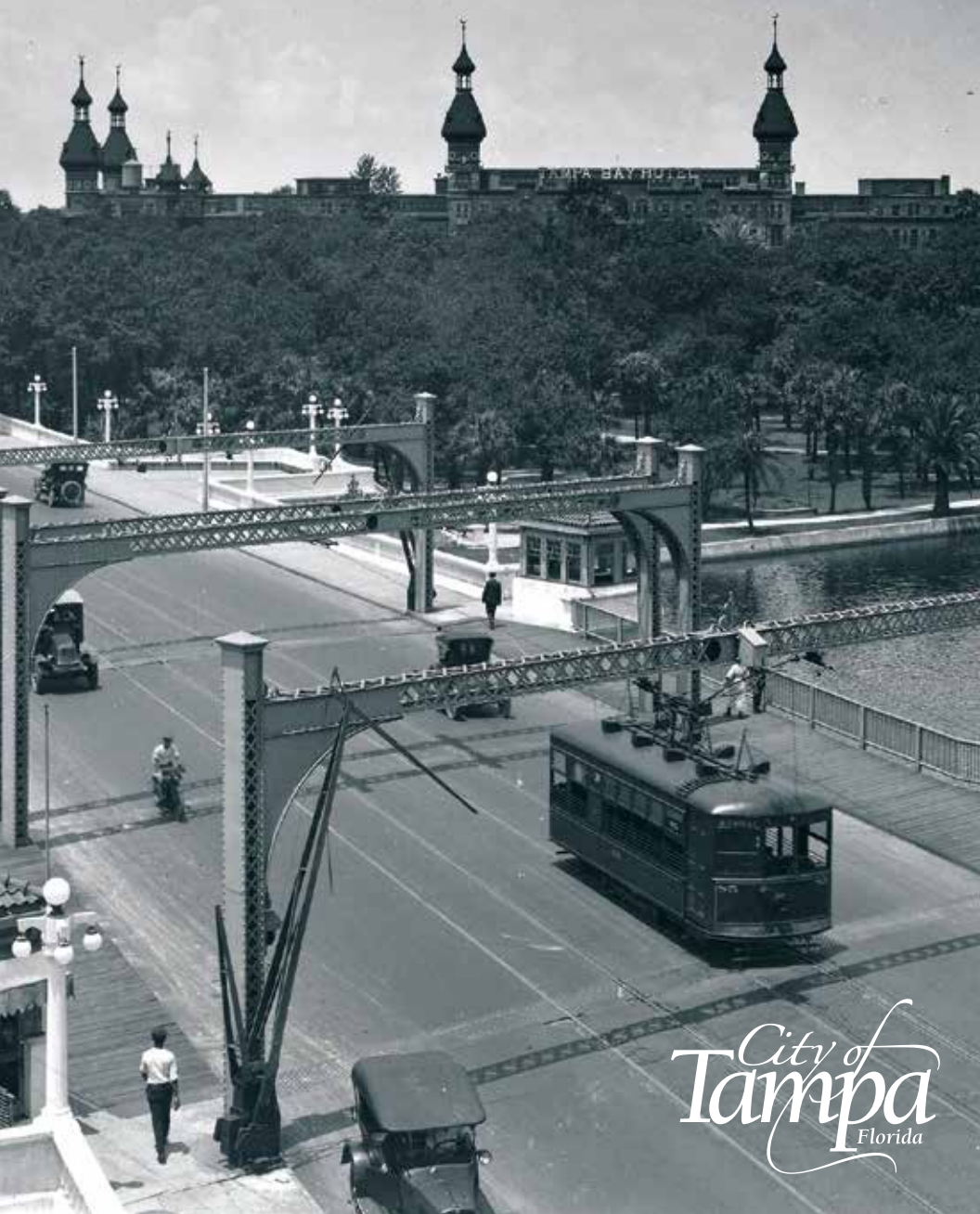


One Hundred Years Ago Tampa in 1921



City of
Tampa
Florida

A project of the



Compiled by Jennifer Dietz, City of Tampa Archives and Records Division.
Archives and Records is a division of the City Clerk's Office.

Cover photo: Automobile and street car traffic on Lafayette Street Bridge
looking west toward Tampa Bay Hotel in 1921. Photo courtesy of the
Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library, Burgert Brothers Collection.

The City of Tampa in 1921



Florida Avenue, looking north from City Hall, on May 24, 1921.

Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection

The photographs in this booklet, all from 1921, are courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library's Burgert Brothers photographic collection, unless otherwise noted. This collection features nearly 19,000 historical photographs captured by local photographers in the Burgert family from the late 1800s until 1960.

Images from the collection are available online:
hcplc.org/research/burgert

In October of 1920, the citizens of Tampa voted in favor of the Commission-Manager form of government. In this form of government, a Mayor-Commissioner was elected with four Commissioners, who each had equal power. The first Mayor to serve under this new system was Charles H. Brown, who took office as Mayor-Commissioner on January 4, 1921. He served until 1924. William James Barritt served as Mayor-Commissioner Pro Tempore, and the other elected commissioners were William A. Adams, Victor V. Sharpe, and Henry E. Snow.



*Mayor-Commissioner
Charles H. Brown*

In 1921, the Tampa Police Department was located next to City Hall. The buildings were connected, and were both designed in 1915 by architect M. Leo Elliott.



This photo shows a corner view of the Tampa Police Department Headquarters on 300 Florida Avenue in 1921.

Memorial Highway

As 1921 began, Memorial Highway was dedicated as a “road of remembrance” with a special ceremony and the installation of two monuments. Initially proposed by Hillsborough County Commissioner James G. Yeates, the idea had strong support from the Hillsborough County Commission, City of Tampa, and the Tampa Rotary Club. Memorial Highway was the first of its kind in the nation, and was named in honor of the 106 soldiers who died in World War I. It spanned approximately 13.5 miles from the Pinellas County line to Howard Avenue at Grand Central Avenue, which is now called John F. Kennedy Boulevard. Monuments were placed at each end of the highway, inscribed with the names of those who had lost their lives in World War I. The list included 105 men, as well as one woman, Cora Davis, who had died while serving in the war as a nurse.



On January 2, 1921, thousands of Tampanians gathered for the dedication of Memorial Highway at Grand Central Avenue and Howard Avenue, which was the location of one of the monuments. A parade led by City of Tampa Commissioner Henry E. Snow went from City Hall to this location. Members of the Tampa Rotary Club marched in the parade with 106 wreaths, which were then placed at the base of the monument by members of the American Legion. Airplanes flew the length of the parade to the county line and back.



There was a rededication ceremony for Memorial Highway in 1948, which also recognized those who had died in World War II. By that time, the monument on Howard Avenue had been moved to its current location at the American Legion Cemetery located at 3810 West Kennedy Boulevard. The second monument is presently located on West Kennedy Boulevard at Memorial Highway, and is surrounded by the marble mile markers that were used on the original Memorial Highway. A historical marker can also be found with this monument.



Memorial Highway monument, mile markers, and historical marker located on West Kennedy Boulevard at Memorial Highway.
Photo credit: Tim Fillmon.

Gasparilla in 1921

Gasparilla took place on February 6, 1921, with Ye Mystic Krewe of Gasparilla docking their ship at Plant Park, where the Florida State Fair was located. Mayor Charles H. Brown flew in a small plane to the fair's grandstands, where he gave the key to the city to the pirates.



Men masquerading as pirates on Gasparilla ship.



Crowd observing men dressed as pirates on Gasparilla ship docked at Plant Park.

1921: Bob Saunders and Black Life in Tampa

By Fred Hearn
Curator of Black History, Tampa Bay History Center

Tampa civil rights icon Robert W. (Bob) Saunders was born on June 9, 1921. His life could serve as exhibit one in Dr. W. E. B. DuBois' observation in the 1903 book *The Soul of Black Folk*. DuBois said: "The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line." The Red Summer of 1919 brought deadly anti-black riots in several American cities. And eight days before Saunders was born racial violence destroyed the prosperous enclave of Tulsa, Oklahoma: "Black Wall Street."



Robert W. Saunders, Sr.

On November 2, 1920 tragedy struck Ocoee, a small town near Orlando. A mob attacked a black man, July Perry, when allowed his friend, Moses Norman, refuge at his home after he tried to cast his ballot on election day. Norman escaped while Perry fought back against those who wanted to disenfranchise black voters. The confrontation turned deadly: two white men died, ten to thirty blacks were killed and twenty buildings were burned to the ground in the black quarters.

