Paradise Reclaimed:

The End of Frontier Florida and the Birth of a Modern State, 1900-1940

by

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The question of whether Florida remained a frontier region well into the twentieth century is examined. For the purposes of this study, the concept of a frontier is not based on geography, but on social perception and infrastructural development. Specific areas of interest include disease prevention, the development of roads and railroads, promotional literature, and advertising as a state sponsored business.

Data gathered in pursuit of these questions comes from a variety of sources. A broad selection of Florida newspapers are combined with a detailed examination of the papers of several governors, a selection of prominent businessmen and boosters, and the personal recollections of individuals interviewed by the Works Progress Administration. Also included are travel accounts, promotional publications by individual towns and cities, and a selection of photographs and illustrations from the era. There are several limitations on the depth of the research, primarily due to the loss of materials in several disasters, both man-made and natural. The WPA also interviewed only a handful of individuals, resulting in a rather meager selection of recollections.

The ultimate conclusion is that Florida was very much a frontier, both physically and psychologically, until the Great Depression of the 1930s. At that point, the state was fully integrated into the United States and ceased to be a place apart. There is more work to be done, with greater emphasis on federal legislation and perhaps starting earlier in the nineteenth century, should anyone wish to delve deeper.
I would like to take this opportunity to thank several people whose assistance, encouragement, and faith have made this all possible. Foremost among them is Kari Frederickson, my committee chair, who took my on as a student when I was casting about and uncertain of whether I would even seek a doctorate or content myself with a master’s degree. Her years of guidance and advice helped shape a disorganized mess into a dissertation I am proud to call my own. I would also like to thank my committee members, George Rable, Joshua Rothman, Lisa Dorr, and Jeff Melton, for their consideration and insight. A special thanks goes to Josh Rothman, who holds the distinction of presiding over the most difficult and most enjoyable graduate class I had the privilege to attend; I have never written for a tougher opponent, and my writing has improved immeasurably as a result.

I would also like to thank my fellow graduate students at the University of Alabama. We struggled together, and seeing each of you succeed kept me going. I cannot forget my family, who endured my bouts of desperation as deadlines approached and never let me give in to despair. Lastly, I need to mention Professor Jim Jones of Florida State. When I was an undergraduate with no concept of what I wanted to do with my life, he showed me what a professor’s life could be and inspired me to follow his example. None of this would have been possible without him, and he has my profound and eternal thanks.
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Illustration 1: Paradise Regained.

The imagery of Florida as a pristine wilderness to be tamed was quite common in turn of the century publications like this map of the Florida East Coast Railway circa 1898.¹

¹ Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division, [2003627030]
“The first day I arrived, because of a very trivial incident, a man came very near being murdered and, except for the foresight of some bystanders, someone would have been shot for almost nothing.” That incident in 1884, recounted some fifty years later by attorney Peter O. Knight, would not have seemed out of place had it described a mining town in the Hollywood version of the Old West, or perhaps some distant settlement so isolated from the rest of the nation that it barely qualified as civilization. But Knight’s offhand remark referred to Fort Meyers in South Florida, not a location generally associated with the sort of rough-and-tumble existence of an untamed frontier. Knight’s first day was not to be his only encounter with danger, however. The lawyer recalled that every time he arrived at the courthouse to perform his job “I was threatened beforehand that… I would be shot or killed, or something.” In truth, life in Florida as the nineteenth century drew to a close was every bit as tenuous as it could be on the western frontier. The only real difference was the mosquitoes.¹

It is ironic that even as Knight was negotiating the difficulties of life in a settlement far from the industrial center of the nation, Frederick Jackson Turner was likely ruminating on the ideas that would be crystallized into his frontier thesis as delivered in 1893. The progenitor of

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¹ Peter O. Knight to Carl Hanton, November 27, 1934, Peter O. Knight Scrapbooks, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter Knight Scrapbooks, UF)
frontier scholarship, Turner would probably not have regarded Florida as a frontier, evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. For Turner’s vision, the frontier was a series of still images that showcased the advance of civilization into the savage realm of the natives, an intellectual equivalent to John Gast’s 1872 painting *American Progress*. Implicit in this concept was the notion of the “noble savage” who was closer to man’s unadjusted state, and lived in a sort of pristine wilderness. The process of developing, and eventually closing, the frontier was thus a series of evolutionary stages that would transform the unblemished (but culturally inferior) natives into good stewards of civilization, while simultaneously transmuting the vast wilderness and making it suitable for the rise of new cities to rival the great metropolises like New York and Chicago, the latter only recently emerging from the darkness of the frontier as Turner wrote. In Turner’s view, “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization.” However, even as he first delivered his address in 1893, Turner admitted that as a precise term the word ‘frontier’ was lacking, too elastic to be easily used. In Europe, for example, he noted that frontiers were fortified borders between nations; such a definition was hardly of any real use for the United States, save perhaps with Mexico and Canada. To better understand Turner, his subsequent critics, and Florida during the metamorphosis which transpired between 1890 and 1940, a more detailed examination of what signifies a frontier region is necessary.¹

For Frederick Jackson Turner, the concept of the frontier was inextricably connected to the American identity. In Turner’s view, the meeting of savagery and civility inevitably forced changes on both sides. For pioneers, whatever level of civilization they had grown accustomed

Illustration 2: American Progress.

This 1875 reproduction of John Gast’s *American Progress* showcases both the concept of manifest destiny and Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis. The “light of civilization” moves westward with the frontier.²

² Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-USZC4-668]
to before their departure was no longer relevant, as they were confronted with the reality that they would, for a time, have to live as their new neighbors did. The natives had, after all, found a way to exist without the luxuries of the western world. This was, in essence, a return to savagery, albeit on a limited scale. Through subsequent stages of development, the encroaching westward migration would reconstruct civilization, allowing for a sort of renewal of ideas and practices that might have long since slipped into the realm of the mundane in areas that exited their own frontier stage decades, or even centuries, earlier. This was the core of Turner’s thesis: that through this process of renewal Americans set themselves apart from their European cousins. But this process could only be continued so long as people could keep pushing west and not encounter civilization, at least as they understood it. Once there was no more free land waiting to welcome a new vanguard of settlers, in Turner’s mind, the frontier stage was ended. And it was that, more than any other factor, which led him to declare the frontier officially closed in 1893. But such a definitive proclamation was bound to be contentious, and almost from the moment Turner gave his address there were discussions regarding whether or not the frontier was truly “closed.”

One of the most outspoken of Turner’s critics is Patricia Nelson Limerick, whose groundbreaking work *The Legacy of Conquest* stands in direct opposition to much of what he posited a century before. In Limerick’s view, Turner accomplished two important tasks with his initial foray into the history of the American West, though both had come at an unfortunate price. First, his view of the transformative power of the frontier, that it changed Europeans into Americans and was therefore the crucial component of the American experience, afforded the nascent field he was essentially founding an air of importance. To truly fit with the other schools

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3 Ibid

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of American history, however, it required a watershed event, something akin to the Revolution for historians of the Colonial period, or the Civil War for students of the South. To that end, Limerick posits, Turner’s proclamation that the frontier was closed in 1890 served to give Western history its own dividing line. Neither of those accomplishments was insignificant, and both certainly served a useful purpose in their day, but Turner’s stature rapidly became such that his ideas became sacrosanct, forcing stagnation on the field that lingered for a generation or more. And that stagnation was particularly problematic in Limerick’s view because Turner appeared to have committed the cardinal sin of bending facts to fit his thesis, rather than adjusting his ideas to suit the facts.\(^4\)

Though Limerick was not the first to indicate that Turner’s rather arbitrary use of the term ‘frontier’ was problematic, her efforts to refine the term press farther than most. Turner had, evidently, been working from the idea that an area was settled, and no longer qualified as a frontier, when the population density reached “at least two persons per square mile.” By that definition, however, any city or town would end the frontier status of its region simply by virtue of existing, and certain areas in Florida, notably portions of the Everglades, would qualify as rugged frontiers even in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Of special interest regarding this particular definition of the frontier is Chicago, as examined by William Cronon in *Nature’s Metropolis*. Within its pages, Cronon deftly pinpoints the hurdles overcome by the city on its startlingly rapid ascent from sleepy cattle and timber town to thriving center of industry and commerce, a process whose echoes can be seen periodically in Florida’s own story, and whose ultimate results most of Florida’s power brokers would have coveted. But Chicago, even as its population surpassed the magical mark of two persons per square mile, was hardly free of

the difficulties intrinsic in the development of infrastructure on the edge of the “civilized” world, further indicating that population density alone does not a frontier close. As a more workable definition, the frontier could be considered closed “when every arable acre was privately owned, if not yet in cultivation.” That also fails as a definition for Florida, as vast tracts were purchased by individuals and businesses, particularly lumber interests, with the specific aim of re-selling them as smaller parcels at a later date, and most of the state was consequently in private hands decades before anyone made the slightest improvement to the land. A final potential litmus test for frontier status could be “contiguous territorial acquisition,” but that would suggest the end of the western frontier with, at best, the Gadsden Purchase in 1854, and would indicate that Florida’s frontier stage was already over when it achieved statehood in 1845, as the only land added from that point forward was reclaimed from the marshy areas at several points along the lengthy coastline. Clearly, the term ‘frontier’ is a slippery one, and no single definition can hope to encompass every facet of it.5

