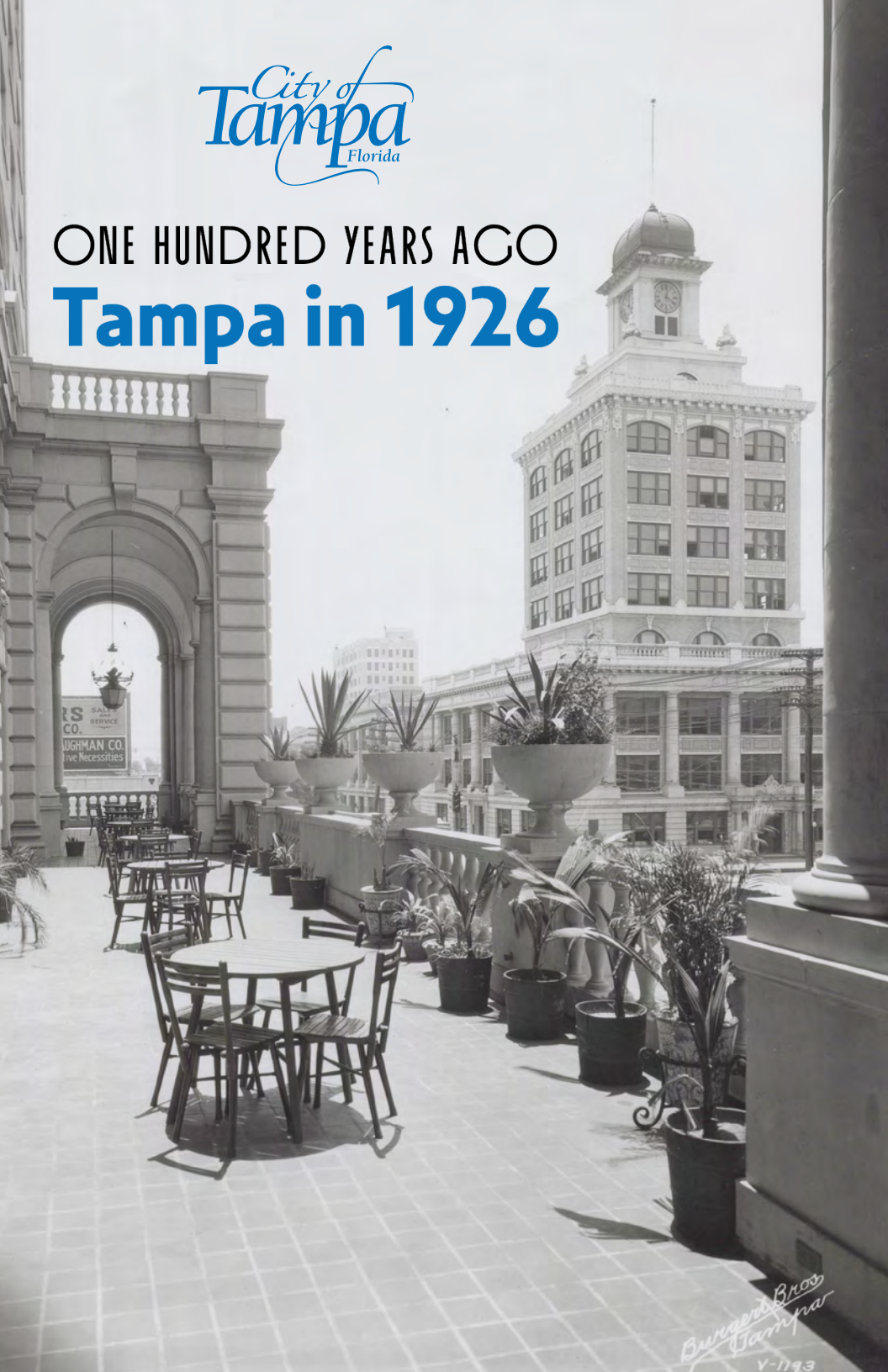


City of
Tampa
Florida

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO
Tampa in 1926



*Burgess Bros
Tampa
V-1193*

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: Tampa Terrace Hotel veranda, located 401-407 Florida Avenue, with a view of City Hall on May 10, 1926.