Still, black people were not the only victims of a brutal brand of street justice a century ago. In his book *Urban Vigilantes in the New South: Tampa 1882-1936* former University of South Florida Professor Dr. Robert P. Ingalls said that of the six men lynched in Tampa between the 1880s and 1930s two were black and four were white. Other scholars have different numbers. But we know that the white victims were accused of being socialists or of causing strife among the workers in the lucrative cigar factories, a threat to the owners' profits and the town's prosperity.

So when Bob Saunders was born in Tampa's Roberts City neighborhood he entered a world in which blacks were repeatedly told to stay quiet and remain passively behind the walls of segregation and racism. In this era Florida led the nation in per-capita cases where black men were lynched.

And on New Years Day in 1923, when Bob was not yet two years old, racial violence in Rosewood (located near Cedar Key) resulted in two whites and six blacks being killed. Angry men burned the small black community down to the ground after they could not find an escaped black prisoner who was accused of attacking a white woman. Eventually the State of Florida paid reparations to a few descendants of the Rosewood tragedy. The 1997 motion picture *Rosewood* told the town's story in film.

Long before Bob was born, his grandparents and parents were leading the fight against racism in Tampa. In 1917, the family had helped organize the Tampa Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). By the time Bob was born, Tampa's NAACP branch had more than 160 members, second in the Southeast only to Atlanta in memberships. It was blacks with Caribbean roots who often led the resistance (in 1921 Tampa also had two chapters of Jamaican Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association/UNIA).

Times were especially rough in 1921 economically and politically for blacks living in Tampa. The White Municipal Party (1910 to 1947) banned blacks from voting in local elections. Discrimination in education, skills training and job advancement against people of color in the South relegated all but a few black people to the lowest paying positions. Black men came to Tampa to work on the railroads, on the docks or in other unskilled jobs. Many black women worked as domestics. College-trained blacks were teachers, insurance executives, medical or legal professionals, pharmacists, morticians, merchants or artisans.

The one thing the whites who grew up in Florida or who immigrated here all had in common was the color of their skin and the privilege that came with it. Tampa's "commercial-civic elite," as Dr. Bob Kerstein calls the local power structure of that era, opened doors for these new white Americans' success as long as they cooperated with the cigar industry's labor bosses (Kerstein 2001, 32).

By 1921, African Americans had built Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Catholic and other churches, plus the Odd Fellows Hall, Masonic Lodges and lounges to meet their spiritual and social needs. Still, the death rate then for blacks in Tampa was double the birth rate, due to unhealthy diets and poor living conditions (Raper 1927). And a dollar was hard to come by for most of the 51,606 people (about 13,000 of them black) living in Tampa that year. Yet, the "Cigar City" in 1920 was second in total population in Florida to Jacksonville (91,558): Miami had not yet blossomed and was third in the state with 33,000 residents.

Bob Saunders attended West Tampa, Dunbar and Harlem Elementary Schools and Booker T. Washington Junior High. After school and on weekends, he worked at the Central Theatre on Central Avenue and greeted thousands of people there. In 1940, he graduated from George S. Middleton High School. Bob and his mother lived in New York for a few years (where he attended an integrated school) before they returned to Tampa. He recalled in his book *Bridging the Gap* (Saunders 2000, 43) seeing signs on Tampa busses some students rode to school that read: "White passengers will sit from front to rear; Colored passengers will sit from rear to front." He never forgot those signs and how they made him feel. He knew somehow that one day he would help bring them down!

After high school, Bob attended Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, where he studied and worked in the home of the renowned college president Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune. But with America fighting World War II, he was drafted into the U. S. military. In 1942, he was assigned to the Army Air Corps and the Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama. After he was discharged Bob settled in the north. He worked as a newspaper journalist in Cincinnati, graduated from the Detroit Institute of Technology and briefly attended the University of Detroit Law School.

Then in 1952, Walter White and Roy Wilkins recruited Bob to work as field secretary for the Florida State Conference of Branches for the NAACP. Bob followed Harry T. Moore of Mims, Florida in this important and potentially dangerous work. The heroic Moore and his wife, Harriette, both were killed by a tragic dynamite blast at their home late Christmas night in 1951. No one ever was arrested for this crime. From 1952 to 1966, Saunders served the NAACP by organizing and working with branches in dozens of Florida cities. He helped lead voter registration drives, supported victims of discrimination and brutality all over the state and provided guidance for plaintiffs and attorneys who challenged Jim Crow segregation.

