

# STARS

## Florida Historical Quarterly

---

Volume 49  
Number 4 *Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol 49,*  
*Number 4*

Article 3

1970

### Making of Modern Tampa: A City of the New South, 1885-1911

Durward Long



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Florida Historical Quarterly by an authorized editor of STARS. For more information, please contact [STARS@ucf.edu](mailto:STARS@ucf.edu).

---

#### Recommended Citation

Long, Durward (1970) "Making of Modern Tampa: A City of the New South, 1885-1911," *Florida Historical Quarterly*: Vol. 49 : No. 4 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/fhq/vol49/iss4/3>

## THE MAKING OF MODERN TAMPA: A CITY OF THE NEW SOUTH, 1885-1911

by DURWARD LONG

**H**ISTORIANS HAVE YET to devote the thought and research to urbanization in the South that the subject deserves. Coulter's brief attention to the growth and role of cities and towns in the Reconstruction era, Van Woodward's similarly brief concern with cities in his *Origins of the New South*, Ezell's short treatment in his textbook survey, Park's interpretative chapter in *Couch's Culture in the South*, and Vance's edited work on the recent South nearly exhaust the list of serious histories which offer even slight leads about southern urbanization.<sup>1</sup> A survey of the *Journal of Southern History* and state historical journals is equally disappointing despite the fact that the larger changes of the South since the Civil War have been inextricably tied to the city. Only recently have students of the South's history turned to examining the city as a topic deserving of as much attention as "Bourbons," "Redeemers," "Populists," "Jim Crow," and the politics of the "Solid South." It could be that the lag in historical study reflects the lag of the section in comparing quantitatively with urbanization of other regions.<sup>2</sup> But perhaps quantitative measurements, which place the South about fifty years behind other parts of the nation, do not necessarily indicate the degree of importance urbanization has played in the South since the Civil War. Nevertheless, as recently as 1967, a monograph on research needs in the South failed to include urban development as a separate topic.<sup>3</sup>

---

\* Mr. Long is vice-chancellor, University Center System, University of Wisconsin, Madison. This paper was read at the Southern Historical Association meeting, Washington, October 1969.

1. Merton Coulter, *The South During Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge, 1947), 252-74; C. Van Woodward, *Origins of the New South* (Baton Rouge, 1951); John Samuel Ezell, *The South Since 1865* (New York, 1963), 232-37; Edd Winfield Parks, "Southern Towns and Cities," in W. T. Couch, ed., *Culture in the South* (Chapel Hill, 1935), 500-18; Rupert Vance, ed., *The Urban South* (Chapel Hill, 1954).
2. Charles N. Glaab and A. Theodore Brown, *A History of Urban America* (New York, 1967), 130-32.
3. Edgar T. Thompson, ed., *Perspectives for the South: Agenda for Research* (Chapel Hill, 1967).

It is probable that serious studies of the rebirth of cities like Richmond and Atlanta, the emergence of Birmingham and Dallas, the agonizing struggle of New Orleans to retain her importance, the dramatic growth of Memphis, Nashville, Durham, and scores of lesser medium-sized towns would reveal patterns of historical development which would prove helpful in understanding the many Souths of the present. Although the approximately forty years following the removal of the last of the federal occupation troops is particularly pivotal in the emergence of the modern South, the role of urbanization in this development is relatively untouched in the South's historiography.

Whatever else the term "New South" includes, it suggests the rise of the commercial entrepreneur as the dominant economic force. It is this development which is "writ large" in the progress of Tampa from an isolated gulf coastal town of sandbeds, small merchants, and cattlemen to a thriving commercial port city in 1911 through which the majority of the world's phosphate and the lion's share of luxury cigars passed.