Burgert family picnic scene: location unknown, January 25, 1926.

Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection

The black and white Burgert Brothers photographs in this booklet were taken in 1926, and they are courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library's Burgert Brothers photographic collection. 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

The City of Tampa in 1926

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.

Perry G. Wall began his term as the the 41st Mayor of the City of Tampa on January 8, 1924. He was named after his grandfather, Perry Green Wall, and was therefore sometimes referred to as Perry G. Wall II. With his brother-in-law, Peter O. Knight, he owned a successful hardware and sporting good store called Knight & Wall. Prior to his election, he had served previously on Tampa's City Council from 1890-1891, and 1895-1896.



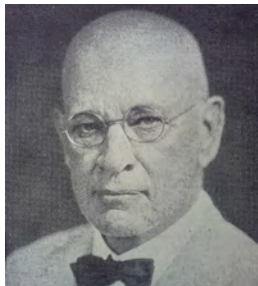
***Perry G. Wall
City of Tampa Mayor-
Commissioner,
1924-1928***



***William James Barritt,
Mayor-Commisioner
Pro Tempore***



***William A. Adams,
Commissioner***



***Dr. Sumter Lowry,
Commissioner***



***James McCants,
Commissioner***

1926 Construction

Many new buildings were either recently completed or under construction in 1926, including Tampa Water Works, homes on Davis Islands, Tampa General Hospital, Tampa Theatre, and more. Here is a look at some of them.



The Tampa Water Works building was completed in 1925. This photo of its entrance on 30th Street was taken on September 30, 1926.



Tampa Water Works, rear of building with treatment ponds on April 7, 1926.



Ballast Point School under construction at 2702 Ballast Point Boulevard on March 3, 1926.



The Palace of Florence Apartment Hotel was completed in 1926 on Davis Islands. This photo shows a side view of the multi-story Mediterranean Revival building, which still stands today.



Completed in 1925, the Davis Islands Coliseum was a popular venue. This photo of four women and a dog in an Oakland automobile was taken in front of the coliseum on April 6, 1926.



This photo, taken on March 23, 1923, shows the interior of the lighted, arched ceiling and hardwood floors of the Davis Islands Coliseum. The stage is at the far end. The coliseum was demolished in 1967.



The home of Davis Islands developer D.P. Davis was constructed in 1925. This photo shows it in 1926. Davis died that same year and did not occupy the house. For more on D.P. Davis, see the article in this booklet by Rodney Kite-Powell.



Construction of Tampa Municipal Hospital (now Tampa General Hospital) on Davis Islands, November 16, 1926.



Rooftop view of the Municipal Auditorium located in Plant Park. Construction was completed in 1926. The building was later renamed McKay Auditorium following the death of Mayor D.B. McKay in 1960. A fire caused significant damage to the structure in 1993. Following extensive renovation, it reopened as the John H. Sykes College of Business in 2000.



Interior of the Municipal Auditorium showing seating and stage on October 5, 1926.

A Look at Tampa Life in 1926

What was it like living in Tampa 100 years ago?
These photos offer a glimpse of what life was like in 1926.



Mayor Perry G. Wall taking a mail sack from Florida Airways plane at Drew Field with Postmistress Elizabeth Barnard and others on April 1, 1926.



This view of Old City Hall on September 10, 1926 shows nearby residential structures as well as the Tampa Terrace Hotel, which is also featured on the back cover of this publication.



World heavyweight champion Jack Demsey visited Tampa for a boxing exhibition on February 3, 1926.



Jack Dempsey with local developer Burks L. Hamner, who commissioned the photo.



A group in front of Allen Temple A.M.E. Church at 1116 E. Scott Street on November 8, 1926.



Crowds watching the Gasparilla parade on Lafayette Street (now known as Kennedy Boulevard) with a view east towards downtown.



View of downtown business district from the Bay View Hotel with City Hall visible on the right, Hillsborough County Courthouse at the center and Sacred Heart Church beyond.



Sacred Heart Catholic Church interior with ornamentation looking toward altar.