Limerick’s own view of what signified the end of the frontier was “the popularization of tourism and the quaintness of the folk.” It is to this definition that Florida most closely hews, though a bit more refinement is needed. A frontier, as regarded in the following chapters, is a place somehow foreign, either as a result of exotic flora and fauna, or of extreme distance. It is a place where the daily routine of visitors from the older portions of the nation cannot be carried out, either due to the lack of proper facilities or the particulars of the climate, or perhaps as the result of some quirk of the local populace. It is a place weighted with hopes and dreams, a setting that minds turn to when casting about for somewhere to begin again, where there is still fresh potential that has long since been exhausted “at home.” At its core, then, a frontier is more

a matter of perception: the region is of the nation, but not yet a part of it. Besides dovetailing with Limerick’s concept, this also fits rather well with the observations made by John Haeger in his article *Economic Development of the American West*, where he noted the “boom psychology that permeated frontier societies and drove some Americans to abandon the ties of family and tradition to begin anew.” That phenomenon, while present for much of Florida’s development, was on full display between 1923 and 1926, when the state underwent a boom to rival anything seen in the distant west, and based on, arguably, even shakier foundations. A further suggestion, supported by Richard Brown, Daniel Boorstin, and Don Doyle, is that there was something distinct in the psychology of the people who ventured to the borders of civilization, and by that logic it can be suggested that the sorts who sought fortune and glory in the west were not dissimilar from their kindred on the Florida peninsula, save for their preference for dry, rather than humid, heat. Rather than affording a step-by-step process to close the frontier, this psychological definition allows for multiple avenues to achieve the same ultimate result: the integration of the region in question into the larger nation, the removal of the foreign quality that leaves visitors feeling as though they have passed from the familiar into the strange. And that process in Florida required several distinct steps.6

On the eve of the twentieth century, Florida faced a series of obstacles to be overcome. To begin, it was a region with which much of the population within the United States was wholly unfamiliar, save perhaps in the abstract. The only consistent tourism base was found in the wealthy, for whom the difficulty and expense of travelling for a week or more could easily be

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borne. That difficulty was compounded by the fact that most accommodations were geared
towards a clientele accustomed to finery and extravagance, allowing little room for a traveler on
a budget. Before tourists of more modest means but greater numbers could be persuaded to
savor the sunshine, inadequate infrastructure required the investment of both time and money to
make any venture into the peninsula less daunting; delays on single-tracked railways and
impassable mud on many of the roads after any significant rainfall made efforts to publicize the
state futile. While there is not any great wealth of material related specifically to Florida’s
efforts to construct new roads, the general topic of the spread of modern highways and the
increasing ubiquity of the automobile in American life has been explored, notably by James
Flink, John Rae, and Richard Davies. Beyond the obvious benefits of modernized roads, early
boosters and tourism boards used figures on the number of automobiles passing through their
regions to generate statistics related to overall tourism, and at least one Florida governor was
persuaded by such figures to invest heavily in promoting his state. Beyond dirt roads and their
paved counterparts, railroads played a large role in the earliest stages of Florida’s history.⁷

Much has already been written on Henry Flagler and his early competitor in the state,
Henry Plant, both of whom created vast railroad networks across the expanse of the peninsula,
though they tended to stay on opposing coasts with Plant the major player around Tampa and
Flagler controlling the long stretch down the east coast from Jacksonville to Miami and,
eventually, Key West. Edward Akin, David Chandler, Les Standiford, and Gregg Turner have
all examined the significance of the railroad industry in late-19th and early-20th century Florida,
and they highlight many of the difficulties faced during the creation of a railroad network in

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Automobile: A Brief History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Richard Davies, *The Age of Asphalt: The
Automobile, the Freeway, and the Condition of Metropolitan America* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1975)
inhospitable terrain. But while railroads have their part in the following tale, particularly the completion of Henry Flagler’s overseas railway to Key West, they are not the primary concern; most of the lines referenced hereafter were already in place by the turn of the century. Harbors and canals, given Florida’s geography, played an even more vital role for the state’s development early in the century, and offered an avenue through which to acquire Federal assistance. They also de-emphasized the power and importance of railroads, when compared with the western regions, because they offered an alternative means for the transportation of both freight and passengers that was simply not available in places like Arizona or Colorado.\footnote{Edward Akin, Flagler: Rockefeller Partner and Florida Baron (Kent State University Press, 1988); David Chandler, Henry Flagler: The Astonishing Life and Times of the Visionary Robber Baron Who Founded Florida (Macmillan Publishing, 1986); Les Standiford, Last Train to Paradise: Henry Flagler and the Spectacular Rise and Fall of the Railroad That Crossed an Ocean (Crown Publishers, 2002); Gregg Turner, A Journey Into Florida Railroad History (University Press of Florida, 2008)}

Infrastructure and publicity were simply the beginning of Florida’s laundry list of challenges. Next was the ceaseless struggle against various malarial diseases which plagued the state during the summer months and could prove lethal to visitors who were unprepared for, and often blissfully unaware of, the danger they faced any time a mosquito happened across their path. And that task was far more difficult than it might have first appeared, as the advent of scientific data with regards to the causes of malarial diseases was not widely known until well into the twentieth century. Once the three initial steps of gaining attention, improving infrastructure, and taming disease were reasonably advanced in their progress, attention could be diverted to the original goal of attracting both tourists and settlers, to say nothing of investors. Unexpected events served both to aid and hinder the goals Florida’s power brokers had set for themselves, notably the Great War which disrupted economic activity but also diverted countless new tourists to the southern coast when their usual summer destinations on the Mediterranean
were closed off by hostilities. And it was the tantalizing promise of untapped potential that reared its head most strikingly in the 1920s, permitting the formation of a real-estate bubble that briefly made the rest of the nation very aware of Florida, but for all the wrong reasons. On the heels of the boom and collapse, the state was struck by two devastating hurricanes, the second of which still ranks as one of the costliest disasters in Florida’s history. The twin blows of collapse and disaster dissolved Florida’s mystique, and by 1930 the state’s citizens could consider themselves to have been truly integrated into the nation at large, no longer the occupants of a land of adventure and intrigue. The fifty years between 1890 and 1940 tell the tale of the passing of a frontier, and they have not been especially well mined.

Most historians who deal with the state of Florida fall into a predictable, if somewhat odd, pattern. For many, Florida’s history essentially begins in 1940. This is not an unreasonable position to take, as the modern incarnation of the state only becomes visible in the prosperous decades that followed the end of the Second World War. After all, those were the years that saw the birth of Cape Canaveral as a vital part of the space program, as well as the arrival of Walt Disney in the largely rural central region of the state. And it cannot seriously be suggested that any understanding of modern Florida can escape the influx of new immigrants and refugees who shaped the southern portion of the state over the course of fifty years. None of this would be odd in and of itself. But when the other camp of Florida historians is considered, the problem becomes clearer: they are largely interested in the state when it was still a Spanish territory, or during the Civil War, or the various military campaigns against the Seminoles across the vast swamplands that sheltered them from Federal Indian Removal. It is also not uncommon to find works that touch on the state during the Spanish-American War, though in most instances those books only pay passing attention to Florida and are far more concerned with the action in Cuba
and the Philippines. Where, the astute observer might ask, are the missing decades between 1900 and 1940? The short answer is that they seem to have fallen into a historiographic crack, lost to scholarly attention because they do not offer readily-visible attractions. But there is far more to those years than what may be squirreled away in a handful of footnotes.

