1. **Jose Marti**: Firebrand revolutionary and orator known as the “George Washington of Cuba.” Marti visited Tampa urging support for Cuban independence over 20 times and spoke to crowds from the steps of Ybor cigar factories. Although a passionate subject, workers of both Spanish and Cuban descent set their differences aside in the community and factory floor – they were American first and foremost. Today a ***Marti memorial*** stands across the street from the factory where Marti spoke, on the site of the Pedroso home where he stayed on visits.
2. **Eduardo Manrara**: Vicente Martinez-Ybor brought industry and Gavino Gutierrez planned the city, but Manrara was the motivating force to develop the district. With Ybor’s help, he established the ***Ybor City Land and Improvement Company*** (which then became the Gonzalez clinic and is now the Don Vicente Hotel). Under his leadership the company built houses and factories and worked incentive packages with the Tampa Board of Trade to entice investment. His innovative efforts provided the spark to turn vision and potential into a thriving industrial city.
3. **Antonio Maceo Grajales**: Often overlooked, Maceo was second-in-command of the Cuban Revolutionary Army. A professional soldier, Maceo stood as role model and hero for black Cubans within Tampa. He illustrates that within a society of mixed race and culture; there can be cohesion and shared leadership despite prejudice. It is a story important to our heritage as a city and nation. Maceo’s heroism and the solidarity of white and black Cuban patriots are themes preserved today by the ***La Unión Martí-Maceo*** social club still operating in Ybor City.
4. **Cesar Gonzmart**: Cesar, Adela’s husband, was a professional violinist, band leader and activist for Ybor as well as Cuban humanitarian issues. His passion helped build the Gonzmart family business into the large corporation of today, despite skepticism from many about his artistic nature. Cesar’s passion for Ybor led to the founding of the current Ybor City Museum and several aggressive community development plans. He represents both the activist and artistic nature of many who gave vitality and flair to Ybor City and Tampa.
5. **Frank Costantino**: Frank represents the pride, skill and compassion of the craftsmen who built Tampa. Born in Ybor after his parents emigrated from Sicily, Frank took up his father’s stone cutting business. A “man of tradition” as well as a humanist who took in the homeless and orphaned. Frank’s life illustrates the ethic of hard work and high standards. These traits, much like the stone Frank worked, form the foundation of Ybor, Tampa and our national economy.



Section E: Triumph of the Human Spirit and Power of Free Speech

The previous section highlighted “doers” – those who brought industry to Tampa Bay and those who built the community around it. This section recognizes less tangible human factors that move a free nation forward and are so deeply interwoven in the heritage of Ybor City.

1. **Paulina Pedroso:** Jose Marti visited Ybor City to speak of a free Cuba from the steps of our cigar factories. During those visits he stayed with the Pedroso family. The food was good, the hospitality warm and the security comforting. On the site of the old Pedroso home now stands a monument to Marti. Paulina is included in the mural to emphasize the strong role of women in Ybor’s history. Her legacy covers her care for the “father of Cuban independence” as well as a colorful vignette of her taking off her petticoats and tossing them at workers she chastised for failing to support the revolution.
2. **The Face of Today’s Youth:** Mirroring the contemporary face at the other end of the mural, this profile communicates the spirit and resolve of new generations of citizens overcoming gender, socio/economic and racial stereotypes. The profile illustrates that the spirit of Paulina lives in the present. Strong people, both men and women, will define our future as in our past. Of all the portraits, this one has the greatest direct eye contact. Her message is simple – “if I can do it so can you.”
3. **Victoriano Manteiga:** Victoriano was a “**Lector**” on the floors of Ybor City cigar factories. The Lector was a combination of celebrity, actor, orator, newsman and editorialist who read novels, news and political commentary to the workers. Victoriano represents the power of ideas and the exercise of free speech that generated controversy as well as cohesiveness among citizens of many races and cultures. His legacy lives on in the **La Gaceta** newspaper he founded - the nation’s only tri-lingual newspaper and oldest continuously operating minority-owned publication in Florida. His gaze is to the right of the image, toward the future.



Section F: New Horizons

The right end of the mural depicts a father and his daughter moving toward the future. The traditional *casitas* of Ybor are seen at the left, and the sands of a beach and a new horizon lie ahead. There is no story to paint in the space in front of this family – just sand, water and sky. Much like the immigrant family at the far left end of the mural, these people know from where they came and what they want from life but there is much unknown about the future.

While times are different, we share the same desire for the dignity, opportunity, and privilege of living in a free country that brought waves of immigrants to Ybor City and Tampa. We are connected through time as a nation of dreams and hard work, where all are encouraged to make the most of their talent to make a better life for themselves and those they care about.

This is the real story of Ybor City, National Historic Landmark District, proud historic foundation of Tampa and shining example of the American Dream.