Although the Tampa Bay area was known by the Spanish well before the nineteenth century, it was not settled until the Americans established Fort Brooke on Tampa Bay in 1824.<sup>4</sup> The trading post and other non-military enterprises which sprang up around the fort became "Tampa" in 1834. The presence of troops encouraged settlers to Florida's west coast during the Seminole wars; others came under the terms of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842.<sup>5</sup> But the transportation and communication barriers, the constant threat of yellow fever and the Seminoles, and the other hardships imposed by the primitive region kept the population small. The total inhabitants numbered only 796 in 1870 after a slight impetus of growth due to federal troops in the town and fort; the population then dropped to 720 by 1880.<sup>6</sup>

During the 1880s, Tampa experienced a vigorous growth because of a number of economic changes, some from purely local

4. Charles W. Arnade, "Celi's Expedition to Tampa Bay: A Historical Analysis," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLVII (July 1968), 1-7; Clarence E. Carter, ed., *Territorial Papers of the United States: Florida Territory*, 26 vols. (Washington, 1956-1962) XXII, 844.

5. Karl Grismer, *Tampa* (St. Petersburg, 1950), 94-99.

6. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910*, "Population," II (Washington, 1912), 299.

developments, while others were reverberations from national and state trends. Nearby, the farm population to the north and west of Tampa, in Hillsborough and Polk counties, tripled each decade after 1870, creating a market for Tampa's merchants and a clientele for the area's transportation lines. Cultivating market garden commodities, vegetables, citrus, and other truck crops, the farmers turned to towns as the natural market; some Tampa townsmen became brokers to ship the commodities to New Orleans and other ports.<sup>7</sup> Cattle ranching, continued from earlier days, emphasized the need for rail or port depots. The settlement of Florida's frontier lands on the gulf coast was in keeping with the national trend propelling settlers to open federal lands; it was further encouraged by Florida's policy of inviting immigration to inhabit its swamp and timber lands, and the state's award of lands to railroads which pierced the sparsely populated wilds.<sup>8</sup>

Among the companies penetrating Florida's frontier was Henry Bradley Plant's investment company. Plant's South Florida Railroad was instrumental in launching Tampa on its course to a modern city where construction began in 1883 on a rail line that would connect the gulf community with Jacksonville on the eastern seaboard.<sup>9</sup> During the same year the old military reservation, Fort Brooke, comprising sixteen square miles juxtaposing Tampa Bay, was opened to settlement, bringing in a number of newcomers and launching a flurry of interest in land speculation.<sup>10</sup> Also in 1883, pebbles of phosphate were dredged up in the Hillsborough Channel, causing still another type of land fever in Hillsborough County and Tampa.

In one year, the town took on the symptoms of some of the

- 
7. The diary of John T. Lesley, a Tampa entrepreneur during the period, revealed that he acted as a middleman in many businesses and farm crops, like other general merchants of the town. The diary also indicated that barter and Spanish gold coins were common in the village as late as the 1880s. A copy of the diary is in the author's possession.
  8. Robert James Young, "Administering Florida's Natural Resources" (M.A. thesis, University of Florida, 1952), S-10. See also Alfred J. Hanna and Kathryn Abbey Hanna, *Lake Okeechobee: Wellspring of the Everglades* (Indianapolis, 1948).
  9. The connection to Tampa was completed on February 10, 1884 according to Henry V. Poor, *Poor's Manual of Railroads* (New York, 1890), 725.
  10. D. haul Westmeyer, "Tampa, Florida, A Geographic Interpretation of its Development" (M.A. thesis, University of Florida, 1953), 47, like Grismer, Tampa, probably overemphasizes the opening of Fort Brooke lands to settlement in 1883.

mining settlements of the West, and over the next two decades events in the surrounding area assumed nearly all of the characteristics of a frenzied western community "on the make," but with a southern flavor.