There are exceptions to the relative dearth of material covering Florida during the first half of the twentieth century. Gary Mormino, arguably the leading historian of the state, examines Tampa in several works, notably The Immigrant World of Ybor City, though much of his attention is spent on the decades following the Second World War. Raymond Vickers, in his impressive Panic in Paradise, delivers a thorough recounting of the Florida boom and bust of the 1920s. Nick Wynne and Joseph Knetsch offer a compelling look at the suffering of average citizens during the 1930s in Florida in the Great Depression. And Michael Gannon has given the time period some consideration in his short history of Florida. But these works all attempt to

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examine specific events in Florida, usually removed from the larger historical framework in which they occurred. More to the point, none of them address the rather stark reality that all through this time period Florida was in the process of transforming from a frontier region to a settled state, and that had a hand in many, if not most, of the larger issues under consideration.  

Florida, in 1945 and the following decades, was in a position to take advantage of Federal and private expenditures all across the state, allowing marginal areas to prosper and attracting tourists on a level previously relegated to fever dreams. That would not have been true in 1935, and the further back in time the question is posed the less prepared the state was. Without adequate infrastructure, very little could be accomplished across the considerable length of the peninsula. So long as malaria and similar diseases cut a bloody swath across the unwary, no vast migration was imminent. Without a stable economy, supported by a sound banking system, the state could never prosper. And so long as Florida’s national image was that of a land filled with swindlers looking to foist swampland on unwary investors there would be no significant influx of capital. These were the obstacles that a generation of Floridians had to overcome in order to turn their state into the paradise they envisioned it to be. And there was no greater visionary than Peter O. Knight when it came to the potential of Florida.  

Not long after his initial arrival in Fort Meyers, Knight witnessed a killing in the street in front of a general goods store. He was employed by the accused as his defense attorney, though

10 Gary Mormino is also the author of *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida*, as well as numerous articles on the state during the Second World War and the ensuing decades.  
the young man had barely turned nineteen; the state of the justice system in Florida was such that there were opportunities available to the young and ambitious that would have been difficult or impossible in the older, settled regions of the nation. Knight was, in fact, the first attorney to try a case in Fort Meyers. “All of the witnesses for the state and defense had to go to Key West by schooner,” Knight recalled. Much of southern Florida was still organized in large counties, such that remote locales like Fort Meyers were forced to endure ridiculous journeys to partake of any official services. In keeping with the rather improvisational nature of Florida justice, Knight was offered the position of county judge just after his first case ended, apparently having impressed the present judge, a man of eighty who was set to retire. Knight was understandably excited at the prospect, but “my mother advised me against it,” he admitted to the newspaperman with whom he was conversing. His mother, evidently, had surmised that Fort Meyers was a locale that had a much brighter future than Key West, and so she preferred that her son remain closer to what she regarded as both a more civilized spot and a point from which he would be able to launch a successful career. Her view of the town may have been somewhat rose-colored.

“Fort Meyers, and Lee County, was as wild a pioneer country as ever existed,” Knight recalled in his correspondence with Carl Hanton. But he was not referring simply to the relative mediocrity of the infrastructure or the bare-bones nature of the legal system. “Nearly everybody went armed,” he mused before pressing on with the admission that “I certainly did all the time.” Lest it be suggested that this was simply a precaution against wildlife, the attorney pointedly stated that “no man dared take any insult from anyone. If he did it meant he would have to leave

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the county.” Again, none of this was especially unique to Florida, but it did reinforce that the state had far more in common with its siblings in the western regions of the country than with its northern brethren.¹³

Knight closed his commentary on the frontier nature of justice in Fort Meyers with an anecdote which encapsulated the situation perfectly. “A certain very prominent man… sent word to me that he was going to horse whip me,” Knight began, though he could not recall what he had done to earn the man’s ire. That would have been disastrous, as the town still valued honor and could never respect a man who would allow himself to be horse whipped. Knight maintained an office above the town’s general goods store, and several days after the threat was made he saw his antagonist tying up his horse across the street and approaching the stairs which led to his office. “Being armed, as I always was, I pulled my pistol out of my pocket, laid it on the table, and moved… so that the table was between the door and myself. As soon as the gentleman came in the door the first thing he saw was this revolver lying on the table beside my hand.” Knight offered his visitor a seat and exchanged pleasantries with him, asking after his crops and his health before finally inquiring as to what he wanted that particular morning. His guest, visibly unsettled by the weapon and the not-so-subtle threat it carried, mumbled that he had only come to visit. He intimated that he might return at another time to deal with other business, but according to Knight that never transpired and the two of them went on to become good friends. “My presence of mind in laying the pistol on the table averted some great tragedy, no doubt,” the attorney concluded. That was frontier Florida; not a land of laws and authority,

but rather a collection of distant oases in a vast swamp where the only true security to be found rested in the barrel of a gun.\textsuperscript{14}

This dissertation’s interest is exceedingly local, and that has dictated the types of material utilized in the pursuit of evidence. While statements made by senators and congressmen do have their place in the discussion, of far more interest are the papers of Florida’s various governors during the period in question. Of particular note is the extant correspondence, which quite often features the concerns of average Floridians who felt compelled to converse with their elected executive. Another invaluable resource for recovering an image of life on the ground during Florida’s transformation from frontier to settled state are the personal papers of several prominent figures. Peter O. Knight was a prominent man in Florida during his life, which coincided with every major event in the state between 1884 and the close of World War II. Though he only occasionally held public office, he was a power broker with connections to politicians at both the state and federal level. His papers, housed at the University of Florida, offer tantalizing glimpses of the background workings of an eclectic assortment of activities which range from the battles over utility rates and gasoline taxes to bitter disagreements over the efficacy of having a state agency whose sole purpose was to promote tourism. As one of the handful of visionaries who saw nothing but potential in the vast swamps and sandy beaches of his adopted home, Knight’s work as a Florida booster kept him constantly searching for new ways to claw profit from the land. That search for new ways to exploit Florida’s natural beauty and resources for financial gain was a common theme across much of the state for the better part of fifty years.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Peter O. Knight to Carl Hanton, November 27, 1934, Knight Scrapbooks, UF
\textsuperscript{15} Ben F. Rogers, “Florida in World War II: Tourists and Citrus,” \textit{Florida Historical Quarterly}, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1, (July 1960); Clifton Paisley, “Madison County’s Sea Island Cotton Industry, 1870-1916,” \textit{Florida Historical}
While Peter Knight’s personal papers offer a wealth of insights into the workings of Florida, they are still the musings of one man. Similarly, the correspondence of the various governors, while remarkably useful, is a view from the top down. For much of the period in question, there is a startling lack of firsthand materials from average Floridians, making it difficult to reconstruct the events that mattered on the small scale. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) employed writers to interview private citizens, and there are numerous Floridians whose life experiences are thus preserved, but they still represent a tiny fraction of the overall citizenry. Newspapers are the most reliable resource available to bridge the gaps. As late as 1940, most towns in Florida strove to have their own locally operated paper, and failing that they made certain they received at least a page for local news in one of the county-wide newspapers. These extant periodicals, painstakingly preserved, and in many cases digitized, by the University of Florida offer a truly unfiltered look at what mattered to the various communities they served. And those interests varied by region. The *Kissimmee Valley Gazette*, for example, devoted more attention to the ongoing debate over cattle dipping to combat ticks than most of the other papers; that made sense, as the region served by the *Gazette* was predominantly cattle country. In Tampa, the production of cigars merited more attention. But there were certain themes that resonated regardless of what the individual community was most invested in, particularly the quest to improve Florida’s woefully outdated infrastructure. In nearly every instance, from Key West to Pensacola, a recurring theme was the

effort to raise funds for road improvements, and those funds were never easily obtained. Those local struggles, while they might have interested men like Knight or elected officials as high up as the governor, were seldom given much detailed attention beyond the county in which they transpired. To truly understand them, there is no greater resource then the local paper.  

The news stories run by the various papers across the state are not the only useful bits to be found. Equally important, and in many cases more so, are the letters individuals wrote to the editors of their local periodicals. They express, often in rather crass terms, what the average citizens thought about the issues of the day. Though they might consist of only a few sentences, or perhaps one pithy comment, those letters to the editor are frequently the only historical voice available for a class of people who did not keep journals and seldom corresponded with anyone outside of friends and family. They also demonstrate what mattered most to the local citizenry, as people are seldom inclined to write to their local newspaper editor over issues that are of only passing interest to them.

