

One Hundred Years Ago Tampa in 1924



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: View of Union Transfer Company trucks in front of Tampa
Union Station on May 10, 1924.



Burgert Brothers Photography Studio at 407 East Lafayette Street, front facade with entrance and porch. Lafayette Street was later renamed Kennedy Boulevard.

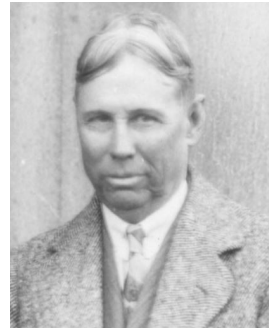
Burgert Brothers Photographic Collection

The photographs in this booklet, all from 1924, 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

The City of Tampa in 1924

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.

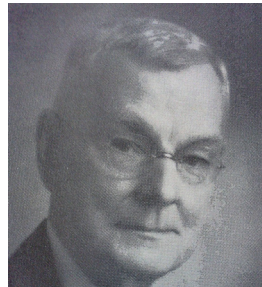
Perry G. Wall began his term as the the 41st Mayor of the City of Tampa on January 8, 1924. He was named after his grandfather, Perry Green Wall, and was therefore sometimes referred to as Perry G. Wall II. With his brother-in-law, Peter O. Knight, he owned a successful hardware and sporting good store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



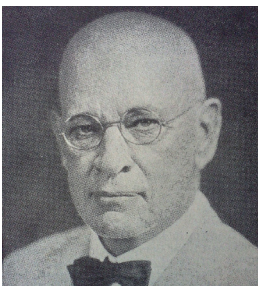
***Perry G. Wall
City of Tampa Mayor-
Commissioner,
1924-1928***



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



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



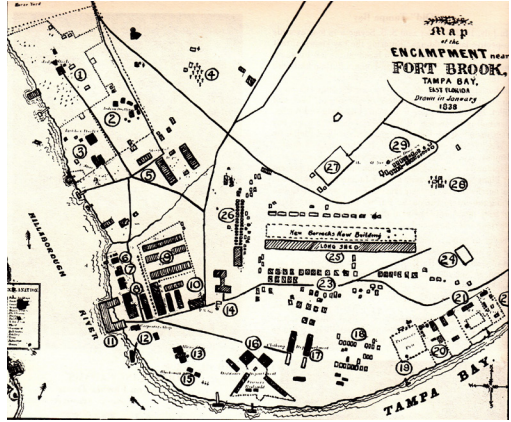
***Dr. Sumter Lowry,
Commissioner***



***James McCants,
Commissioner***

The 200th Anniversary of Fort Brooke

2024 marks the 200th anniversary of Fort Brooke, which preceded the City of Tampa. Named after its first commander, Colonel George Mercer Brooke, Fort Brooke was established on January 22, 1824, to protect the strategic harbor of Tampa Bay. Fort Brooke was located where the present-day Tampa Bay Convention Center stands. This 1838 map shows many of the structures that once stood at Fort Brooke.



Courtesy of the Hampton Dunn Collection, University of South Florida.

The City of Tampa's Archives and Records Division has artifacts from Fort Brooke that were uncovered during the construction of the Tampa Convention Center, Fort Brooke Municipal Parking Garage, Lee Roy Selmon Expressway (formerly known as the Crosstown Expressway), and Pam Iorio Parking Garage (formerly known as the South Regional Garage). Thus, our artifact collections are grouped by the locations where they were recovered. A large amount of our artifacts are from the Crosstown Expressway, Fort Brooke's Hospital Kitchen Complex at the Convention Center site, as well as the Quad Block from the Fort Brooke Parking Garage.



Some of the Fort Brooke artifacts in The City of Tampa's Fort Brooke collection.



Soldiers at Fort Brooke, undated.

The Annexation of the City of West Tampa

E.J. Salcines

Retired Appellate Judge, District Court of Appeal

The modern City of Tampa as we know it was born on July 15, 1887. Our neighboring City of West Tampa was created on May 18, 1895. They coexisted like Charles Dickens used in the title of his book, *A Tale of Two Cities*. We have our own tale of two cities: The City of Tampa and the City of West Tampa. That changed with annexation, which is a form of growth, a form of expansion of cities and municipalities. Each of these two cities had their separate municipal governments, and both produced enough quality, handmade cigars that gave Tampa the title, "Cigar Capital of the World." We were producing more handmade cigars here in Tampa than even Havana, Cuba.

The City of West Tampa, on the west bank of the Hillsborough River, operated as an independent city for thirty years, from 1895 to 1925. The seal of the City of West Tampa has two horns of plenty, and the star at the top represents the influence of the Cuban cigar makers, and it was the lone star in the flag of Cuba. When you travel through West Tampa, you'll notice historical markers that have this seal that remembers the City of West Tampa.



There were frequent attempts to merge the City of Tampa with the City of West Tampa. Famous City of Tampa Mayor D.B. McKay frequently came to the City of West Tampa with the message that it would be possible to do so much more if both economies could merge and bring both populations together. The city fathers in West Tampa would listen with a friendly and a fraternal ear. They would say something like, "Thank you, but we're not ready. Perhaps someday we'll join forces."

That went on for years until one hundred years ago. Something was in the air, and the City of West Tampa fathers decided it was about time for them to merge with the City of Tampa. West Tampa was always under the leadership of an outstanding Scottish-born Tampa attorney, Hugh Campbell Macfarlane. Many of you enjoy Macfarlane Park in West

Tampa. That was donated by the founder of West Tampa, attorney Macfarlane. We remember him frequently. He was never Mayor of the City of West Tampa, but his son, James D. Macfarlane was.