While the railroad, the opening of Fort Brooke, and the phosphate discovery were influential in bringing the town to new life, it was not until the cigar industry began operations in 1885 that a solid industrial and population base provided the catalyst for Tampa to become a city. Literally thousands of workers followed the factories over the next few decades.<sup>11</sup> And in great measure, the organization of entrepreneurs into the Tampa board of trade in 1885 was responsible for bringing the cigar industry to the city by assuring factory owners of subsidies in land and construction of buildings, although wisely avoiding any commitments of *tax* exemption.<sup>12</sup> The board of trade seemed to be the generating force in developing Tampa after 1885, unifying influential political sentiment and serving as the catalyst to initiate change. The activities of the body during its first two years included campaigns for a variety of improved city services and business-oriented developments such as attracting V. Martinez Ybor and the cigar industry from Key West.<sup>13</sup>

Within two years after Ybor established a cigar manufacturing city named after himself, Tampa annexed it, and it was incorporated as a city.<sup>14</sup> With the beginning of phosphate mining and the opening of Plant's rail connection to Port Tampa in 1888, the city's new economic base was set and its transportation links to other parts of the region and the nation were assured. Largely as a result of the efforts of the board of trade, the gulf port was declared an official port of entry in 1887, and a customs house was established, primarily to receive the large imports of Cuban tobacco which the cigar makers made into

- 
11. See Wallace Martin Nelson, "The Economic Development of Florida, 1870-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1962), 398-99, for Hillsborough's labor force increases.
  12. Ybor and his partner, Edward Manrara, were given a subsidy of \$4,000 in cash and land toward the purchase of a tract of ten acres for a total price of \$9,000. See Minutes of the Tampa Board of Trade, October 5, 1885, Ledger I, 15.
  13. Minutes of the Tampa Board of Trade, Ledger I, 4-42, and Minutes of the Board of Governors of the Tampa Board of Trade, Ledger II, 4-10.
  14. Durward Long, "Historical Beginnings of Ybor City and Modern Tampa," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, XLV (July 1966), 31-44.

Tampa-brand Havana cigars.

Simultaneous with these business activities, utilities and other urban services were initiated. The city had two telegraph lines by 1884, and a local street railway company was formed the next year, financed with local capital and outfitted with passenger cars made on the scene. The Tampa Electric Company came into existence in 1887 to provide lighting and energy for other uses and was soon thereafter reorganized as a stock company renamed the Tampa Electric Light and Power Company. A water works was established in the middle 1880s, although it was 1889 before it provided water to city businesses and residents. Supporting these improvements, the board of trade also sponsored a bond issue in 1889 to provide \$65,000 for sewers and \$35,000 for paving city streets. The Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company brought telephones to the city in 1890, and in the same year, a Florida railway firm, the Florida Central and Peninsular, constructed a second railroad. The new company also brought Plant's monopoly much-needed competition.

As the city entered the decade of the 1890s, with a population of nearly 6,000 or a seven-fold increase in ten years,<sup>15</sup> it had many of the characteristics of a city and was radically different from the village of 1880. Electric lights, a sewerage system, sidewalks, and paved streets were subjects of local pride despite the fact that they served only the commercial and business section. Efforts to pave streets with cypress blocks became a fiasco when during the first rainy season the blocks swelled and popped out of their places. Like many other cities, Tampa's sewers emptied raw sewage directly into the Hillsborough River. In 1891 Tampan approved a bond issue of another \$100,000 for streets and sewers.

There were other differences, however slight, in the pattern of development in the 1890s. Previously advancement had in great measure been sponsored by local entrepreneurs and one or two outside interests which held a monopoly over their economic function. Now competition among the various interests became quite severe, particularly among the railroads and opposing street railway and electric and light companies. In each of these cases outside capital allied with a local interest usually won out. Com-

15. *Thirteenth Census, 1910, "Population," II, 299.*

petition extended to journalism as well, with one group of businessmen sponsoring the *Tampa Times* and another backing the *Tampa Tribune*. It was also during this period before the twentieth century that the deposit and exchange of capital was sufficient to bring about the establishment of four banks, each of which was capitalized, at least during the early years, by local businessmen.