In addition to the letters and news stories run by the small newspapers across Florida, the advertisements they carried can offer a tantalizing glimpse into the prevailing issues and ideas of any given moment. These might range from something as mundane and innocuous as an advertisement detailing new innovations finally on sale at a local store, suggesting a whole host of things from infrastructure improvement to the rising prominence and affluence of a given locality, to more overt and questionable pieces whose purpose was to attract new settlers and tourists. One ad run by the Homestead Leader, for example, depicted a prospector panning for gold and cheerfully tossing around coins under the caption of “Gold!” The advertisement’s aim was to suggest that investments in land around the newly-incorporated town had a high

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probability of allowing those with a little nerve to strike it rich, with the unspoken understanding that it would be easy money. There was also the subtle linkage of modern Florida with boom-era California, a comparison that boosters across the state would have endorsed and in many cases fought to foster. When taken as a whole, the articles, letters, editorials, and advertisements carried by the local periodicals allow a fascinating glimpse into the concerns of everyday Floridians as their state underwent the difficult transformation from coarse frontier to respectable region.\footnote{Homestead Leader, June 1, 1926}

The tale begins in 1898, on the precipice of war with Spain. The war itself is not afforded a great deal of attention, the primary interest instead being the reaction of Florida’s citizens and elected officials to residing on the front line of a modern war. Letters, journals, and newspapers all showcase a considerable amount of trepidation on the part of the locals, with visions of marauding Spaniards vexing the hardy souls living in isolated enclaves around the
peninsula. The travel log of an adventurer making his way across the unexplored Everglades serves to showcase the distant quality of the state, clarifying some of the fear the locals felt. But despite the fear, the overriding theme of the war was opportunity. Lobbying and luck allowed Tampa to secure a significant windfall as the staging area for the invasion of Cuba, and the amount of money poured into the local economy helped it to shake off the effects of a difficult depression which began nearly a decade earlier. Miami and Key West also managed to secure a portion of the war profits, and for the first time Florida became a place in the eyes of many Americans who had never given the swampy southland much thought, if any. But in short order it became painfully obvious that Florida’s infrastructure was not up to the task of shipping men and materials over vast distances quickly, with the result being a complete halt to transit on numerous occasions and for extended periods. Also apparent was the inability of either the military or civilian medical professionals to stave off the advance of malaria and yellow fever as men unaccustomed to life in the tropics languished in the fetid heat awaiting their departure and swatting at mosquitoes.

The second chapter delves more deeply into the efforts made by the Florida government to understand and eradicate the scourge of malarial disease. Since it was not until the turn of the century that it was scientifically understood that mosquitoes carried the diseases in question, much of the early work to combat the seasonal plagues of Florida was based on trial and error. This is demonstrated most clearly by the records of the State Board of Health, which labored under the guidance of Dr. Joseph Porter for decades. Ultimately, as understanding overtook speculation, Florida blazed a new trail in quarantine techniques which were first utilized against ailments coming in from distant foreign ports and eventually against infected regions of the United States, notably New Orleans in 1905. So effective were the new methods devised by the
chief physician of Florida that they were adopted nationally as the standard quarantine procedures. That was by no means the end of disease as a problem for Floridians, but it was a new and promising beginning. The other major problem made evident during the war crisis in 1898, inadequate infrastructure, was taken up with significantly less zeal. All communities were able to see that new and improved roadways and rail lines would be beneficial, but there was a surprising degree of resistance to paying for any such work. Here, too, new techniques were being tested to see what methods were best for creating roads that would survive in the harsh, wet climate of a drained swamp. Disease prevention and infrastructure improvements remained fixtures in Florida for decades to come, but the initial groundwork for both was laid in the decade immediately following the war with Spain.

Chapter three examines events which transpired between 1910 and 1920, including the birth of a primordial type of advertising, the rush to exploit the Great War for Florida’s gain, and the first signs of the state’s integration into the nation at large. Also significant was the growing power of the local boards of trade, precursors to modern chambers of commerce. The barrage of pamphlets touting the advantages and amenities of a certain city or county escalated as Europe descended into chaos, the goal being to attract tourists unable to venture to their usual vacation spots in the Old World. As the war escalated, efforts to acquire federal dollars intensified. Pensacola lobbied for, and successfully obtained, a training field for naval aviators. The naval station at Key West, which had been mothballed decades earlier, was reopened to train even more pilots, as well as guard a vital trade route through the Florida Straits. But while the men in Pensacola enjoyed a vibrant social scene, those relegated to the distant southern tip of Florida complained bitterly of being stuck in what could charitably be described as a one-horse town. The letters written by one trainee in particular showcase life in Key West, and the station’s
commander also compiled a detailed report. Both Tampa and Pensacola secured shipbuilding contracts, and Miami managed to convince the necessary officials to deepen the channel into the city’s harbor, though it remained a rather unimpressive eighteen feet. And while concerns did mount about spies, leading to unusual tales of arrests and searches, the greatest effect of the war was the influx of new tourists. The effort to spread the state’s name would pay significant dividends in short order. However, the end of the decade also saw a pair of events which demonstrated Florida’s increasing connectivity to the rest of the nation in the form of the Red Scare and the arrival of Spanish Flu. Neither event was as momentous on the peninsula as elsewhere in the nation, but they suggested that Florida’s days as a pocket of detached frontier life on the southern coast were indeed numbered.  

The tumultuous decade following the Great War is the subject of the fourth chapter. This was the period that saw Florida make its most impressive gains, but it also rang out the death knell for the state’s frontier days. A portion of the chapter is devoted to explaining the boom and bust that seized the state beginning in 1922-23. Detailed recollections preserved by WPA interviews and several autobiographical publications clearly demonstrate shades of the boom mentality displayed in places like Sutter’s Mill during the gold rush some seventy-odd years earlier. That brief window of national notoriety would have lasting ramifications, particularly once Mother Nature saw fit to unleash her wrath on the peninsula with a pair of devastating storms that caused significant damage and claimed thousands of lives, events recorded in the journal entries of survivors. That caused a shift in the general understanding of Florida, away from a land of easy money and towards a swamp that devoured dreams. With a sense of

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opportunity being essential to a region’s frontier status, this shattering of faith marked a crucial steps towards the ultimate end of that stage on the peninsula. In the wake of unprecedented calamity, the state essentially slipped into the oncoming Great Depression ahead of schedule.

The final chapter follows Florida’s course through the aftermath of the twin storms and the opening stages of the Great Depression. Of interest during this time is the resurgence of tourism as the chief concern of the citizenry. A series of reports delivered to Governors Carlton and Sholtz convinced both men of the efficacy of establishing state-run advertising efforts, and hinted at new methods that might be employed, notably a focus on Florida’s health benefits. This period also saw the dramatic expansion of civil and military aviation across the state, as well as the arrival of the WPA. The projects undertaken by that organization included the aforementioned interviews, but also expansion to existing roadways and the dredging of harbors. Many of those efforts, as well as those undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers, primed the state for an influx of new federal dollars as war clouds began to gather once more over Europe. Once hostilities erupted across the Atlantic, the floodgates of defense spending were flung open. In one month in 1940 alone, over $33 million was invested in renovations for existing military facilities and the construction of new ones.  

Spending throughout the war years proceeded at an unprecedented rate, and due to Florida’s hospitable climate and strategic defensive position at the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico the state received a seemingly-inexhaustible stream of cash. From that point forward, the state’s trajectory was ever ascendant, with a rising population and new industries spurring perpetual growth. This brings us, once again, to the point from which most studies of modern Florida begin. But the missing chapter of the story, the prologue to Florida’s prosperity, involved the

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19 National Defense Program report for the State of Florida (undated, late 1940), Series 368, Box 97, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee (hereafter SAF)
concerted efforts of many figures, both prominent and obscure. Peter Knight lived to see the war’s end, and while he left no writings in his twilight years it is certain that he never doubted Florida would attain a position of significance in the United States. And Knight was not alone. Dr. Porter, the state’s head physician for the better part of two decades, waged a long and lonely crusade against malarial diseases on the peninsula. The various boards of trade and local governments poured substantial funds and endless hours into efforts to improve basic infrastructure, and were rewarded by growth and prosperity. The armed interludes which poured federal money into the state’s coffers were a great boon, but they were still a resource to be managed and applied; without careful consideration, much of that money would amount to nothing. And that was the greatest accomplishment of the men and women who shaped Florida for the first forty years of the 20th century: they perceived opportunities and made the most of them.