Macfarlane Park was dedicated on December 31, 1924, the day before West Tampa was incorporated into the city (sic) of Tampa. Gathered for the occasion were (left to right): West Tampa Councilman Jose Rey, West Tampa Councilman Arturo M. Morales, City of Tampa Commissioner James McCants, West Tampa Councilman George Benjamin, Mayor of the City of West Tampa Enrique Henriquez, Tampa Mayor-Commissioner Perry G. Wall, Attorney Hugh C. Macfarlane (with glasses), City Commissioner Sumter L. Lowry, Council Jose Vazquez, Dr. Frank L. Adams and City Commissioner William Barritt.

In the thirty-year period of the City of West Tampa, there were eight elected mayors and two hundred and twenty-one city councilmen. In 1920, the City of Tampa had changed their governmental system to something experimental. They went from the city council system to the mayor-commissioner system. In that system, the mayor-commissioner had as much authority as the other four city commissioners, who hired a city manager to run the city. The commissioners would set the policies, establish the ordinances and the regulations, while the city manager ran the City of Tampa.

Under the leadership of Charles H. Brown, the first experimental term was underway. He was the mayor-commissioner from January 1921 to January 1924. That experiment, as I call it, lasted for seven years until the voters reenacted the old city council system of wards, where every section of the city had representation. All of this came together during the spring of 1923, when they all agreed that it was time to merge. The meeting of the minds had occurred, they shook hands, and both city leaders met with the legislative delegation to prepare the necessary legislation to bring about a vote from the voters. The question was: do we want to merge the City of Tampa with the City of West Tampa?

In May of 1923, the legislature did just that, and decided the annexation would occur on January 1, 1925. They had agreed the City of West Tampa would be annexed, along with Seminole Heights, Jackson Heights, and Gary, which was just east of Ybor City. Other unincorporated territory would be annexed as well, which the voters approved in a referendum in November of 1923. It passed by a large majority of voters.

Anticipating that the annexation was going to be approved, the City of Tampa bought the Tampa Water Works Company. Annexation is a form of growth in size, population, income, taxation, industry, factories, services, and parks and recreation. Annexation must take place according to the laws of annexation. You don't just decide, "Let's annex Brandon. Let's annex Ruskin. Let's annex something else." There is a formula set by law that has to be accomplished.



In 1924, construction began on a new water treatment plant on the Hillsborough River near 30th Street, which is pictured here.

The consolidation of both cities was amicable and the merger took place in 1925. By that time, the City of West Tampa had grown in its thirty years as an independent city to have the fifth-largest population in the State of Florida. By merging Tampa and West Tampa, this area's population became the third, and almost the second, largest population in the State of Florida. That catapulted our importance in state government and activities.

When the annexation happened, what happened to all of the employees that the City of West Tampa had in its departments? It had all been decided by the two committees that both cities had designated to determine where the employees would fit into the various departments. The Mayor of West Tampa at the time was Enrique Henriquez, and he presided over these different negotiations. Other influential men in West Tampa at the time were Mr. Macfarlane, Angel Cuesta (Cuesta and Rey cigar factories), and John Drew, one of the major developers of this area (Drew Field, which became Tampa International Airport).

Perry G. Wall, II, had followed Mr. Brown as the second City of Tampa Mayor-Commissioner. That experiment did not last long. After seven years, the mayor-commissioner system was abolished and it returned to a city council system in 1928. Perry Wall was co-owner of one of the large hardware stores, Knight and Wall, on the corner of Tampa and what used to be Lafayette, and is now Kennedy Boulevard. Wall's brother-in-law was a powerful, important lawyer named Peter O. Knight. The airport on Davis Islands is named for him.

As all of these things came together, the City of West Tampa was ceasing to exist, and the City of Tampa was now a big city. It was the third largest, but almost the second largest, city in Florida. There were a lot of things happening in this area.

Almost one-hundred years ago, a young man by the name of David P. Davis, had a great idea that he could dredge the bay and create man-made islands. He did this and created Davis Islands. He came to the city and offered to provide enough land on one of his islands for playgrounds and a hospital. We had a small hospital on North Boulevard and North B Street at the time, which was called the Gordon Keller Memorial Hospital. The city fathers were about to build a more modern hospital there, but then decided to build the new hospital on Davis Islands instead.

They needed a new bridge from Bayshore Boulevard to get over onto Davis Islands, so a new bridge was built and eventually, Tampa General Hospital was built. It was going to be called the Gordon Keller Memorial Hospital, and then it became Tampa Municipal Hospital. As it grew, it became Tampa General Hospital.

In 1924, A.J. Simms was developing an area called Parkland Estates. It did not belong to the City of Tampa. It was in Hillsborough County, as was Beach Park, New Suburban Beautiful, and Palma Ceia. But Mr. Simms did very well. Three years later, he decided to build the Floridan Hotel. In 1927, it was the tallest hotel in all of Florida.

Near the end of 1924, just before the City of West Tampa ceased to exist, George Gandy completed his bridge. The Gandy Bridge, the shortest connection between Tampa and St. Petersburg, was dedicated on November 20, 1924.