It was during this era of competition that the Boston firm of Stone and Webster was indirectly aided in its quest for control of the Tampa Electric Company when cattlemen dynamited the company's dam north of Tampa because the dam flooded open grazing range. The company never recovered, **and it** had to sell to Stone and Webster. A more standard device; excessively low passenger rates, was used by the Consumers Electric Light and Power Company, financed by New York capital, to force the locally-owned Tampa Street Railway into bankruptcy in 1894 after two years of competitive warfare. National concentration in the Havana cigar industry began in the late 1890s, bringing the American Tobacco Company' to the city in 1901.<sup>16</sup> The following year the Atlantic Coast Line Rail Company purchased control of Plant's Florida Southern Railroad.<sup>17</sup>

In part, the gradual change from a mercantile town to a more entrepreneurial and urbanized community was reflected in the kinds of businessmen who organized Tampa's board of trade in 1885 and the group which reorganized the body in 1892.<sup>18</sup> The initial group was dominated by general or specialty retail store owners (twenty-seven of sixty-three) and lawyers and other professions. In 1892 real estate dealers numbered more than any other single group and were tied with managers and superintendents of companies; builders and building suppliers constituted the next largest group, followed by general retailers, and then lawyers.<sup>19</sup> Manufacturers and managers grew in number and prominence among board members, and by 1911, together with lawyers, they seemed to exert the greatest influence on board action.

16. *Report of the Commissioner of Corporations on the Tobacco Industry* Pt. I, (Washington, 1909), 7.

17. Henry V. Poor, *Poor's Manual of Railroads* (New York, 1902), 250.

18. Minutes of the Tampa Board of Trade, Ledger I, 1-3.

19. *Ibid.*, 62.

From the beginning, Tampa had lacked a deep water port conveniently close to the settlement. The channel of the Hillsborough River was too shallow for big ships to enter. Moreover, the depth of the gulf at the mouth of the Hillsborough remained consistently two to three feet for several miles. The nearest natural deep water channel was Old Tampa Bay, nine or ten miles from the Hillsborough River. Although army engineers made efforts to dredge the river in 1886, they pronounced the enterprise exorbitantly expensive and recommended that federal harbor improvement funds be spent on Old Tampa Bay. Once again Henry Bradley Plant provided the initial investment by constructing an extension wharf on Old Tampa Bay, creating Port Tampa. It was tied to Tampa by a rail connection with Plant's South Florida Railroad. Plant's steamship company served the port, giving his empire a monopoly of commercial shipping for a brief time. And because his railroad controlled the Florida interior, he played a dominant role with the shippers who wished to make port connections. To add glamour to his varied holdings, Plant completed the opulent Tampa Bay Hotel in 1891, providing a gulf coast competitor for Henry Flagler's Ponce de Leon Hotel in St. Augustine.

Plant's Port Tampa experienced its greatest prosperity during the Spanish-American War. Even before the United States entered the conflict, Tampa had become a center of support for Cuban revolutionaries who regularly visited the city to secure funds and to contract with filibusterers for the delivery of arms to the island. At the same time, Tampa merchants served the Spanish in Cuba by shipping cattle to Havana. Tampa became the major port of embarkation for men and supplies during the war. Thousands of troops were encamped in and near the city, producing a monthly payroll of approximately \$75,000, in addition to pouring other funds into the local economy through purchase of supplies and services. The nation's attention focused on Tampa, and the city enjoyed the limelight of free advertising of inestimable value. Port Tampa was burdened beyond its ability to serve, filling company coffers, and bringing unknown prosperity to hotels and suppliers.<sup>20</sup>

20. William J. Schellings, "The Role of Florida in the Spanish-American War, 1898" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1958), 256, 258, 273-74.