Staff on a "Tin Lizzie" at the B. L. Hamner Realty Corporation tour bus garage on July 19, 1926.



Five men posed with the first automobile, a Buick, to cross the Tampa Beach Causeway (22nd Street Causeway) on January 21, 1926.



Remington Typewriter Company with office staff at 103 Parker Street on April 16, 1926.



An aerial view of downtown Tampa looking north from Whiting Street on March 17, 1926.

The Mysterious Death of a Tampa Icon

Rodney Kite-Powell
Director, Touchton Map Library
Tampa Bay History Center



D.P. Davis

October 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of David P. Davis' death. The passing of the larger than life developer of Davis Islands has been shrouded in mystery since that fateful night aboard the steamship *Majestic*. What follows is an examination of the few facts that are known about the incident that took the life of one of the true characters of the Florida Land Boom.

In October 1926, Davis booked passage aboard the luxury liner *Majestic* for a trip to Europe. His life, both professional and personal, had taken some severe hits over the previous few months. He had to sell his interest in Davis Islands, and Davis Shores in St. Augustine was proceeding very slowly. In addition, his second marriage, to the former Elizabeth Nelson, was falling apart. Nelson had fled to France, as the story goes, and Davis was headed her way. He would not live to see her nor the end of the trans-Atlantic voyage.

Stories of Davis' death always include some element of mystery. The only undisputed facts are that he went overboard and drowned while en route to Europe aboard the large ocean liner on October 12, 1926 and that his girlfriend, Lucille Zehring, accompanied him on the voyage. What is in question is how he ended up in the water: by accidentally falling out of a stateroom window, being pushed out, or jumping out to end his own life. A multitude of stories fill the void.

Victory National Life Insurance Company sold Davis a \$300,000 policy a few months before his death. Davis held policies with other insurance companies and, since his body was not recovered, some felt that Davis faked his own death. Company president Sumter Lowry, "anxious to make a reputation for paying claims promptly," hired an investigator, who determined that Davis had accidentally fallen overboard.

Lowry's findings regarding Davis' death did not alleviate all doubts on the subject. Many felt that Davis leapt overboard to end his life. Chief among this theory's proponents was the captain of the *Majestic*. Another who thought Davis killed himself was Jerome McLeod, who had joined D. P. Davis Properties in 1925 as assistant publicity director after a stint at the *Tampa Daily Times*. "He got drunk," McLeod told a later interviewer, and "when he got drunk he got maudlin." A third story comes from a steward who stood outside Davis' room and overheard an argument between Davis and Zehring. The steward claimed Davis said, "I can go on living or end it. I can make money or spend it. It all depends on you." The statement was punctuated by a loud splash. This runs somewhat counter to the testimony given Lowry, in which the steward had to be told of Davis' fall by Zehring.

Davis' brother Milton had a different story. While acknowledging D. P. Davis had a drinking problem, he believed his death was an accident. Milton traveled to New York City to speak with Zehring about his brother's final moments. Milton, who claimed David probably intended to divorce Elizabeth (for a second time) and marry his girlfriend, restated Zehring's recollection: "Lucille said there had been a party and D. P. was sitting in an open porthole, one of those big ones. It was storming outside, and he blew out the



Elizabeth Nelson

window. She said she started to scream and grab his leg, but it was blown out of her hands. That's what happened."

There are a variety of problems and inconsistencies with each of these stories. Some say that Davis and Zehring were alone while others say there was a party. The *Majestic* was the largest ship in the world, a sister to the *Titanic*, and undoubtedly had "large portholes," and Davis was a small man, but could he



Lucille Zehring

really sit in one and then be "blown overboard"? Could the steward standing outside of the closed stateroom door hear a loud splash that occurred *outside* the ship and dozens of yards below the open window? The idea that Davis booked passage with a large party, including Davis Properties employees and his oldest son, George, places doubt that the intent of the voyage was to divorce his wife.

Davis' drinking problem unquestionably contributed to his untimely death, but to what degree? Some point to the possible fight with Zehring, others to his overall financial collapse, as reasons why he would commit suicide. Alcohol inevitably compounded those problems. Others, like Davis' brother, felt that his alcoholism merely put him in the position of hurting himself, intentionally or otherwise.