The transition of power from the government of City of West Tampa to the government City of Tampa began as the clock struck midnight on December 31, 1924, as we went into 1925. Voluntary annexation was accomplished. The two cities hosted an annexation banquet in one of our famous Ybor City restaurants, El Pasaje. The building is still there. The big banquet took



The Gandy Bridge under construction over Old Tampa Bay on December 17, 1923.

place with the best of fellowship and fraternity prevailing, as officials of both cities celebrated the merger with cooperation. The heads of almost every city department gathered. City of Tampa Mayor Perry Wall was the toastmaster. Hugh Campbell Macfarlane's son, Howard Macfarlane, for whom Howard Avenue is named, was the representative of the Mayor of West Tampa, Enrique Henriquez, and he read a message from him. Representing the cigar manufacturers was Angel Cuesta, who reminded everyone that the City of Tampa was receiving the City of West Tampa on a silver platter, with 12,000 new citizens added to the City of Tampa. West Tampa's cigar workers were bringing home a total of \$100,000 per week. \$100,000 a week multiplied by 52 weeks in the year tells you what a rich economy West Tampa provided. Dr. Sumter L. Lowry, Sr., for whom we have Lowry Park, also spoke at the banquet. He was a member of Tampa's City Council, and he welcomed the citizens of West Tampa. The last words at that banquet were delivered by former State Attorney Hugh Campbell Macfarlane, father of West Tampa.

As the City of West Tampa had ceased to exist, a new city was just being born. The legislature had created the city of Temple Terrace, with Maude Fowler and her son, attorney Cody Fowler, as the founders. As the new year started, Josiah Richardson developed the Sulphur Springs Hotel, an arcade with a spa and mineral springs, and a historic water tower built by Grover Poole. The tower was completed in 1927. Mr. Richardson then sold all of that property to J.F. Hendricks. The City of Tampa annexed Sulphur Springs in 1953.

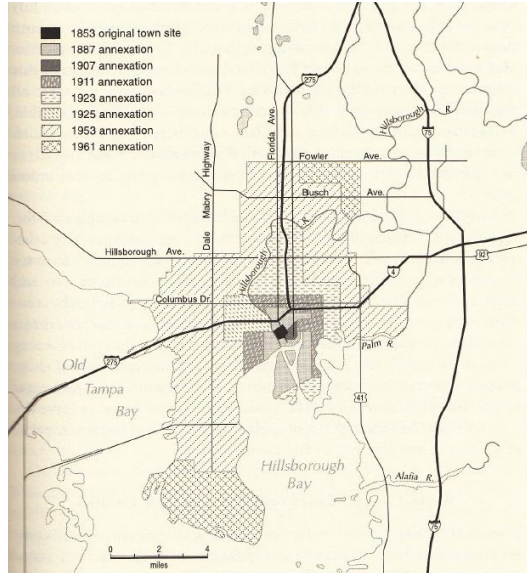
In 1925, the City of Tampa population skyrocketed from 51,608 to 101,162, with the annexation of the City of West Tampa. The City of Tampa was third largest city in Florida, behind Jacksonville, which was the largest city in Florida. Jacksonville had a population of 129,540. Miami, the second largest city in Florida, had a population of 110,637. In 1925, Florida's total population was 1,263,540. The land boom in late 1925 drove our population to 1,468,211.

The City of Tampa liked annexing West Tampa and they thought they could shortcut the annexation process and expand their reach into other areas. But they didn't follow the law or the procedures required, and it backfired. In December of 1925, the voters had overwhelmingly approved increasing the number of square miles in the City of Tampa from nineteen square miles to almost one hundred and fifty square miles, adding another 30,000 people to its population. But the courts were asked to intervene and circuit judge Francis Marion Robles, for whose father we have Robles Park, said that the law of annexation had not been followed. Judge Robles ruled that the December annexation was illegal as the land had never been legally annexed, nor had it become part of Tampa. So the attempt at annexation did not include Port Tampa, Sulphur Springs, Beach Park, or the City of Temple Terrace. It was not to become part of the City of Tampa because it had not followed the rules and protocol of legal annexation. Temple Terrace today is still an independent municipality, and other areas did eventually become part of Tampa through legal annexation.

As World War II came to an end, and our troops returned from Europe and the Pacific, growth took center stage and became the focus of attention. Again, annexation brightened the future of Tampa. Two young representatives, Sam Gibbons and Tom Johnson, working with State Senator Thomas Drew Branch, decided it was time to legally annex a large area, and that happened. As a result, we went all the way to where the University of South Florida is now located, all of Drew Park and Drew Field, which is now Tampa International Airport, all of Palma Ceia, and all of Interbay became part of the City of Tampa that we are enjoying today. Our population, again, skyrocketed. Through legal annexation, we acquired other areas that we had lost in the court, like Rocky Point, Sulphur Springs, and Palma Springs. Now these areas are part of the area of Tampa.

In 1988, a big expansion happened with New Tampa, which added twenty-four square miles, mostly rural, increasing the City of Tampa's total land area from eighty-four square miles to almost one hundred and nine square miles.

Through annexation and growth, Tampa has become a major metropolitan area as well as a cosmopolitan area, with nearly every country in the world having some representation in this area. So we went from the smallest population state to today, when Florida is the third largest state by population in the United States. It is all part of the great gift that God has given us here in Florida, but especially in Tampa. Happy Birthday, Tampa!



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 in law. 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 an 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.

1924: Commission Rule in the City of Tampa

By Fred Hearn
Tampa Bay History Center Curator of Black History

Commission-Manager Government

One hundred years ago (1924) marked the middle of a seven-year deviation (1920-1927) from the relatively strong mayor and multiprecinct-led municipal form of government that Tampa's 132,096 residents had known. The new "commission-manager" political system in Tampa made its debut in 1920, thanks to the organizational work and lobbying of a fifteen-member, all-male charter review board and a 1,576 to 665 charter vote of approval by the citizens (Polk, 1925; McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

Was this new format for municipal government good for the City of Tampa? Was it not so good? Or did it matter much one way or the other to residents, especially to women and to Blacks?