Florida’s journey from frontier to modern state is not unique. Similar tales can be found in California, and to a lesser degree places like Arizona, Nevada, and Colorado. The state’s abundant resources and vast landscape were present long before any appreciable gains were made in the development of Florida, but the one thing that was truly necessary to tame the wilderness was a sufficient supply of people, and that did not begin to appear until the Spanish-American War rather abruptly made the rest of the nation aware of their unkempt backyard. The four ensuing decades saw the wilderness tamed, the swamps drained, the roads paved and the harbors deepened. When the GIs arrived in 1942, they found a balmy paradise with neatly trimmed foliage and pristine beaches, to say nothing of welcoming locals who were thrilled to offer up whatever diversions they could in order to help the servicemen part with their pay. That was the version of Florida that finally put paid to the old images of swamps and swindlers and
opened the door to a brighter future. Or, in keeping with Turner’s view of the frontier, the wilderness had been transformed into a garden.
Illustration 4: Peter O. Knight.

*Photo carried in *Tampa Daily Tribune *circa 1909*
CHAPTER ONE:
WAR ON THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER

The winter of 1898 settled across the sparsely populated state of Florida like an eerie calm preceding an unseasonable storm. As the century approached its end, the United States was in the midst of a slow recovery from a significant financial collapse in the summer of 1893. Booming real estate and insufficient restraint on the part of financial institutions caused a bubble which ruptured and caused “a terribly sudden and violent impairment of reserves, the actual money decrease being thirty-eight percent.” The worst of the collapse fell upon the western regions of the nation, but Florida, which bore a more than passing resemblance to those old frontiers, was hardly immune. In addition to the problems facing the rest of the country, the state had also endured several intense winters, whose impact on the local crops was profound. “During the last cold winter,” observed Everglades explorer Hugh Willoughby in 1898, “the central and northern part of the State was made desolate, and thousands of people were financially ruined, by the terrible blow given to the orange culture.” Underdeveloped and financially debilitated, Florida was in no way prepared to deal with any unexpected emergency. Ninety miles off the southern shore, however, a powder keg in the form of the Cuban insurgency against the flagging Spanish Empire awaited a spark.¹

Undaunted by the pressing internal difficulties and looming external threats to his state, Governor William Bloxham (1881-1885, 1897-1901) went about his daily business as best he

could. Citizens hounded the governor with requests ranging from governmental job
appointments to relief of delinquent tax bills; several rough years had weakened Florida’s
economy enough that the inability to pay property taxes was alarmingly frequent. More than
anything, however, people wanted Bloxham to attend various events scattered across the state,
often political but occasionally social. In early January, the Governor begged off an appearance
at a convention for tobacco growers, citing his inability to return to Tallahassee promptly due to
poor railroad conditions. “The train that passes through Green Cove,” Bloxham told a
disappointed petitioner, “is seldom on time and it is frequently late in the day before it reaches
Tampa.” This fact, the governor claimed, made it impossible for him to traverse the state with
any great speed. Bloxham’s rationale wore all the trappings of a polite excuse to avoid a dull
affair, but the conditions on the ground in Florida made it entirely plausible.¹

Florida at the end of the nineteenth century remained much as it had been since its
admittance to statehood some fifty years earlier; poor roads, spotty rail connections, and a sparse
population scattered over a vast expanse made the state a place where distance had not yet been
conquered by the onset of technology. Agriculture still dominated most of the economy, and
what little outside capital reached the state came during the winter months, when wealthy
northerners settled in for a mild climate and exotic, tropical fare. Most of Florida’s future
metropolises were still small communities, and the vast reservoir of manpower that would
eventually tame the Everglades had not yet migrated in. The Everglades itself was still little
more than a large, blank space on existing maps, regarded as an impenetrable swamp that housed
nothing but dispossessed Seminoles and ravenous reptiles. “The very settlers along the edge of
the east coast know absolutely nothing of what exists ten miles west of their farms,” remarked

¹ William Bloxham to Henry Curtis, January 8, 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter book, Series 32, Box 50, SAF
Hugh Willoughby in the opening pages of the publication which chronicled his efforts to illuminate the unknown swampland. A former commander of the Rhode Island Naval Reserve, Willoughby was intrigued by what he called “a tract of land one hundred and thirty miles long and seventy miles wide that is as much unknown to the white man as the heart of Africa.” And his expedition faced challenges nearly as daunting as one venturing into the unknown heart of the “Dark Continent.” Willoughby faced supply problems, dangerous wildlife (he took several pages to describe, in detail, the various species of alligators and crocodiles he feared he would encounter), and inhospitable terrain that left him physically depleted on more than one occasion.

In truth, had he simply switched some of the location names, his account could easily have passed for an expedition into the depths of some foreign jungle, not a trek through part of a state. And if it seemed exotic and unknown to those who lived nearby, surely Florida must have appeared as little better than the Amazon or the Congo to the more settled regions of the nation. Those who already called the state home, including Peter O. Knight, who was already a fixture in Tampa, were very much aware of their distance from the rest of the nation, and eyed the deteriorating situation in Cuba with keen interest.²

Across the United States, public opinion remained divided on the Cuban question. Senator Stephen Elkins of West Virginia, a Civil War veteran whose stark memories of bloodshed had not softened with time, put forth the argument against intervention. “Spain,” Elkins said, “is simply trying to hold what belongs to her and what has been hers for the past century or more…just as the United States did in the Civil War.” Elkins attempted to remind the nation that the North would not have looked kindly on foreign intervention during the secession crisis, and the senator saw little difference between the situations. He cemented his argument

² Hugh L. Willoughby. *Across The Everglades*, P. 12; Ibid, P. 13
more bluntly with his assertion that “the United States laid down a doctrine of non-intervention in our civil war from which she cannot and with consistency depart.”

Opposing Elkins and calling for intervention was Senator Jacob Gallinger of New Hampshire, who travelled to Cuba to witness the carnage firsthand and was very blunt in his descriptions of what he observed. “The condition of affairs,” Gallinger began, “is simply indescribable… The best information obtainable leads to the conclusion that there have been beyond a doubt four hundred thousand deaths as the result of Spain’s brutal policy, and the tragedy goes on from day to day.” Gallinger’s firsthand accounts of the brutality on the ground, while certainly exaggerated, combined with the powerful rhetoric of Nebraska Senator John Thurston to provide a potent argument for intervention in the Cuban question. Thurston had accompanied Gallinger on his trip to Cuba, and his wife passed away suddenly during the voyage. In mid March, shaken and sober, he took the floor to address a packed senate house. “God forbid that the bitterness of a personal loss should induce me to color in the slightest degree the statement that I feel it my duty to make,” Thurston began. He detailed, in unsettling terms, the treatment of innocent civilians on the island, and made note of the fact that the rebels were in peaceful possession of most of the territory, with the Spanish only able to continue their rule in fortified regions. “Every hour’s delay only adds another chapter to the awful story of misery and death,” Thurston continued. “Only one power can intervene – the United States of America… We cannot refuse to accept this responsibility which the God of the Universe has placed upon us as the one great power in the new world. What shall our action be?” Thurston and Gallinger offered a bleak image of life in Cuba, as well as stirring reasons for why the United States should aid the rebels. On its own, none of that rhetoric would have been sufficient

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3 *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator.* (New York) March 26, 1898
to push America into war on the side of the Cubans, but the destruction of the *USS Maine* in February in the harbor at Havana enflamed American passions and stirred up a patriotic fervor unseen in the nation since the days of the Civil War.⁴

All of these conversations were echoed to a lesser or greater degree in Florida, but the detached philosophical element that pervaded the debate nationwide was mostly absent. For the editor of the *Florida Times Union and Citizen* out of Jacksonville, S. Powers, the threat was anything but abstract. He did not fear Spanish incursions, and never doubted that the United States could win any conflict, but he intensely feared what potential peace terms might do to Florida. In his mind, Cuba would certainly be annexed, which would produce two catastrophic results. First, the removal of tariff barriers, as Cuba would be a part of the United States, would make it impossible for Florida’s agriculture to compete with the island; anyone interested in tobacco, citrus, or sugar would naturally opt for Cuba over Florida. Second, the budding tourism industry, already identified as a major piece of the state’s financial future, would be overshadowed by Cuba’s. In effect, everything that made Florida unique among the states could be done better and cheaper in Cuba. That was the fear of numerous Florida newspapermen and boosters, but their views were hardly the common refrain heard across the nation. The situation is best described by T.D. Allman in his work on the history of Miami: “Northerners and Southerners felt that they could unite in a holy crusade to liberate a comfortably distant people – distant, that is, from the rest of the nation, though not from Florida.” It was not just the

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proximity to Cuba which made Floridians more interested in the direct implications of intervention; rather it was the condition of the state itself which aroused the most concern.\footnote{T.D. Allman, \textit{Miami: City of the Future} (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1987) 164; William J. Schellings, “Florida and the Cuban Revolution, 1895-1898,” \textit{Florida Historical Quarterly}, Vol. XXXIX, No. 2, (October 1960)}