Murder, too, is a possibility. Some stories relate that Davis had up to \$50,000 in cash with him. Others discount this, claiming that he hardly ever carried large amounts of money on him. Motive and opportunity do not seem to be on the side of murder, but no one could lead his life without making enemies, especially after losing so much money in such a brief period of time.

Yet another theory intimates that Davis faked his death. While discredited by Lowry's investigation and Milton's

assurances to the contrary, it remains a possibility, though very remote. Someone, be it his brothers or his sons, would certainly have said something at some point about this if it were true.

Perhaps the closest we will be to understanding what happened that night in 1926 comes from his oldest son, George Davis, who was aboard the *Majestic*. I had the incredibly good fortune to interview George and his brother, David Davis, Jr., in California in 2004. George Davis was 12 years old when he accompanied his father on the trip to Europe. Though seventy-eight years had passed, he was still very emotional when talking about his father's death. In the end, he too felt that it was likely that his father had succumbed to his inner demons and leapt to his death into the Atlantic Ocean.

Though we are now closer to knowing the "how" regarding D. P. Davis' death, we are still left asking "why." Davis' life was unraveling, but this was the case with many people during this era. What pushed him, figuratively, over the edge will likely never be known.



About the Author

Rodney Kite-Powell is the Director of the Touchton Map Library at the Tampa Bay History Center. He received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Florida and a Master of Arts from the University of South Florida, both in American History. He is the author of three books, including *History of Davis Islands: David P. Davis and the Story of a Landmark Tampa Neighborhood*, and *Tampa Bay's Waterfront: Its History and Development*, co-authored with Arthur Savage. He was appointed by the Hillsborough County Historical Advisory Council as Hillsborough County Historian in 2019.

1976 to 2026: Fifty Years of Black History Month

Fred Hearn
Curator of Black History
Tampa Bay History Center

Any discussion of the origin of Black History Month in 1976 must include the key roles played by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and President Gerald R. Ford. We shall examine their collaboration in purpose in the 20th Century in this essay.

Dr. Mirelle Luecke reminds us that in 1974, President Ford signed into law a constitutional amendment to the 1965 Voting Rights Act. His initiative was tremendously impactful toward furthering Black access to the ballot. Along with the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, the 1954 Brown decision, the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1968 Fair Housing Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 is a hallmark of jurisprudence in African American history. Today one might ask what Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Father of Black History, would say about Ford's action in 1976 (Woodson died in 1950). For sure, they both elevated the study and appreciation of Black History to levels where it had not previously been.

Back in 1965, millions of Americans read about and saw on their evening television news programs hundreds of marchers in Selma, Alabama being brutalized by law enforcement troopers on horseback at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. That tragic day was called Bloody Sunday. These Black and White people, laymen and clergy, were on their way to the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery to seek the right to the ballot for all people in the state.

In January 1965, Ford became Minority Leader in the United States House of Representatives. He was the U. S. Representative for Michigan's 5th Congressional District and had been a star player for the two-time national champion University of Michigan football team. Even as a young man Ford's progressive attitude (for his day) about fair treatment of Black people began to surface.

When he played for the Michigan Wolverines in the early 1930s the team was one of a handful of major college squads in America that was integrated – it had one Black player, Willis Ward. Legend has it that Ford threatened to sit out of a game when Michigan's opponent refused to take the field against a team that had a Black player on it (University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library).

As president, Ford is perhaps best remembered as the man who played a major role in steering the White House back on course following former president Richard M. Nixon's resignation and the Watergate scandal of the early 1970s. In 1983, when Ford was a management consultant for Beneficial, the former president hit a golf ball from downtown Tampa across the Garrison Channel to the Harbour Island development.



Gerald Ford

In the early 1960s, Tampa native Bernard LaFayette, Jr. of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) began working in Selma registering locals to vote. Lafayette lived on Union Street during the Selma Voting Rights Movement, and today this street bears his name. His dedicated years of activism and that of Civil rights champions John Lewis, Hosea Williams, Rosa Parks, Martin

Luther King, Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer and many others led to change at the federal, state and local levels. These brave souls helped give hope in the words of the Constitution for all citizens.