The new city hierarchy called for a mayor and four commissioners – all elected at large. This differed from the previous system of a mayor and several more elected representatives coming from votes tallied in the different wards throughout the city. The men elected in 1920 would appoint a city manager and most other city department heads. The mayor would preside over commission meetings but otherwise had no more power than did the commissioners (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

This new system placed tremendous political power in the hands of the five elected city officials (per term) during those seven years. By 1927, Tampa would return from this political structure to the same one that is currently in place in the 21st Century. Some might say the rich got richer (in real estate and other deals) during the era that preceded the Great Depression. After all, Tampa was incorporated in 1887, and by 1924, it had become the "Cigar Capital of the World" with some 200 factories, large and small. Most people could find jobs here, the city's population was exploding and overall you could say things were good for many citizens.

Perhaps the dye was cast for ushering in a new form of city government in 1920, when voters chose thirteen of the fifteen members of the charter review board from among applicants who lived in the upscale communities west of the Hillsborough River: all but two of the chosen board members lived in Wards 2 and 3 in Hyde Park. Board members were lawyers (5), heads of major corporations (2) and the board elected as its president Dr. Louis A. Bize, president of the Citizens Bank and Trust Company. As was typical for this era, no women or Blacks were elected to serve on the 1920 city charter review board (Kerstein 2001).

In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution gave women the right to vote and so the local charter review board gave a nod to female citizens. It made a White woman, Julia A. Norris, vice president of the ad-hoc Commission Government Club. The opposition to a commission-led city government called itself the Home Rule Club. Donald Brenham (D.B.) McKay and eight other city leaders formed this group's executive committee. McKay was a leading member of what Historian Dr. Robert Kerstein referred to as the early Twentieth Century "commercial-civic elite" class. They wielded considerable influence and few major political or economic decisions were made without their input. Others in McKay's camp were bankers James A. Griffin and Thomas C. Taliaferro. A third, cattleman Dr. Howell T. Lykes, was McKay's relative (Kerstein 2001).

McKay's Home Rule Club, not to be outdone in its nod to female voters, chose Frances (Mrs. Hugh) Macfarlane and Kate Jackson, who was a veteran at civic engagement, as vice presidents. Another of McKay's supporters, Perry Green Wall, warned that if the commission form of government was approved by voters the majority of city officials would live in Hyde Park. His prediction came true.

The White Municipal Party and Perry Green Wall

Wall was the chairman of the White Municipal Party (1910-1947) that dominated local elections for decades. This party excluded Black candidates from running for public office and denied Black voters the franchise. The party was formed two years after Black Tampa Attorney Z. D. Green attempted to run for a judge's position; just before the deadline to register for the 1908 election, he was told his paperwork had been misplaced. Wall was quoted as saying there was no way to improve upon a political system in which "a Florida cracker handles a negro, a mule and a shovel" (Kerstein 2001, p. 59).

The reign of the White Municipal Party ended only after the 1944 *Smith v. Allwright* Supreme Court Case out of Texas banned segregated

primary elections. Wall would go on to be elected Tampa mayor in 1924 and serve until 1928, when the commission-manager city government format ended. Wall had come to Tampa in 1884 and established a hardware store with his brother-in-law, State Attorney Peter O. Knight. In 1924 Wall oversaw development of the subdivision of Temple Terrace, a former 1,500 acre orange grove northeast of Tampa. And while construction of the segregated Tampa Municipal Hospital on Davis Islands happened under his watch in 1927, his administration made few provisions for the Tampa Negro Hospital founded by Nurse Clara Frye.

The Tribune claimed that the charter's opponents in 1920 had strived to register Black women to offset the votes of White women (Black women could participate only because this was not an election for city officials). And it would be 1971 (by then the city would have elected two hundred eighty men to the Tampa City Council) before a female, Catherine Barja, would be elected. It would be fifteen more years (1986) before Sandra Warshaw Freedman would serve as mayor. Notably, it was not until April of 1983 that Perry Harvey, Jr. would be the first black City Council member elected to the Tampa City Council since Reconstruction. And in 1995, Gwendolyn Miller became the first Black woman elected to the council. Tampa has never elected a Black mayor.

James McKay and Wallace Stovall

McKay's grandfather, James McKay, Sr., came to Tampa in 1846, and purchased cattle, real estate and ships. His investments proved very wise. During the Civil War the elder McKay served in the Confederate army and later became the collector of customs in Tampa. James McKay and Wall were related by marriage. This created a powerful alliance that enabled McKay to wield tremendous influence for decades.

In 1898, D. B. McKay became the owner and publisher of the *Tampa Daily Times*. This served him well as he began

organizing political supporters, and he was elected mayor in 1910. McKay would remain an influential political figure until his death in early 1960. He served three terms as mayor, from 1910 to 1920, and a fourth term from 1928 to 1931. Thus, McKay occupied the most powerful seat in city government immediately before and immediately after mayor-commission rule in Tampa. As mayor he benefitted from a "loose-knit



D.B. McKay

regime” that was pro-growth. Notably, his administration purchased large swaths of real estate that led to the expansion of Tampa’s port. Today, Port Tampa Bay is Florida’s largest ports by tonnage and land (Kerstein 2001; www.fdot.gov).

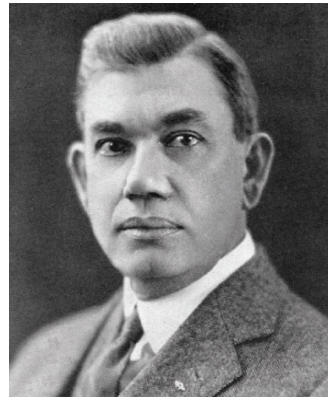
McKay’s focus on expanding Tampa’s port may not have directly benefitted the railroad barons. Most notably, Henry Flagler and Henry B. Plant had prospered by expanding their rail ownership throughout the state after the Civil War. Still, new shipping opportunities in Tampa’s deep-water port enticed businessmen to open up new shops in the city.