Partly because of unhappy experiences with the inadequacy of Port Tampa and partly because of the continued promotional activities of the Tampa board of trade, congress in 1899 approved a serious effort to develop a port at Tampa and to expand Port Tampa. Other large appropriations in 1905 and 1910 provided a total of nearly \$3,000,000 to transform a marshy estuary into a modern port. The port of Tampa began receiving large steamers in 1908, and by World War I it was a major port. But it was not the pattern of commercial development, complemented by a nationally-important extractive industry, which made Tampa unique among the New South's cities. Nor was the city unique in the spirited promotionalism of its entrepreneurs, organized in a formidable block to achieve their aims in city politics and the development of local commerce. The factor which distinguished Tampa among southern urban communities was the presence of large numbers of immigrants during the development of the city.

The population changes in Tampa and Hillsborough County between 1880-1911 were dramatic in the percentage of increase, and, as significantly, in the composition of the population. Compared to the nation's average increase of 25.5 per cent, and Florida's growth of 45.2 per cent between 1880-1890, Tampa grew by 668 per cent in the period. During the next two decades the city increased by 186 and 138 per cent, respectively, compared with the state's growth of 35 and 42 per cent, and the nation's low 20 and 21 per cent.<sup>21</sup> Coincidental with the rapid growth of the cigar manufacturing industry and with the post Spanish-American War period, Tampa's population became more heterogeneous. In Hillsborough County in 1890 there were 2,275 foreign-born inhabitants and 2,917 blacks, comprising a third of the total. Ten years later, the foreign-born white males of voting age numbered nearly 3,000; black males of voting age totaled over 2,500; together they outnumbered by 1,000 the approximately 4,500 native white males of voting age, and constituted more than half of the *males* of voting age. By 1910, there were almost as many foreign-born males of voting age as natives; with blacks, the two groups comprised more than 60 per cent of the county's voting-age males.<sup>22</sup> Restrictive electoral

21. Thirteenth **Census, 1910**, "Population," II, 298-99.

22. *Ibid.*, 311, 315, 332.

laws minimized the possible effect of this particular grouping of potential voters.

Within Tampa, the population change was even more pronounced than in the county. By 1900, a new town, West Tampa, had emerged as an almost exclusively non-native white community. Within a decade, its slightly more than 8,000 population included only 626 native whites of native parentage and 6,500 foreign-born or of foreign or mixed parentage. In 1910, there were nearly 21,000 persons of foreign birth residing in Tampa.<sup>23</sup> The city boasted of 9,000 wage earners in manufacturing in 1909, nearly four times that of any other Florida city. The value of tobacco products in Tampa in 1909 was nearly \$15,000,000, or 82 per cent of the city's manufactured products.<sup>24</sup>

The percentage of foreign-born employees in the Tampa cigar industry ranged from 75 to 90 per cent in the years 1885-1911. During the first decade the Cubans were in greatest numerical strength, the Spanish second, and the Italians third. These groups changed positions in numerical importance during the period, but they remained the most important three.<sup>25</sup> A study of these groups in 1908 revealed that 87.3 per cent of the Cubans, 49.8 per cent of the Spanish, but only 25.0 per cent of the South Italians were engaged in the manufacturing of cigars and tobacco before coming to the United States. As a contrast, 39.2 per cent of the South Italians and 28.4 per cent of the Spanish were engaged in farming or farm labor before migrating, while only 7.0 per cent of the Cubans were so engaged.<sup>26</sup> The majority of the new residents had been urban and town dwellers before they came to the United States.

The immigrants' response to their new environment and the natives' reaction to the Latin immigrants constituted one of the most important themes of the city's social and political development. The Latins included Cuban, Spanish, and Italian workers who had immigrated to Tampa from Key West, New Orleans, New York, Cuba, and from their home countries. Generally, they were highly literate and brought with them ideas of

23. *Ibid.*, "Manufacturing 1909," IX, 20.

24. *Ibid.*, 20, 196.

25. "Report of the Immigration Commission," *Senate Documents*, 61st Cong., 2nd sess., No. 633, 1911, Pt. 14, "Cigar and Tobacco Manufacturing," 186-200.