President Ford's declaration for Black History Month came at a time when government needed to restore citizens' faith in elected officials. His announcement that beginning in 1976, every February would officially be celebrated as Black History Month was refreshing to many Americans. A full copy of it can be found in this booklet, immediately following this article. His decree helped change what being a citizen here meant for Black people. And in 1976, the country celebrated the Bicentennial year of its Independence. Simultaneously, Ford's actions validated Woodson's early 20th Century vision that the history of African people in the United States and around the globe should be studied, acknowledged and celebrated by all peoples.

Woodson was born in New Canton, Virginia in 1875 to formerly enslaved parents. As a youth, he worked in the West Virginia coal mines by day and studied by night. He entered Douglass High School and graduated with excellent grades in Latin, arithmetic and algebra. Woodson attended Berea College and the University of Chicago and studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. He then was accepted into Harvard University, where he majored in history. And in 1912, Woodson became the second African American, following Dr. W. E. B. DuBoise, to earn a Ph. D. from Harvard.



Carter G. Woodson

In 1915, in the Land of Lincoln, the State of Illinois was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the end of chattel slavery in America. Woodson traveled from Washington, D. C. back to the home of his alma mater to participate in the festivities. At a conference held during the celebration in the Chicago Coliseum, Woodson joined many other exhibitors. His presentation captured the numerous accomplishments of Blacks in the United States and drew overflow crowds of more than 6,000 people – many of them from out of state.

Woodson was so inspired by the outpouring of interest and support in providing people with more information about Black history that he remained in Chicago for a few extra days at the end of the three-week celebration. He conferred with colleagues about the feasibility of launching an organization that would be dedicated to studying and spreading scientific fact-based information about the history of Black people.

On September 9, 1915, Woodson met with Al Jackson and three other scholars at the Wabash YMCA in Chicago to form the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. It is now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History – ASALH. Woodson soon took another important step toward getting this information about Black achievement out to the masses. In 1916, he began publishing the Journal of Negro History.

Every year since 1915, ASALH has held an annual meeting and conference, bringing together thousands of scholars from all over the United States. Florida has more ASALH Branches – six – than does any other state. The ASALH Florida Coalition counts as its members Manasota (Sarasota/Manatee County), Jacksonville, Orlando, Tampa Bay, St. Petersburg and South Florida (Ft. Lauderdale). With more than four hundred (400) members, the Manasota Branch is the largest one in the world.

In 1920, Woodson was the major speaker at the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Grand Conclave held in Nashville. The Fraternity was founded in 1911 at Howard University in Washington, D. C. – the first African American Greek Letter Fraternity to be organized on the campus of a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Woodson was one of the first honorary members of Omega, along with fraternity founder Dr. Ernest E. Just. The Hillsborough County Public School District has schools named after these two outstanding individuals: Just Elementary School and Woodson Leadership Academy.

In 1920, at the Omega’s Grand Conclave in Tennessee, Woodson’s address was titled “Democracy and the Man Far Down.” In 2025, four members of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. published *With Faith in God and Heart and Mind*, a history of the fraternity. The book pinpoints a January 1921 issue of the *Atlanta Independent* Newspaper, which said of Woodson’s 1920 speech before an audience of Omega men that “unprejudiced critics” proclaimed Woodson’s delivery “as the most constructive and scholarly address of his career. Woodson’s extensive research work in the economical and historical field causes him to rank as one of the foremost exponents on the American platform in his respective field” (Hobson, Cole, Harper II and Alridge, p. 42).



Ernest E. Just

In 1924, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. began celebrating Negro History and Literature Week. The Omegas renamed the activity Achievement Week, as it is called today. And in 1926, rather than compete with Omega Brother Woodson’s notion of promoting Negro History Week in February, the fraternity chose to celebrate Achievement Week each

November. Every November Omega Chapters across America give awards and other recognition to members of the fraternity and to other persons who have made outstanding contributions toward the advancement of Black people. Former ASALH National President Daryl Scott points out that since 1976, every President of the United States, regardless of party affiliation, has issued a proclamation in recognition of Black History Month.