Later he worked for the U. S. Office of Equal Opportunity and as director of the Hillsborough County Office of Equal Opportunity. Bob retired in 1988. He and his wife, Helen, had one son, Robert W. Saunders, Jr. Bob Saunders died in Tampa on March 18, 2003. Later that year, the former Ybor City Public Library was renamed the Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Public Library in his honor. A new \$7.8 million library opened there at 1505 N. Nebraska Avenue in 2015. NAACP icon Julian Bond and Ilyasah Shabazz (Malcolm X's third daughter) honored Saunders by visiting Tampa, reading to children, speaking at banquets and helping to raise funds for the new library.

About the Author



Fred Hearn is the Curator of Black History at the Tampa Bay History Center. Previously, he served the City of Tampa for more than thirty years, retiring in 2007 as the Director of Community Affairs. He has a Master of Arts Degree in Human Services from Springfield College, and a Master of Science degree in Africana Studies from the University of South Florida.

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Happy Birthday Florida: The Two Hundredth Anniversary of Florida Becoming American

By E.J. Salcines
Retired Appellate Judge
Former State Attorney, Hillsborough County

July 2021 is the 200th Anniversary of Florida becoming American. This is our Bicentennial, 200 years of being part of United States. In July 1821, Spain transferred title and possession of East and West Florida to the United States. Florida had been part of Spain since 1513 when Ponce de Leon had set foot on this land. Since that date, the Spanish flag had waved over Florida for 300 years, except for a short 20 years under British rule (1763-1783). That Spanish flag was lowered 200 years ago, and the flag of the United States was raised. Our flag only had 23 stars when the Adams-Onís Treaty with Spain was ratified. Florida is the first and the oldest name in United States history; it is older than the word America. But the Florida of 1821 was much larger than our current state boundaries.

Two hundred years ago this July, Spain peacefully transferred and ceded a region of North America that it had governed for more than 300 years. It meant the acquisition of nearly 60,000 square miles of territory for the new nation called the United States of America. After the transfer ceremonies, General Andrew Jackson resigned and quickly left Florida returning to his plantation in Tennessee, The Hermitage, to prepare for his presidential aspirations. Florida would be governed by a Territorial Governor and the Territorial Council (Legislature) for the next 25 years. Our first Territorial Governor (of the combined East and West Florida) was William P. DuVal.



Charles III created this Spanish national flag in 1785. It flew over Florida until the United States took official possession of the territory in 1821. Credit: Florida Department of State

The Florida that Spain ceded to the United States went all the way to the Mississippi River. Florida became a "territory" and the size of West

Florida was reduced. Western portions of our land became southern Alabama, Mississippi, and a small portion of Louisiana. A Florida territorial government was set up with two population centers, St. Augustine on the east and Pensacola on the west. The Suwanee River served as the dividing line. We were a territory for 24 years, until 1845, when Florida was admitted into the Union as the 27th state with a state population of 66,000. That is quite a contrast with the Florida of today, the third largest state among the 50 states, with more than 21.5 million people.

The Adams-Onís (Transcontinental) Treaty was negotiated in Washington, DC during the Presidency of James Monroe (our 5th President), by our Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and the Minister (Ambassador) of Spain, Luis de Onís. It was signed on February 22, 1819 (George Washington's Birthday) and ratified two years later. The Treaty not only gave Florida to the United States, it also gave the United States land access to the Pacific Ocean in Oregon. John Quincy Adams, son of our second President John Adams, was elected as our sixth President (1825-1829) having defeated Andrew Jackson. But Jackson came back and defeated John Quincy Adams in 1829. Jackson saw Florida become the 27th state and died shortly thereafter. John Quincy Adams witnessed the Florida Territory become the State of Florida when Adams had been elected to the House of Representatives from Massachusetts after his one term as President of the United States.

On March 30, 1821, President James Monroe appointed General Jackson as the "Commissioner" to oversee the transfer of flags and sovereignty and supervise the transition from Spanish land to United States territory. Since there were two Floridas, East and West, two formal ceremonies were

set: Tuesday, July 10, 1821, in St. Augustine, and Tuesday, July 17, 1821, in Pensacola. The Spanish Governor in St. Augustine was Jose Coppinger and the Spanish Governor in Pensacola was Jose Maria Callava. General Jackson would preside with his delegation in the Pensacola ceremony, and his representative Colonel Robert Butler would preside in St. Augustine because General Edmund P. Gaines was



The change of flags on July 10, 1821 at Castillo de San Marcos, Saint Augustine, Florida. Credit: Florida Memory Project

unavailable. There would be an agreed upon formal protocol of transfer of documents, flags, national anthems by their military bands, cannons and gun salutes, and all military personnel of both nations in dress uniforms, each passing in review. In the ramparts, the Spanish flag would be lowered to half-staff and the American flag would meet the Spanish flag at half-staff and then the Spanish flag would be lowered and the American Stars and Stripes hoisted to the top of the flagstaff. The Spanish soldiers would march out to the transport ships waiting in the harbor and United States troops would occupy the famous Spanish garrison, Fort San Marcos, and United States officials would occupy the respective government buildings.