26. *Ibid.*, 200.

social and economic cooperation that did not always agree with their native American neighbors. Drawing ideas from Kropotkin and Marx rather than from Darwin, the immigrants found themselves condemned as "radical" when these ideas were expounded.

In addition to the basic philosophical differences between the immigrants and the native Tampans, the confusing racial composition of the newcomers created another breach. The various shades of skin color among the Cubans caused the natives to lump most of them with the Negro and to adopt a similar pattern of discrimination against them. The deceptively open pattern of integration of Negroes in the ranks of Cuban labor caused the Tampa gentry to attribute it to radicalism. Voluntary segregation among the middle and upper economic and social families was so subtle that it was often overlooked. Factory owners, for example, whether Spanish or Cuban, felt little if any discrimination by the "Anglos," and, in fact, moved quite freely among "high society." Their sons and daughters (usually daughters) sometimes married into families of Tampa's old elite. While there was generally little or no structured color discrimination within the Cuban colony, blacks were not welcomed as members of *Circulo Cubano*, a mutual benefit society organized in 1899. The next year Cuban blacks organized *La Union Marti-Maceo*.<sup>27</sup>

The development of immigrant institutions, including the hand manufacture of cigars, gave the city its unique flavor and strongly influenced the making of modern Tampa. The Latins formed labor unions, some of which were founded on Marxian and syndicalist ideology. They organized mutual benefit societies which provided unemployment and burial insurance, cooperative medicine, and educational and recreational programs.<sup>28</sup> Social medicine groups were organized as early as 1888. The newcomers shocked Tampans with their open discussion of anarchistic and socialistic ideas. Their interests in philosophical and literary works, with particular recurrence of Lamarck, Hugo,

27. Jules A. Frost, "History of Ybor City," *Ybor City*, Federal **Writer's** Project, Works Progress Administration for the State of Florida, 6, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. "Life of Jose Ramon Sanfeliz," *ibid.*, 7.

28. Durward Long, "An Immigrant Cooperative Medicine Program in the South, 1887-1963," *Journal of Southern History* (November 1965), 417-34.

Zola, and other European writers, and their cosmopolitan social habits gave the city a Latin flavor. The Spanish newspapers, social customs, and festivals which appeared in the early twentieth century continue to exist. The organization of anarchistic reading groups, socialist political groups, and the endorsement of Eugene Debs, the I.W.W., and the Mexican Revolution by some of the Latins, galvanized Tampa's entrepreneurs into a formidable economic and political force. Laborer's demands for a union shop and threats of a general strike were viewed by the business interests through the colored glasses of the Haymarket and Pullman affairs, McKinley's assassination, and Marxian socialism. Therefore, commercial interests resisted with all powers at their disposal, legal and otherwise.

From the very early days of the cigar industry, the Tampa board of trade had assured the owners of the companies that life and property would be protected by all legal means.<sup>29</sup> More than once, the business elite acted as non-neutral mediators in labor disputes and sometimes encouraged vigilante action against the alleged "radical agitators." In 1901, *La Resistencia* union and strike leaders were forcibly kidnapped, put aboard a chartered ship, deposited on a deserted beach in Honduras, and warned under threat of their lives never to return to Tampa.

Law enforcement officials, although aware of the kidnapping, failed to prevent it or to prosecute the vigilantes. Despite the demands by laborers for an investigation of the affair, and a subsequent white-washing by a federal attorney, the native community of Tampa found little to condemn.<sup>30</sup> As the immigrant labor organizations grew larger and more militant, so did the spirit of vigilantism in Tampa, which resulted in the lynching of two Italians during the strike of 1910-1911 in retaliation for the shooting of a cigar company's bookkeeper. This tragedy not only created more severe divisions along nationality lines, but it also broke the spirit of unionism for nearly a decade. More significantly, it drove underground any radical ideas among the Latins, and for some it probably destroyed hope in achieving fundamental change through the normal legal and

- 
29. Minutes of the Tampa Board of Trade, March 8, 1887, Ledger I, 41. This assurance was in response to a strike in some of the factories and in reaction to rumored threats against non-strikers and the factories.
30. Durward Long, "La Resistencia: Tampa's Immigrant Labor Union," *Labor History*, V (Fall 1965), 193-213.

political processes.