In 1926, Woodson chose the second week of February as Negro History Week to honor two great men: President Lincoln, and former bondsman and noted statesman, Frederick Douglass. Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809. Douglass – as was typical for many enslaved Black people – never knew his birthday because written records for Black births were not carefully kept. But Douglass celebrated his birthday on February 14, allegedly because his mother called him her little “Valentine.” The celebration of “Valentine Day” falls on February 14 each year.

According to a 2022 article by Kelly R. McBride, Woodson and his new association distributed pamphlets and brochures to state departments of education, elementary and secondary schools, colleges and universities, civic organizations and black news publications. “Woodson included literature and programs emphasizing the achievements and contributions of African Americans, as well as suggestions on how to celebrate the week” (www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/negro-history-week).”

Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, founder and president of Bethune Cookman College (now a university), served as national president of ASALH from 1936 to 1951. She was the organization’s first female president. Dr. Bethune encouraged Woodson to launch the *Negro History Bulletin* in 1937. This publication was very accessible to everyday

people, teachers and students. As a prominent educator and advisor to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt she is perhaps the most significant historical Black female in the establishment and recognition of Black history Month.

Dr. Bethune also had an important connection to Tampa. She was cofounder and president of the Central Industrial Insurance Company: the company began operating in Tampa in 1922 and eventually went statewide. Bethune often visited Tampa friends like *Tampa Bulletin Newspaper* Owner and Publisher Rev. Marcellas Potter. Often, while in Tampa on business, she attracted outstanding high school students who became Bethune Cookman College students. And the Mary Bethune High-Rise Apartments building in West Tampa is named in her honor. In 2022, Dr. Bethune became one of only two Floridians, and the first and only African American, represented in the National Statuary Hall in Washington, D. C.

Perhaps Congressman Ford gave America a hint in 1963, in an editorial in the Grand Rapids Press at what he would do in 1976 relating to recognition of Black History Month. The editorial titled "The Way of Free Citizens" was published two days following the August 28, 1963, March on Washington. Former U. S. diplomat James Patterson said the editorial quoted Ford talking about the march, which drew an estimated 250,000 people, who said: "In assembling, these people were, as Representative Gerald R. Ford, Jr., has observed, exercising as free Americans, their right of petition to Congress for redress of their grievances (www.fordforum.org/observer-essays/2026/02/19/ford-africanamerican-history.)"

As president, Ford said in part in his National Black History Month Address of February 1976, "we can review with admiration the impressive contributions of Black Americans to our national life and culture." And after paying tribute to Woodson and ASALH, the president further said, "We are

grateful to him today for his initiative, and we are richer for the work of his organization ... Freedom and recognition of our individual rights are what our Revolution was all about: ideals that we have been striving to live up to ever since. Yet it took many years before these ideals became a reality for black citizens.


“We can seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history. I urge my fellow citizens to join me in tribute to Black History Month and to the message of courage and perseverance it brings to all of us” (Eliska Hasek Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential 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.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

National Black History Month
February 1976

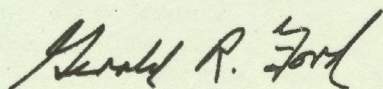
In the Bicentennial year of our Independence, we can review with admiration the impressive contributions of black Americans to our national life and culture.

One hundred years ago, to help highlight these achievements, Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History. We are grateful to him today for his initiative, and we are richer for the work of his organization.

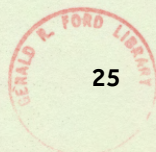
Freedom and the recognition of individual rights are what our Revolution was all about. They were ideals that inspired our fight for Independence: ideals that we have been striving to live up to ever since. Yet it took many years before these ideals became a reality for black citizens.

The last quarter-century has finally witnessed significant strides in the full integration of black people into every area of national life. In celebrating Black History Month, we can take satisfaction from this recent progress in the realization of the ideals envisioned by our Founding Fathers. But, even more than this, we can seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.

I urge my fellow citizens to join me in tribute to Black History Month and to the message of courage and perseverance it brings to all of us.