In June 1920, Horace Caldwell Gordon followed McKay as the 39th Mayor of Tampa. But Gordon’s only term as chief executive was cut short on January 4, 1921 with implementation of the commission-manager form of government. That year, Charles H. Brown became the first elected Mayor of the City of Tampa to serve under the new municipal system of government. Brown was one of the largest landowners in Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco Counties. He also was founder of the Tampa and Gulf Coast Railroad. Supporters believed this form of government would be more direct and efficient than was the standard system. Time would prove otherwise – at least in the opinion of Tampa’s voting public (Kerstein 2021).



Horace Caldwell Gordon

In 1921, it was *Tampa Morning Tribune* publisher Wallace Stovall and many of his commercial-civic elite power brokers who mounted the opposition that replaced McKay and installed Brown as mayor. Over the next three years Brown and the four city commissioners led the charge that “increased taxation and spending to support development.” For example, from January 1921 to January 1924 the city purchased the Tampa Waterworks Company, annexed the City of West Tampa and unincorporated communities to include Seminole Heights, Jackson Heights and Gary (Kerstein 2001, p. 52).



Charles H. Brown

Black Residents Under Commission Rule

Segregation had forced Tampa's 18,000 Blacks in 1924 to live primarily in eight inner-city communities (in order of population): Tampa Proper/"The Scrub," College Hill, West Tampa, West Hyde Park, Ybor City, West Palm Avenue, The Garrison and Robles Pond. A few hundred "Negroes" also lived in the rear (servant's quarters) of White residential property, primarily in Hyde Park (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

A survey done three years later showed that of the 950 Negro home owners, most were in West Hyde Park, which was known as Dobyville. Richard Doby settled there in the 1880s, began hauling ice and picking up garbage. He used his earnings to purchase property nearby – thus the name "Dobyville." Doby also made acquaintances with some of Tampa's commercial-civic elite. He purchased land for a cemetery for Blacks north of the city limits along Florida Avenue – the Zion Cemetery. The community took the name Robles Pond. The last recorded burial in this cemetery was in 1923, and within a few years, commercial development would take place on top of some graves there (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927; Guzzo, Aug. 26, 2000, *Tampa Bay Times*).

Even in these segregated Black enclaves, so-called Negroes were not safe from encroachment and displacement. The overflow residents from West Hyde Park had little choice but to move to College Hill. Many Cuban immigrants came to West Tampa in 1924, just before the City of Tampa annexed this cigar-producing community in 1925. Within 25 years, the Black residents of Robles Pond would be pushed out through eminent domain as an all-White federal public housing development called Robles Park would replace them. A relative few Black businessmen would build modern homes in the Central Avenue district, in Tampa Proper (Hearns 2019).

In 1924, a former school for White students in East Tampa, known as Lomax High School, served the Black community. The following year, the school board built Booker T. Washington Junior/Senior High School in western Ybor City. George S. Middleton High School in East Tampa's Historic Belmont Heights was the first facility built as a secondary school for Blacks. In 1945, Hillsborough County Public Schools would convert a former warehouse near the Oaklawn Cemetery into the Don Thompson High School for Black students in the Central Avenue district. It was replaced in 1956 by the new Howard W. Blake High School on Spruce Street. Eventually the State of Florida cleared the Tampa Heights area around the old Don Thompson High School site for interstate expansion. The Morgan Street Jail and a HART City Bus terminal would follow nearby years later.

Residential Ybor City in 1924 was largely a mix of White and Black Cubans, with a substantial number of African Americans living there. The inhabitants worked as common laborers or as house servants, in the area's many cigar factories, in corner markets and in retail stores. Local government provided little relief. Some Black men took jobs which discrimination did not prevent them from working, such as longshoremen. In the Garrison, many Black renters began moving out as warehouses and other commercial spaces began replacing them. College Hill was the only residential community during this era that Blacks lived in without being surrounded by White residents. A 1927 survey showed that of 400 Black homes visited, 305 of them were owned by White landlords (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

Many Black households in the 1920s made ends meet by taking in boarders. Of 71 homes surveyed during that era where the tenants were Black, 21 had boarders. The average rent for these dwellings was \$5 a week. "Shotgun houses" (called that because they were built with an opening that went straight through the center of the dwelling) rented for \$3.50 a week. The rental houses in the "Scrub" community called Forty-four quarters had 650 ft. of living space. With an open ditch in the rear of the houses, little or no garbage pickup and a common well, poor health standards were common there (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

Both Black and White renters made do with 3,000 privies in Tampa during this era. And landlords usually only complied with City of Tampa health standards when compelled to do so. Property owners complained that it would cost them one year's rent revenue to install water and sewer lines through their rental units. Enforcing city code violations in these ghettos did not appear to be a priority with either the former mayor-council structure or with the commission-manager form of municipal government in the 1920s (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

Tragically, by 1927 some 534 of the total 1,078 still birth babies in Tampa were Black – although Blacks were just 20% of the city's population. A survey that year found that the chief causes of deaths in the Black community were tuberculosis, nephritis (inflammation of the kidneys) and cerebral hemorrhages. Studies in the 1920s showed that the problem with health in disadvantaged communities was tied to housing, sanitation, lack of recreational opportunities, hospitalization, employment, wages and long hours at work. The primary hospital where Blacks could seek treatment in 1924 was the one operated by nurse Clara Frye. No government funds were directed toward this hospital at that time. A few years after 1924, the voters would reject

a proposed \$500,000 bond issue for a new White medical center, with \$100,000 of those funds slated to go toward medical care for Blacks (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