Florida had not been ravaged a generation earlier like her sister southern states, but while that may have appeared to be a blessing in the initial aftermath of the war it soon became something of a burden. Less interest was paid to rebuilding a state which had not been laid so thoroughly prostrate, and there was still little that could be done with the malarial and abundantly unpleasant swampland that covered most of Florida’s southern expanse. It is nearly impossible to obtain accurate population figures from the state at the end of the nineteenth century, as even figures from the census are debatable, but estimates put the number at approximately half a million residents statewide, and most of those were confined to the northern counties. Halfway down the peninsula, Tampa offered a bastion of civilization in the unforgiving wilderness, but it was a far cry from what could be reasonably called a bustling city. Florida was still very much a peripheral piece of the nation, a frontier where the ambitious could seek their fortunes or the desperate could disappear into the wilds. It had been a state for more than fifty years, but it had yet to make its mark on the national landscape. This fact made the approaching war both terrifying and exhilarating for the people of Florida. One the one hand, the state was surely open to invasion if the Spanish felt the endeavor was worth their effort. On the other, the near certainty of the state playing a vital role in the upcoming conflict offered an economic and developmental opportunity that had been inconceivable only a few short months before. On balance, the economic opportunities outweighed the potential dangers, but that was not apparent until after the war’s conclusion. The Spanish-American war and the months leading up to it
introduced South Florida to the rest of the United States, salvaged a crumbling economy in Tampa, allowed for the rapid expansion and improvement of both transportation and communications lines, and permitted visionaries like Henry Flagler to create a future metropolis in the middle of a fetid swamp. More importantly, the difficulties encountered during the brief sojourn into war demonstrated that, hyperbolic boosters notwithstanding, Florida was not yet in a position to sit back and let development come at its own pace. If the state was to achieve all that men like Peter Knight envisioned and truly put its frontier stage in the past, certain deficiencies needed to be remedied. The next forty years were spent, in no small part, addressing the failings identified at the dawn of the new century.6

January of 1898 found the entire state of Florida experiencing an economic downturn. What few large cities the state possessed, primarily in the northern region, were struggling to recover from a significant period of financial instability that saw many jobs vanish. The governor was inundated by requests from a wide swath of citizens for tax clemency, and some even begged him for work. Mr. W.L. Finger, a Confederate veteran who “was in 40 engagements [sic] in Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia,” asked Governor Bloxham “as a favor to give me some appointment that will enable me to make a living for my family.” The governor responded promptly, stating that “so far as civil appointments are concerned, all officers whose salaries are any consideration whatever are elected by the people. The Governor really appoints only the notary publics, judges, and state attorneys.” Outside the developed areas of the state, several unusually harsh winters proved devastating to many of Florida’s primary crops, and in the more southerly regions a lack of rainfall finished off what the frost had begun. Commenting

6 A fire destroyed most of Florida’s internal census records for this period, and that combined with the rural nature of the population and difficulty of compiling statistics of any sort renders any figure related to Florida’s population an estimate at best.
on the dry weather, the *Weekly Tribune*, of Tampa, noted that “there has been no rain for six months.”

Tourism, a relatively new concept which was being explored in many parts of the south as a supplement to, or in some cases replacement for, industrial growth, received new attention and legitimacy in the wake of economic and agricultural calamity. It must be noted, however, that tourism in 1898 did not reflect its more modern meaning. Florida boosters had not yet envisioned year-round beach resorts which would attract the masses, or amusement parks on a massive scale which could reshape portions of the state. No, at that point in time Floridians regarded the wealthy as their primary clientele, and convincing them that the mysterious southern peninsula was worthy of their fortunes was the common refrain. “While visitors are with us, talk up your town and state,” suggested the *Semi-Weekly Advocate* in early February. “Florida and her people merit all the good things you can say about them… It may encourage immigration and invite capital.” Such encouragement of immigration and capital was not easily achieved, however, due to an overabundance of caution among investors. Under the title “An Absurd Suspicion” the *Advocate* ran an article discussing the difficulty of enticing northerners to invest in Florida. “Some of the visitors to Florida… are making inquiries as to investment of capital in the State, and one of the questions invariably asked is whether or not capital of Northern men is safe here.” This could either have referenced a concern regarding anti-Union sentiment in a former Confederate state or, more likely, a belief that there was simply little in Florida that merited investment, particularly in the wake of the nation’s worst (to that point) economic collapse; the article’s unnamed author did not specify. It cannot be denied that conservative investment after a collapse was an obstacle to be overcome, but whether there was

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W.L. Finger to William Bloxham, April 25, 1898, Series 578, Box 15, Folder 7, SAF; William Bloxham to W.L. Finger, April 27, 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter book, SAF; *Weekly Tribune* (Tampa), May 12, 1898
any basis for concern in relation to lingering resentment of northerners is open to debate. It is true that many Florida newspapers (as well as many across the south in general) made frequent reference to the horrors of Reconstruction. They also tended to print pieces that showcased how far the state had progressed since removing the supposedly-corrupt governments foisted upon them in the 1870s. Whatever fears the Advocate was attempting to relieve, potential dollars scared off by foolish whispers were too dear for the state to spare them. Regardless, northern capital in the form of private investment, though certainly welcome, was not the primary concern of the majority of the citizenry as the crisis with Spain threatened to boil over into armed conflict.  

For the people of Florida, more than any other state, the vexing Cuban question was nothing new. Though Spain was still considered by many to be a major world power, in truth the former giant of the western hemisphere was a hollow shell, rapidly imploding upon itself. Out of its vast empire, which had once counted most of South America as well as the West Indies, only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained under its sway in the Americas, and those were relationships that could hardly be described as ideal. For generations, Cuban rebels had been attempting to throw off the yoke of Spanish rule, sometimes aided by filibusters from the United States, but quite often acting alone. In the middle of the century, the United States had even attempted to buy the island from Spain, an idea much loved by southerners who coveted Cuba for its potential as a new outpost for their peculiar institution. All efforts to raise a general revolt or purchase the island away from Spain had met with failure, however, as the Spanish were intent on keeping the

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8 Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate (Starke), February 8, 1898; Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate, March 15, 1898
jewel of their overseas empire. Honor demanded that the island be held, no matter the cost in blood and treasure.9

The last of the Cuban insurrections, still ongoing as the United States faced war with Spain, began in 1895. That struggle was led primarily by veterans of the previous uprisings, particularly the decade-long struggle in the 1870s, and it was easily the most successful. There was some early support for the revolutionaries, particularly in areas visited by Jose Marti, the Cuban intellectual and poet who lent eloquence to a visceral cause. Most Americans, however, saw no real point in getting involved beyond relief efforts for refugees. In early March, the St. Andrews Buoy demonstrated this humanitarian interest thusly:

> U.S. Secretary of State John Sherman has issued a circular letter addressed to all the charitably inclined people of the United States to come to the relief of the suffering and destitute people of Cuba. The condition of the island is deplorable; people are dying from malarial fever and starvation, and help of all kinds is an imperative necessity.

However, while the feeling that some form of aid should be given to the suffering civilians caught in the crossfire was quite common, it was by no means unopposed. “Why should the United States take care of the Cubans any more than the subjects of any other foreign country?” asked one Tampa citizen in a letter to the editor as March drew to a close. Making matters more chaotic, many Cuban refugees in Tampa were using whatever meager funds they had at their disposal to purchase arms and ammunition for their countrymen, relying on the goodwill of their hosts to keep them fed, a fact lamented by the Weekly Tribune in early February:

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9 A filibuster is an irregular military adventurer, usually one who operates in a foreign country with the intent of starting an uprising. Perhaps the most notable filibuster related to Cuba is Narciso Lopez, an exiled Cuban who attempted to lead an invasion and general insurrection in Cuba several times between 1849 and 1851; For general information regarding the various Cuban revolts of the nineteenth century, see Hugh Thomas, Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Gerald E. Poyo “Key West and the Cuban Ten Years War,” Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol. LVII, No. 3, (January 1979); Ruby Leach Carson, “Florida, Promoter of Cuban Liberty,” Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol. XIX, No. 3, (January 1941); Consuelo Stebbins, “The Insurgents of Key West and the Expedition of 1895,” Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal, Vol. 15, No. 1, (Fall 2004)
The fact that there [are] about one thousand Cubans being fed daily at the soup houses and kitchen established by the charitably inclined of the city and that the Cubans are giving their money for the purchase of a gun is being very unfavorably commented upon by many people.