Gerald R. Ford



Hugh Campbell Macfarlane

E.J. Salcines

Retired Appellate Judge, District Court of Appeal

Hugh Campbell Macfarlane, an important leader in the development of Tampa and the founder of West Tampa, was born near Glasgow, Scotland on December 28, 1851, to James D. Macfarlane and Ann Campbell. When he was 14, his family left the British Isles and came to Fall River, Massachusetts. Five years later, the family moved to Stearns County, Minnesota and Macfarlane enrolled in St. John's College in St. Paul. The family moved back to Fall River, and he completed his training at Boston University School of Law. After graduation, he opened his law practice in Fall River, married and had a son named James. That marriage did not last long and Hugh moved to New Orleans for a short time, but by March of 1884, at the age of 32, he came to Tampa. He started practicing law and making a name for himself in the courtroom. By May of 1885, he became a founding member of the new Board of Trade (today's Chamber of Commerce). His nickname quickly became "Colonel," as senior lawyers were commonly called in the South. In July 1887, the Florida Legislature approved the City of Tampa's reincorporation, and Macfarlane served as the first City Attorney (1887-1890). He spoke at the laying of the cornerstone of the Tampa Bay Hotel ceremony on July 26,



*Hugh Campbell
Macfarlane*

1888. He soon married Frances I. Pettingill and they had a son Howard, and a daughter Mary. His son James, from his first marriage, came frequently to Tampa and moved here permanently in 1906.

By late 1886, Hugh C. Macfarlane acquired 120 acres on the west side of the Hillsborough River opposite Tampa. He surveyed and platted out industrial sites and residential lots, streets, and public areas. By 1892, the first cigar factory opened in West Tampa. In 1893, the Fortune Street Bridge, spanning the Hillsborough River to West Tampa, saw new buildings and industry grow. Together with business partners George N. Benjamin, John H. Drew, Alonzo C. Clewis and others, they financed, besides the bridge, the streetcar line, acquired more land, and invited cigar manufacturers to bring their factories to West Tampa.

On May 18, 1895, the Florida Legislature created a new city called West Tampa. Everyone knew it was Macfarlane's City. The two center streets were named Howard, for his son and Frances (now Albany) for Colonel Macfarlane's wife. Macfarlane donated a large park to the citizens of West Tampa and the school across the street is named in his honor. Macfarlane Park School opened in 1926 and celebrated its centennial in 2026.



The original Macfarlane Park School building and what it looks like in 2026.

By 1900, West Tampa had a larger population than Tallahassee. Ten years later, West Tampa was the fastest growing multicultural and ethnic city in the fastest growing state east of the Mississippi. Colonel Macfarlane served as City Attorney both for the City of Tampa and West Tampa. In addition, his son James served as mayor of West Tampa from 1912 through 1916.

Macfarlane was the leader of Tampa's powerful Scottish community. He persuaded Andrew Carnegie, also a native of Scotland, to donate the funds for the first Free (Public) Library in West Tampa on Howard Avenue, which opened on January 1, 1914. The City of Tampa's library opened April 27, 1917, on 7th Avenue, between Franklin and Tampa Streets, also thanks to the Macfarlane-Carnegie connection. Macfarlane served as the State Attorney for this Circuit from 1893-1894. For years, he was the superintendent of public works in West Tampa. West Tampa evolved from a frontier outpost to a model city. He built a prestigious law firm and witnessed his city of West Tampa grow to become the fifth largest city in Florida.

After thirty years of independence the two cities became one when West Tampa was annexed into the City of Tampa in January of 1925.



Descendants of Hugh Campbell Macfarlane attending the 100th anniversary celebration at Macfarlane Park Elementary School in 2026.

He continued his public service on Tampa's Board of Public Works, the Board of Port Commissioners, the Industrial Board, and many civic and social clubs, national, state, and local bar associations. He had just celebrated his 84th birthday when he died January 7, 1935, at his home in Tampa Heights near Columbus Drive and North Boulevard.