At the center of the problems Blacks faced in Tampa in 1924 (regardless of the form of municipal government) was racism. This led to their limited income and housing options, poor educational and entrepreneurial opportunities. Bank loans were frequently denied to Black citizens seeking to open their own businesses or to purchase homes. Thus, they could never build wealth equal to that of their White counterparts. Most of these Black men worked as day laborers, while the women were domestic servants. The average salary for Black men in these positions was \$14 a week, while women earned \$8.50 weekly. Union membership was a frequent stumbling block for men who wanted to become certified brick layers, carpenters, painters, paper hangers, cigar makers, electricians, plumbers and mechanics because Blacks first had to be accepted by a White person as an apprentice (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

The government used convict labor, largely Black men, in the 1920s for such projects as grading Temple Terrace Highway. With employment opportunities limited, many Blacks left Tampa after World War I to work in factories in Chicago and Harlem. At the same time, “thousands of rural Florida and Georgia blacks left cotton fields and turpentine camps for opportunities in Tampa,” reported Gary Mormino and Tony Pizzo in *Tampa: the Treasure City* (Mormino and Pizzo, 1983).

In spite of their limited options, Blacks opened 185 businesses in Tampa that employed 400 men and women by 1927. They accumulated \$213,050 in stock and owned 35 grocery stores, 23 barber shops, 21 cleaning and pressing shops, 19 cafes and restaurants, 14 confectionary shops, 9 physicians, 9 insurance companies, 9 pool rooms, 4 dentists, 4 bakeries, 4 trucking companies, 4 undertakers. Many of these businesses were located in the Central Avenue district – which by the 1920s was attracting entertainers and would become world renowned as the “Harlem of the South” (McGrew, Raper and Mays, 1927).

Ann Lowe and John Bates Henry: Light in the Midst of Darkness

Two local Black businesspersons of note were seamstress Ann Lowe and trucking business owner John Bates Henry. Lowe was born in Clayton, Alabama and grew up in the state’s “Cotton Belt.” Her family moved to Montgomery when she was still a child as she learned dressmaking at her mother’s feet. While in Alabama, Lowe came to

the attention of wealthy White Tampa resident Josephine Edwards Lee. Lee persuaded Ann to come to Florida and to live in her estate at Lake Thonotosassa with her other servants and Lee's six children. Soon news of Ann's exceptional talent spread and by 1924, she was sewing for Lee and for many other families in Tampa. As an adult, Lowe first lived in Tampa on Pierce Street and then at 1514 Jefferson Street (Electa 2024).

Lowe and her assistants made the most fashionable dresses during that period. In the 1920s, Ann Lowe creations for women (and costumes for men) were the talk of Tampa's annual Gasparilla balls. Lowe later studied fashion design in Manhattan and moved to New York, where her fame led her to create the wedding dress for First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, bride of President John F. Kennedy. Lowe also made all of Mrs. Kennedy's bridesmaids' dresses. In the 1960s, Lowe was a guest on the popular television program the Mike Douglas Show. She was the subject of a 2024 book entitled *Ann Lowe: American Couturier* (Electa 2024).



Ann Lowe, photo from Ann Lowe: American Couturier (Electa 2024).

John Bates Henry, a mulatto whose family came originally from North Carolina, moved to Monticello, Florida and then to Tampa in the early 1900s. He was looking for a change from farm life for his wife,



Gasparilla 1924, photo from Ann Lowe: American Couturier (Electa 2024).

daughter and son. He wanted to raise them away from north Florida's brutal turpentine camps. Henry eventually opened a trucking business in Tampa and in 1922, he was said to have hauled the decorative stones from the Hillsborough River that went into the façade of the Episcopal House of

Prayer at Michigan Avenue (Columbus Drive) and Central Avenue.

Henry and his family were among the founders of the Garrison Center near Tampa's banana docks. He helped move that building to East Tampa's Historic Belmont Heights community. It became the Pleasant Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church. His son-in-law, Israel Tillman, became one of union president Perry Harvey's trusted headers (supervisors) in the late 1930s at the longshoreman's union (Odom 2014; Hearns 2019).



John Bates Henry

The New 1927 Charter and a Familiar Politico

In 1927, a new city charter brought back the previous structure of local government, with a powerful mayor and a larger number of city council members – some elected from wards or districts and some chosen at-large. McKay had long advocated that a majority of the city's commissioners be elected from wards under the mayor-council structure. Some voters protested the increase in governmental spending during Brown and Wall's terms as mayor. Taxpayers also resented having to pay the full cost of street paving after legislation in 1923 and 1925. And crime, while not new to Tampa, seemed to flourish with homicides, property crimes, bootleggers, drug trafficking and the popular but illegal bolita game in the early 1920s. In November 1927, McKay was elected unopposed as mayor-commissioner. Some residents said the returning mayor's relative, Charlie Wall, was a major reason the illegal bolita houses flourished after McKay became mayor again.

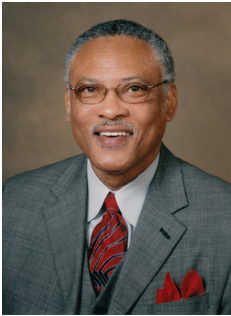
In 1927, voters approved by a vote of 4,880 to 1,507 a political structure of a mayor and twelve councilmen. Of Tampa's twenty-six precincts only three voted against the charter. Strong support came from the Latin voters in Ybor City and West Tampa. Wall, the widely reputed gambling czar, helped push support there toward McKay and his coalition. And with McKay back in the mayor's seat the commission-manager form of local government abruptly came to an end in Tampa (Kerstein 2001).

Since 1927, a mayor and city council members (some members elected at-large and some from districts) have directed the affairs of the City of Tampa. And after the official demise of the White Municipal Party in 1947, and the adoption of single member districts in 1983, Black voters and others in Tampa have elected Black candidates in every city council

campaign since Robert (Bob) Martinez served as mayor from 1979-1986 ([law.justia.com/Warren v. City of Tampa, 1988](http://law.justia.com/Warren%20v.%20City%20of%20Tampa)).