This contrasted very sharply with the goal of a peaceful solution that many Americans still clung to, especially because the misguided belief persisted that Spain was a significant military power whose wrath was not to be called down without sufficient provocation. The majority of American action, therefore, was in relation to the Central Cuban Relief Committee, a charitable organization whose efforts were ostensibly to aid those innocents caught in the crossfire on the embattled island. On January 13, Governor Bloxham wrote to Stephen Berton, the Committee’s chairman, expressing his support: “I have issued a proclamation, appointing all mayors of respective towns [where interest in aid had been shown], committees to solicit subscriptions for the suffering Cubans; …and to forward all moneys to your Treasurer, and all supplies to the Agent of the Plant System at Tampa.” For most individuals, much like their senators in Washington, the question of intervention in the war remained academic and detached, but certain elements of American society had a far more personal stake in the impending conflagration.10

Because of the half-century of instability that Cuba endured, many Cubans and Spaniards fled to Florida, whose climate allowed them to carry on with their businesses, generally related to tobacco cultivation, in relative comfort. A significant portion of these early exiles resided in Tampa, where cigar manufacturing became a crucial element of the city’s economy. Situated on the west coast of Florida and possessing a superb natural bay and harbor area, Tampa offered an ideal point of embarkation for the American soldiers bound for Cuba in 1898. It also marked the southernmost extreme of “civilized” Florida, the last true city before Key West. However,

10St. Andrews Buoy (St. Andrews Bay), March 10, 1898; The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), March 31, 1898; The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), February 10, 1898; William Bloxham to Stephen Berton, January 13 1898. Governor Bloxham’s Letter Book, SAF
despite a robust cigar manufacturing industry, the city remained remarkably small and financially vulnerable.\textsuperscript{11}

Surviving statistics place Tampa’s population in 1890 at approximately 5,500, most of them either working in the cigar industry or servicing one of the hotels that lured tourists down for the balmy winter weather. Unfortunately, Tampa suffered along with the rest of the state when economic turmoil arose in 1893. By 1898, the \textit{Semi-Weekly Advocate} noted that “City officials in Tampa have not drawn their salaries in over five months and miscellaneous bills have been standing against the City for over two years that have not been liquidated.” Only a month earlier, the paper had noted that “many places in Florida have complained of a scarcity of tourists this season,” a fact which cannot have been helpful to Tampa’s flagging economy. As war clouds loomed on the horizon, several of the more astute citizens of the Tampa area began to detect a hint of opportunity which might alleviate, or perhaps even end, their woes.\textsuperscript{12}

“The war scare will be of one benefit to Tampa,” commented the \textit{Weekly Tribune} in March, “for it is already attracting attention to the necessity of improvements in the channel leading up Tampa Bay.” Numerous discussions broke out regarding the necessity of laying torpedoes (mines) in the bay to prevent Spanish incursions, and the idea of fortifying the city against a potential attack gained a great deal of favor. Beyond the potential construction dollars that were likely to flow into the city, the mere presence of troops, which looked increasingly likely as the crisis with Spain deepened, held a great deal of monetary promise for the local businesses. The \textit{Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate} summed up the situation thusly on March 22:

If war comes between Spain and the United States, thousands of soldiers will be quartered in Florida. It is a fact that every soldier spends daily on an average of twenty-five cents for vegetables, fruits, and fresh meats when he can get them. A reserve of 50,000 troops stationed at different places in the state would enrich truckers, fruit growers and farmers $12,500 each day and create a ready market for surplus chickens, eggs, milk, etc. It is an ill wind that doesn’t bring good to somebody.

While the Advocate’s assumption of troop numbers and expenditures was likely exaggerated, the point was abundantly clear to the readers; war was good business for the state of Florida.  

As events quickened, one of Tampa’s leading citizens, attorney Peter O. Knight, entered the discussion. Knight had moved to the city from the more remote Fort Meyers earlier in the decade, and quickly established himself as one of the directors of the local power company, as well as one of Tampa’s strongest boosters. In early April, Knight wrote to Governor Bloxham regarding the forthcoming gathering of state military personnel scheduled for May. While the embarkation point for the troops being sent to Cuba was ultimately beyond his ability to influence, he still hoped to demonstrate to the governor that no better location could be found for the state’s own forces. “We have, as you know, two naval reserves and they have all of the equipment that they are supposed to have under the law,” Knight reminded the governor, “and therefore it seems that there could be no better place than this, from a military standpoint.”

Knight’s argument, while lucid, was unlikely to sway the governor, so he adopted a new approach halfway through his request. “We need these people to ride on the street cars and drink Florida beer. These two latter reasons are the most cogent, so far as we are concerned.”

Tampa’s economic concerns were paramount, and Knight certainly subscribed to the notion that a sudden influx of men would lead to a substantial windfall, a position he would have reason to reconsider in later years. He need not have worried, as Tampa was selected as the primary point

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13 *The Weekly Tribune* (Tampa), March 17, 1898; *Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate* (Starke), March 22, 1898.
of embarkation, but the process was long and trying, in some cases seeming more a question of politics than expediency.\footnote{Peter O. Knight to William Bloxham, April 9, 1898, Series 578, Box 20, SAF} 

Once it was clear that some form of military action would be taken against the Spanish forces in Cuba, a debate arose regarding which city should serve as the supply depot and embarkation point for the army and navy. “If Uncle Sam kicks Spain off the island of Cuba he must stand on Florida to do so. This State is the natural base for our supplies,” opined the \textit{Chipley Banner} as the discussion of potential locations ramped up. It quickly became apparent that there were only a handful of realistic options. “Three cities are in the race, the authorities having decided that this immense base of supplies will be located either at New Orleans, Mobile, or Tampa,” observed the \textit{Weekly Tribune} in early April. The paper then listed several reasons for New Orleans being an utterly absurd choice, mostly due to its significantly increased distance from the potential front, concluding that “it is an even chance now that it will be either Tampa or Mobile… The Florida Congressmen and Senators are working manfully to induce the board to select the Tampa site.” Further on, the editor got into the mix and set forth his own rationale behind recommending Tampa, economic benefits to the city itself being overlooked or perhaps implicitly understood by the readers:

From a geographical and economical standpoint, Tampa is beyond all doubt the most convenient and desirable place that could be selected for a base of supplies during the anticipated hostilities between the United States and Spain, and those in authority will make a grievous error if Mobile is selected instead of Tampa… the main question to consider is the protection of supply ships, and that would vary with the length of the voyage.

The editor’s essential argument, that the distance from Tampa to Cuba would allow the navy to waste fewer vessels on guard duty and allow for more efficient resupply, while certainly reasonable in itself, is somewhat disingenuous in its lack of admission that the city would benefit
more than the navy. Regardless, the decision came down in Tampa’s favor, and before long the city was flooded by a wave of troops.\footnote{The Chipley Banner (Chipley), April 23, 1898; The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), April 7, 1898; Ibid; Ibid; William Schellings, “Florida Volunteers in the War With Spain, 1898,” Florida Historical Quarterly, Vol. XLI, No. 1, (July 1962)}

“Probably the amount of benefit which will emenate[sic] from the quartering of the United States troops at Tampa cannot even as yet be appropriately approximated,” wrote the Weekly Tribune in late May, well after the flow of money had begun. It continued:

It will be a perpetual recommendation to the city in the future as a field for business embarkments[sic] and social rendezvous. The result has already become obvious, judging from the number of visitors who were noticed upon the streets yesterday, who were undoubtedly attracted hither by the usual magnetic influence which an army affords. Independent of the influx of capital, resulting directly from the government quartermaster’s offices and warehouses a perceptible affect upon the general business is already manifest in proportions heretofore without comparison.

The paper pressed on, this time preferring to document the impressive flow of cash that was rapidly spreading through Tampa. The soldiers destined for Cuba were camped outside the city for several weeks before their pay finally arrived, and when it did the event became big news for everyone who hoped to prosper from their presence. In mid May the Tribune noted that:

Yesterday was soldiers day in Tampa… by noon and until a late hour last night, the streets were lined with boys in blue who spent their money freely… Over $175,000 was paid out yesterday in salaries alone. A like amount will be distributed to the officers in a few days. Today a large portion of it will be placed in our banks, being deposited there by our merchants, who were busy all of yesterday relieving the soldiers of it, but in a perfectly legitimate manner.