In St. Augustine, the Spanish troops marched out on Aviles Street, the oldest street in the United States. Besides Spanish Governor Coppinger, there were 16 Spanish officers and their families, plus 173 persons, women and children, to be transported to Havana, Cuba. The larger portion of the Spanish citizens of St. Augustine remained. Most were bilingual and fluent in English and Spanish. In Pensacola, there are two town squares called Plazas in Spanish. The ceremony took place in King Ferdinand VII Plaza. Many inhabitants continued living under the American flag. Most of them were conversant and equally fluent in either language. Spanish Governor Callava remained for a short time in Pensacola overseeing the embarkation and shipment of supplies before leaving for Washington, DC. Both cities had been crowded with visitors from various parts of the Union to witness the historic transfer of authority and flags.



The United States flag in 1821. Credit: Florida Department of State

Assisting General Jackson in Pensacola were U. S. Army Colonels George Mercer Brooke and James Gadsden who both, later, came to survey Tampa Bay and to set up Fort Brooke, which started the development of Tampa. Mrs. Rachel Jackson, General Jackson's wife, had accompanied her husband to Pensacola for the transfer ceremony and noted in her diary that many of the Spanish inhabitants were crying as they left Pensacola and she wrote, "Never did my heart feel more for a people." Both ceremonies complied with all military precision and protocol. Florida was officially transferred from Spain to American control. That Tuesday, July 17, 1821, Florida said good-bye to being a Spanish colony – adios to Spain and hello to being a new territory of the United States.

Our history is the record of great achievements. Two hundred years ago, Florida became American territory. That is our DNA and of which Floridians must be proud. Happy Birthday, Florida!

About the Author



E.J. Salcines is a native of Tampa, and a career state and federal prosecuting attorney with a legal career spanning more than 55 years, including 16 years as the elected State (prosecuting) Attorney and serving more than 14 years on Florida's Second District Court of Appeal. He has 2 academic degrees including his law degree, as well as 2 honorary doctorate degrees. He is a recognized local historian and has produced documentary programs on Tampa history seen on City of Tampa Television and YouTube titled Tampa: Untold Stories. He is the 2021 recipient of the Medal of Honor from the Florida Bar Foundation.

The 1921 Hurricane

On October 25, 1921, Tampanians endured the most destructive hurricane to impact the area since the Great Gale of 1848. The unnamed storm was estimated to be a Category 3 hurricane when it made landfall at Tarpon Springs. There were eight confirmed fatalities in the Tampa Bay area, and millions of dollars in losses. Piles of debris could be found around the city. The seawall along Bayshore Boulevard was destroyed in places by a storm surge that was estimated at 11 feet. The Ballast Point Pavilion was heavily damaged by the storm, and boats washed ashore. The following images were taken by the Burgert Brothers as they surveyed the area after the hurricane.



Hurricane damage on 5th Avenue (1200 block), looking east.



Hurricane damage to Ballast Point Pavilion.



Intersection of Parker and Eagle streets looking south at flooding after the hurricane.



Ship, Thomas B. Garland, and barge washed ashore by hurricane, showing damage to wharf.



View of a steamboat called The Favorite washed ashore at Plant Park.

Images of Tampa in 1921



People swimming at Sulphur Springs Pool on September 1, 1921.



View of Tampa Union Station and billboard advertising Tampa in 1921. A similar billboard is featured on the back cover of this booklet.



Tampa Tribune delivery truck loaded with a nine ton Sunday edition, in front of Tribune's building at 500 Tampa Street. 100 years later, this building is still in downtown Tampa.



The Lucas Building on northeast corner of Tampa (500 block) and Madison (200 block) streets. This building is still in downtown Tampa.

Ads from Tampa's 1921 City Directory

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Knight & Wall Co.
ESTABLISHED 1884



HEADQUARTERS
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