With the exception of the seven days that Thomas Henderson spent in late 1931 as acting mayor following McKay's resignation a week before the end of his term, the city's top office was occupied for the following twenty-five years by only two men: Mayors Robert Lee Chancey (1931-1943) and Curtis Hixon (1943-1956). In 1949, while Hixon was in office, a charter revision gave the mayor additional powers. This further confirmed the population's extensive faith during the 20th Century in the mayor-council system of local government (Kerstein 2021).

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.

A Conversation with Tampa City Councilman Charlie Miranda 1974-2024

First elected in 1974, Charlie Miranda is not only one of two of the longest serving City Council members in the City's history he is also one of the most colorful. Known for his campaign slogan "Who Cares? Miranda Cares!", fiscal responsibility, and razor sharp memory we asked Charlie to share some of the changes he remembers or has been a part of when it comes to the City of Tampa.



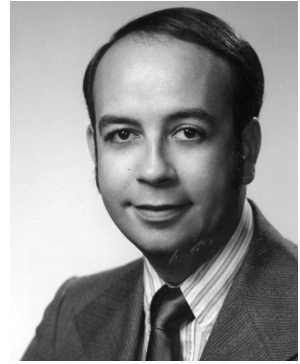
You can always be certain about one thing, okay maybe more than one thing, but for the purpose of this intro and the City of Tampa, it's that "change" is inevitable. I am proud to be a part of this book and take many of you down memory lane and some of you down "I didn't know that" lane.

Let me start off by talking about our government structure. When I was first elected into office in 1974, all seven district City Council seats were At-Large, meaning every seat represented the entire city. It wasn't until 1987, with city growth that we went from seven At-Large District seats to three At-Large District seats and four Single-Member District seats. As a result of that change, I am one of the few council members who have represented all citizens of Tampa by being elected to two different At-Large seats and two out of the four Single-Member seats.

In addition to structure changes, we also have had election-day changes. Today everyone wonders why City Council members, and the Mayor, are all elected at the same time. There was no staggering of election seats due to the cost of an election. In fact, City Council elections were held during the General Elections. Those elections used to be in September 1971-75 then changed to October 1975-79, and finally moved to March in 1983, where it still stands today. Voter turnout in the early days could reach as high as 40%. Today we're lucky to reach a 15-20% voter turnout.

In the early 1970s I decided that people should have the right to seek office without paying filing fees. I thought it shouldn't be about raising money, but rather the person's desire to serve. So I filed a lawsuit that would permit candidates to file by obtaining a certain number of petitions. The case won here in Federal Court, but the State took it to the Circuit Court of Appeal and then on to the U.S. Supreme Court and in 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed that people should be able

to seek office utilizing the petition method. Since then, many candidates have qualified using the petition method rather than paying a filing fee.



Charlie Miranda in 1974

Once elected, council members didn't have a fancy office to serve its constituents; in fact, Council members shared a big office area on the 3rd Floor of old City Hall with a cubbyhole for our messages and one phone for everyone to share. (Now we have government in the Sunshine laws.) In fact, because we didn't have offices, constituents would at times meet you at your home. The office was staffed by four people who supported all of our efforts. The office manager was Beverly Spicola, assisted by Hazel Pines (who later became office manager), Joann Pennington and the receptionist, Christy. Our agenda was printed on a mimeograph machine. No fancy copiers back then.

The Mayor's office and staff was also located on the 3rd floor of old City Hall along with the Office of City Clerk. In 1978, Mayor William Poe built a new City Hall, now called the Tampa Municipal Office Building, and moved the Mayor's office and staff to the eighth floor. I'll never forget, one day Mayor Poe called me in to his office and sat me down. He said "Charlie, you're too darn smart to be dumb. You need to finish your education. I want you to go over to the University of Tampa and sign up!" Thanks to the mentoring of this fine Mayor, I did what he said, and the rest is history. In the meantime, while the Mayor and his staff were moving out, City Council members were moving in to their new space with an office for each council member. However, it wasn't until the mid-80s that City Council aides became part of the picture. In 1999, Mayor Greco moved the mayor's office and staff from the eighth floor to the first floor to be more accessible to the people.

In 1971, before I became a council member Catherine Barja was the first woman elected to the City Council. In 1974, Tampa voted in two more women to City Council seats. I had the pleasure of serving with these two women who went on to do bigger and better things than me. Jan Platt became a County Commissioner and Sandy Freedman became Mayor of the City of Tampa.

For many years, if you ever visited old City Hall and needed to take the elevator to a floor higher than the third floor, chances were you would

be greeted and driven by Hortensia Sotomayor, the elevator operator. Upon Hortensia's retirement in 2007, the position of elevator operator was retired and an automated elevator came to old City Hall.

I remember when City Council meetings didn't require security personnel. However, when the world changed on September 11, 2001, security measures ramped up, and officers became a part of our process – waving a wand around people before they can enter the council meetings and, on a rare occasion, escorting out a malcontent.

As our government structure was changing to accommodate growth, so were government operations. In 1974, our budget was around \$300 million.

Today, our city budget is around \$2.2 billion. Throughout the years, city utility bills were mailed on postcards then changed to a single page and today you can pay your bill online...paperless. In the postcard days, you would tear off the perforated tab and mail that in with your payment or, bring it in person to pay. On the back of the water bill postcard it was blank. I initiated the printing of city contact information on the back of the post card as well as other pertinent public notices that provided good customer service and took advantage of this post card that we were already paying to print and mail. City services have changed too. The days of the garbage truck with four employees who lifted the trashcan that you were required to buy, and dumped your garbage in the truck compactor has been replaced by one driver and an automated garbage truck that with a push of the button does it all.