For a variety of reasons, the main one of which being a restricted electorate, there was no sustained or significant social or political reform in the city in the period prior to 1911. While the evidence consulted is *unclear* at this point, it appears that the immigrants did not participate significantly in the city's political life. Instead, they used the mutual benefit societies as protection leagues—Spanish versus Cuban prior to War War I; Asturianos versus other Spaniards, and Latins against Anglos—as educational self-help organizations, and as cooperative medical and welfare groups; in great measure they diverted their tendency to social reform into these societies. For most of the period, the Latins also rejected the American middle-class idea of labor unions and resisted the establishment craftsmen of the American Federation of Labor. There were flirtations with and serious discussions about the varieties of socialist ideology of the time, although electoral returns do not in themselves indicate *significant* political support of socialist candidates. About twenty per cent of the socialist votes cast in Florida in 1904 were in Hillsborough, ten per cent in 1908, and about fifteen per cent in 1912. In each year the number was much less than 1,000, and hovered closer to 500, but that vote was probably the reflection of the attitudes of a much larger group of immigrants who were unregistered.<sup>31</sup> Many of them soon became involved in local politics and the traditional party cleavages; others rejected political activity altogether as promising any hope for the worker.

Although there was a powerful minority of commercial leaders who influenced the political and economic fortunes of the city during the period of development, "bossism" in the form of one powerful individual does not manifest itself. Peter O. Knight, an influential attorney who became a corporation lawyer with national firms by World War I, came closest to qualifying as a boss. The alliance of the managers, entrepreneurs, and the *Tampa Tribune* constituted the clique which determined Tampa's directions. D. B. McKay and his political supporters, primarily business leaders and old Tampa families, was closest to a political machine, but it fell short of the control

---

31. Florida had the highest socialist vote among the southern states in these elections. See the official election returns for 1904, 1908, 1912 in the *Biennial Reports of the Secretary of State for the State of Florida*.

maintained by machines in other cities. Perhaps the absence of a discernible bossism actually prevented the rise of a significant progressive impulse. And while there was an elite of sorts in the early years, it was based on old Tampa families and professionals and not on entrenched wealth.

Until 1880 Tampa was nothing more than a village, exhibiting the characteristics of a garrison and market city. Its geographical location made it a likely distribution center for a relatively restricted interior hinterland and a break-in-transportation point for rail-water connections. These considerations prompted Plant to build his railroad into Tampa. Some historians have sought in the railroad the one main explanation for Tampa's growth. But to do so is to overemphasize the importance of one factor in the complex development in even a small city. Without the promotional activities of the board of trade, it is questionable whether the village of Tampa would have developed as it did. Also, it seems fairly clear that the cigar industry and its accompanying Spanish-speaking immigration decisively affected the course of the city's development. The accidental discovery of phosphate and the establishment of a world supplier of this extractive product fortuitously occurred during the same period. These economic interests provided the impetus for the construction of the port of Tampa and constituted the city's modern economic configuration.

Along with Tampa's economic development and growth there were several technological advances and improvements in the general living conditions, although these were rarely part of an organized effort to better the lives of all citizens. In many ways, the city remained tied to the Old South, with the entrepreneur replacing the planter and landed squirearchy, although there was even some revival of the latter, based on profits of commerce. These conditions seem to conform to most of the growing cities in the nation in this age of Horatio Alger rather than to those of just the New South. But the mixture of ante bellum southern tradition, the commercial entrepreneurship of the New South, and significant numbers of immigrant workers drawing practices from still other institutional values provided the milieu of Tampa as a modern city. Recurring tensions over the years indicate that the three institutional patterns still persist and that none have won a total victory.