This article was originally written by E.J. Salcines for the Tampa Riverwalk Historical Monument trail and was adapted for this publication. <https://thetampariverwalk.com/visit/historical-monument-trail.html/title/hugh-campbell-macfarlane>



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 60 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 two academic degrees including his law degree, as well as two 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 entitled *Tampa: Untold Stories*. He is the 2021 recipient of the Medal of Honor from the Florida Bar Foundation. In 2023, he received another Honorary Doctorate of Humanities from the University of South Florida. In 2024, he was the recipient of Tiger Bay Club's Lifetime Achievement Award, and he was also selected as Las Damas' 2024 Man of the Year by the Centro Asturiano. In 2025, he received the Florida Historical Society's Michael Gannon Lifetime Achievement Award.

Tampa Theatre: Still Cool at 100

Rodney Kite-Powell
Director, Touchton Map Library
Tampa Bay History Center

Tampa's landmark Tampa Theatre, located at 711 North Franklin Street, will turn 100 on October 15. It has been able to avoid the swing of the wrecking ball, and, for the most part, the tide of modernization.

Since its October 15, 1926 opening, the Tampa Theatre has been home to extravagant vaudeville shows, concerts by the Tampa Theatre Orchestra, and all manner of films, from both the silent and sound eras. The Theatre also hosts music acts from around the country and children interested in the art of filmmaking.

The advent of sound pictures was still a year away when the Theatre opened. Movies cost 25 cents, and a "Mighty Wurlitzer" organ and an orchestra provided soundtracks for the films. When Hollywood introduced sound into its movies in 1927, the Tampa Theatre presented all the latest "talkies." This trend



Tampa Theatre building on Franklin Street (700 block), front and side facades under construction on August 30, 1926.

continued through the 1950s and '60s, but by the early 1970s, downtown Tampa in general, and the Tampa Theatre in particular, was no longer a center of activity, losing out to the malls in the suburbs. The once grande dame was reduced to showing "B" films. Today, however, the Tampa Theatre is now open year-round and features an acclaimed Film Series of cinema from around the world. The Theatre also hosts live concerts and special events, and enthralls more than 40,000 school children a year during the Theatre's field trip programs.

The Tampa Theatre is an atmospheric theater, designed to make moviegoers feel like they are in a plush courtyard. The Theatre's designer, John Eberson, designed over 200 such theaters worldwide in the 1920s. His design for the Tampa Theatre is an eclectic mix of Mediterranean styles, sometimes called Florida Mediterranean, including Greek Revival and Italian Renaissance. Added to this are Spanish, Baroque, and English Tudor styles. Statues of Greek and Roman mythological figures, which are stationed in alcoves around the proscenium, add to the outdoor effect. A statue of Christopher Columbus also stands in the Theatre, along with a replica of the Santa Maria.

The theater building was constructed at a cost of \$1.2 million and was the first air-conditioned commercial building in Tampa. Beginning from when the city purchased it in the late 1970s, the building has undergone extensive renovations. The most recent project, a \$30 million "Second Century Campaign," will be completed this year and includes restoration of interior plaster and paint, plus upgrades to the HVAC, plumbing, lighting, and sound systems.

The Theatre is owned and maintained by the City of Tampa and operated by the not-for-profit Tampa Theatre Foundation. Programming, maintenance, and restoration funds are provided by the State of Florida, Department of

State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners, the Arts Council of Hillsborough County, the City of Tampa and City of Tampa CRA, plus ticket sales, concessions, rental fees, and private donations. Tampa Theatre is on the National Register of Historic Places, is a City of Tampa landmark, and is a member of the League of Historic American Theatres and the Art House Convergence.



About the Author

Rodney Kite-Powell is the Director of the Touchton Map Library at the Tampa Bay History Center. He received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Florida and a Master of Arts from the University of South Florida, both in American History. He is the author of three books, including *History of Davis Islands: David P. Davis and the Story of a Landmark Tampa Neighborhood*, and *Tampa Bay's Waterfront: Its History and Development*, co-authored with Arthur Savage. He was appointed by the Hillsborough County Historical Advisory Council as Hillsborough County Historian in 2019.



City of
Tampa
Florida

**306 East Jackson Street
Tampa, Florida 33602
tampa.gov**