When it comes to City Council meetings, televised meetings didn't occur until the end of 1984, but the meeting was taped for showing at a later date. In December, 1986 council meetings went live through city's government access channel.

Sometimes change means "what goes around comes around"—downtown streets have had their share of changes. Two-way streets were turned in to one-way streets and during the lorio administration, we realized that this change impacted businesses and didn't make it easy for people to park, so we changed one-way streets back to two-way with the exception of a few.

Another thing that has changed throughout the years is the political process of running for office. As someone who grew up living in the Tampa Public Housing, which by the way is now referred to as Affordable Housing, I didn't know how bad I had it. In fact, I thought I lived in a condominium. We had stairs, solar heating, and hot water.

I never once thought I couldn't achieve what I set my mind to. And I never thought I wasn't good enough to run for office.

You see, the entire process was so different back then—it was more personal. There were 12,000 people in the cigar industry and really several big companies that employed most of the people: Continental Can, American Can, Reynolds Can, Schlitz, and Budweiser. You had the ability to go to those places at every shift change and shake everyone's hand and strike up a conversation. You could touch 20,000 people relatively fast over and over. We also had the ability to visit stores and talk with people in the stores. We could also use a megaphone in an open car with speakers and ride through neighborhoods reminding people to vote, telling them who to vote for, and other messages. We visited fire stations and we were able to talk to each shift; we held more fish fries and spaghetti dinners to meet more people face-to-face.

Population growth and technology influenced a lot of change in the political process. A City Council race back then cost about \$5,000 to \$7,000 dollars and there were no campaign managers or consultants with a population of about 200,000. Today, a City Council race will cost around \$100,000 dollars and up with a population of over 400,000. Technology makes it easy for candidates to pinpoint where they need to spend their time and money without the need to be so visible.

There was a time you had to go to the polls if you wanted to vote. Voting day was just one day. Today voters have several options, you can go to the polls, mail-in your ballot, and even vote early to give the voters more opportunity to vote.

The way the media covered elections was much different. Beat reporters would get to know you, were more hands on talking to people, researching, and really learning the facts. Today, they let their fingers do the walking on the keyboard to research facts. Social media has driven news reporting to be more instantaneous and spontaneous.

I could go on and on about what's changed and what hasn't. What I do know is that I feel very fortunate and honored to have been a part of it all!

Just for the record, there are some things that haven't changed: a lot of effort by a lot of people throughout the years to keep our city moving forward and making our community a better place to live, work, play, and learn. And then there's me—Charlie Miranda. For the past 50 years, Charlie Miranda has cared and still does!

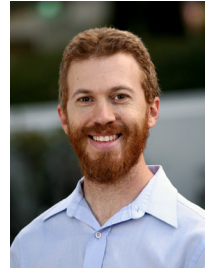


In May of 2024, Councilman Charlie Miranda received the John Land Years of Service Award from the Florida League of Cities, Inc. in recognition of his commitment to municipal leadership and governance, serving a total of 30 years in office. He is the second longest serving council member, with only Lee Duncan having served longer, with 36 years of service.

Tampa Changing

In 2010, Tampa native Bryan Weinstein created a website called Tampa Changing to document how Tampa has changed over time. Using photos from the public library's Burgert Brothers collection, Bryan revisited each site and took a new photo from the same angle to show how each place had changed. This is called rephotography.

The photo below shows 710 Florida Avenue at the southwest corner of Polk Street in 1924. Back then, it was a furnished rooming house that was operated by a woman named Amanda Johnson.



***Bryan Weinstein,
Creator of
Tampa Changing***



Bryan took the modern-day photo below at the same location.



Images of Tampa in 1924



This billboard advertised Tampa Theatre, which would be completed in 1926. Its location on 710 N. Franklin Street was featured on the previous page in the Tampa Changing section.



A similar billboard was located across the street, at the future Tampa Theatre location, 711 N. Franklin Street.



Cuesta-Rey and Company, corner Howard and Ponce DeLeon Street, front and side facade of multi-story brick cigar factory on July 5, 1924.



Franklin Street Crowds on Gasparilla Day, February 4, 1924.



View of We-Fone-U Stores brick building on April 19, 1924. This business was a grocery delivery service where groceries could be ordered by phone and delivered to customers.



Crowds in the midway at the Florida State Fair.



A parade float on Gasparilla Day, February 4, 1924.



Arrival of Gasparilla Pirate ship "C. H. Hackley" on river in front of Plant Park on Gasparilla Day, February 4, 1924.



Yacht "Zalophus" on Hillsborough River passing under the Lafayette Street Bridge during Gasparilla Day on February 4, 1924.



Excursion boat in Tampa on March 15, 1924.



1924 Billboard located at Seventh Avenue and Nebraska Avenue congratulating D. P. Davis, developer of Davis Islands.



D.P. Davis is show on the right of this photo, which also includes Governor Clifford Walker of New Jersey, and Miss Sara Lykes Keller - Miss Tampa. This photo was taken at the Gandy Bridge opening in November 1924.



A view of the Tampa Bay Hotel and its minarets above the tree tops on July 11, 1924.



The First Baptist Church building nearing completion on corner of West Lafayette Street and Plant Avenue on March 22, 1924. This building still stands 100 years later in 2024.



Palma Ceia Golf Course in 1924.



Sunset from La Casa Encantada in Beach Park on October 14, 1924.



View of the Children's Home at 3302 Florida Avenue. This building still stands 100 years later in 2024.



National City Bank Building on corner at 701 Franklin Street.



City of
Tampa
Florida

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