The Tribune went on to reference the gentlemanly nature of the soldiers, particularly when compared to tales handed down in a preponderance of Southern families that still bemoaned the brutality of the northern armies that occupied the region during the Civil War and its aftermath. While such a statement was tailored to a southern audience, reports of insufficient police forces to maintain order suggest that the soldiers were not as benign as implied. Still, when reflecting
on the soldiers, the paper concluded that “in reality the pecuniary benefits have been so conspicuous as to render their presence a pleasure seldom enjoyed by a city or community.” However, there was one aspect of having soldiers in Tampa which the local newsmen were not overly fond of: black servicemen.16

“The colored infantrymen stationed in Tampa and vicinity have made themselves very offensive to the people of the city,” opined the Tampa Morning Tribune shortly after the first of more than 4,000 black troops arrived in the city. Considering the joy with which the rest of the troops were received, it is startling that the financial benefits to be obtained, even from black soldiers, were not able to soften the racial animus of a deeply southern population. However, the Tribune made clear the reason for the problem: “The citizens will not make any distinction between the colored troops and the colored civilians.” Initially, the tensions between local whites and their uniformed black guests were moderately restrained, with the soldiers offended by their exclusion from many establishments and occasionally slipping into drunken outbursts, but otherwise maintaining military discipline. Even that modicum of civility vanished, however, when a riot broke out on the evening of June 6. Just after daybreak, as white Ohio volunteers drunkenly roamed the streets “one party of men caught a little colored child about two years old and decided to have some fun. One of the men held the child by the legs…and spanked it with a shingle.” As other soldiers looked on and laughed, “…the child was then held at arm’s length, by the feet with head down, and the man holding it called to another to shoot at it.” The child was not physically harmed, but he was still understandably distraught when the inebriated men

16 The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), May 19, 1898; The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), May 12, 1898; The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), May 19, 1898
returned him to his panicked mother. The black troops, already on edge due to their poor treatment by the locals, did not react well to the news.¹⁷

Accounts of the riot that followed the shameful acts of the Ohio volunteers were varied, as military authorities attempted to suppress the incident and Florida newspapers tried to downplay it, lest it damage their state. The most balanced report was offered in the same issue of the Tampa Morning Tribune that recounted the incident which sparked the disturbance in the first place, though the riot was relegated to page four, while the abuse of the child merited front page coverage. The paper started by noting that “to their shame…the disorderly mob was composed entirely of soldiers of the United States army.” The presence of white troops was noted, but “The soldiers were nearly all colored.” Not surprisingly, intoxication played a large role in the course of events, earlier provocations notwithstanding:

The mob of white and black drunken soldiers started their wild acts in the saloon… and broke up everything in the place. Then they stole every bottle of whiskey and beer in the place and fired their pistols to intimidate the provost guard… Several hundred shots were fired and citizens fled for their lives… The provost guards and the city police were powerless to stop the mob, and the disorder was continued until after daylight, when a battalion from the Georgia regiment of volunteers was sent out with orders to stop the rioting. The Georgia boys meant business, and the mob soon found it out and dispersed. In an apparent effort to complete the trifecta of alcohol, violence, and sex, before the Georgia troops arrived to restore order the rioters turned their attentions to one other enterprise in the city of Tampa. “Houses of ill repute were entered by force, and the white and black inmates were forced, at the point of pistols, to submit to the men who were disgracing the uniforms of the United States.” The entire matter was quickly glossed over, and providentially there was no loss of life, as well as very few injuries serious enough to merit major concern. Still, while the

people of Tampa, and Florida as a whole, were thrilled to have soldiers on hand to benefit their economies, there were obvious drawbacks. One lesson they seem to have been unable to learn was that black men in uniform were less willing to tolerate the abuses their civilian counterparts would swallow, and those who had spent time battling natives in the west were not likely to react to said abuses with simple words. The entire story surrounding the riot was, if nothing else, a stark reminder that armed, drunk men can be a dangerously volatile demographic, regardless of whatever pecuniary benefits their presence might bring.  

While the presence of soldiers with money to spend and hours to waste was an obvious economic boon to the city of Tampa, even if there were occasional problems brought on by the same, another benefit was found in the great numbers of Cubans forced to flee their island in the face of escalating conflict. “Tampa hotels and boarding houses are crowded with refugees from Cuba,” reported the Tribune, closing the article rather bluntly with “let them come.” The influx of Cuban refugees was not a new phenomenon in 1898, however. Ever since the start of the Cuban insurrection in 1895, noncombatants had streamed into Florida to avoid the crossfire. In Tampa and nearby Fort Meade they set about continuing their work, which by and large consisted of tobacco cultivation. “The Cuban war has done one big thing for this country,” noted the Advocate in mid March, further asserting that “it has compelled recognition, indirectly, of the value of Florida lands for the production of the finest tobacco in the world.” The paper ended the article by stating that within Florida “a vast area is suitable and available for this branch of agricultural industry.” The soil in Florida was apparently very similar to that found in Cuba, prompting the Chipley Banner to comment in May that “Florida can raise the very best tobacco, and if the wholesale dealers will only give it its proper place in the market it will prove one of

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18 The entire text of the article covering the riot may be read in the Tampa Morning Tribune, June 6, 1898.
the most profitable industries in the state.” The excellent quality of the soil, when combined with the skill of the transplanted workers available to anyone willing to pay, quickly transformed Tampa into the unofficial leader in the manufacturing of Cuban tobacco products, particularly cigars.19

The cigar industry became an essential component of Tampa’s economy, and to a lesser degree the state as a whole. The industry was so important, in fact, that when the Spanish owners of several cigar factories began to grow nervous, fearing they would be attacked because of their ethnicity, the *Weekly Tribune* ran an article proclaiming that Spanish businessmen were “too important a factor in the commercial development of our city to allow them to feel at all uneasy.” Despite the reassurances of both the mayor and the local newspapers, many Spaniards in the city could not be convinced that they were in no immediate danger, and by the end of the month several hundred had fled, either to New York, or, with the help of the Spanish government, back to Havana. In an effort to stem the tide of the apparent exodus, prominent attorney Peter O. Knight was compelled to write to the governor on the subject. “The Spaniards are a very desirable class of people, many of them having property interests here and they are almost panic-stricken over the situation,” Knight began. “Now, Governor, this is of vital importance to us. There will be no riot here or any trouble, if there is war with Spain. The citizens of Tampa will protect the Spanish citizens and there will be no trouble, but they don’t believe that.” Knight closed with the most crucial issue at stake: “We have had hard times here for two or three years and we cannot afford to lose these people.” Governor Bloxham’s response instructed the attorney to “assure the Spanish citizens and inhabitants of Tampa, that every power possible will

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be exerted to protect them in the discharge of their usual avocations, and also to protect their property.” The Governor continued on with a description of the provisions under which state militia might be utilized to prevent damage to the persons or property of the Spanish citizenry, then closed by stating: “I sincerely trust that the Spaniards and Cubans of your city who have been working in harmony during the three years that war has raged in Cuba will continue; even should there be a conflict between the Government of Spain and the Government of the United States.”

A substantial portion of the Spanish factory owners were soothed by the Governor’s statement, and the tobacco industry did not vanish from Tampa, instead surging ahead. On March 3rd, the Tribune ran a story on the Central Curing and Packing Company, “an enterprise whose business is fast assuming great proportions, and is doing much to establish the reputation of Tampa as a tobacco curing and packing center.” Further on in the same edition, a crucial notice was given related to the price of the tobacco being processed in places like Tampa. “There has been a revival of the interdiction upon the exportation of tobacco from Cuba, and as a result there is in this country a scarcity,” noted the Tribune in a reprint of a February report. “It was said by officials of the tobacco board of trade that certain grades have already risen 7 cents a pound.” A steady rise in prices, when combined with potent soil and a willing labor force promised a bright future for the tobacco industry in the state of Florida.

With the Spanish businessmen of Tampa assured that their lives and properties were not in danger, the next pressing matter for the city was to prepare for the coming conflict. In early March, General John Wilson, head of the Army Corps of Engineers, visited Tampa on an

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20 The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), April 7, 1898; William J. Schellings, “The Advent of the Spanish-American War in Florida,” Florida Historical Quarterly, April 1961; Peter Knight to William Bloxham, April 16th, 1898, Series 578, Box 15, Folder 7, SAF; William Bloxham to Peter Knight, April 18, 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter Book, SAF.

21 The Weekly Tribune (Tampa), March 3, 1898.
inspection tour of the ports in Florida. “There is not near the excitement in the South over the prospects of war with Spain as there is in the North,” Wilson commented to reporters as he examined the fortifications at Tampa Bay. He clarified his statement, noting simply that he saw no real fear on the part of his southern hosts. This was a sentiment echoed several weeks later in the *Tribune*, but there was a hint of growing apprehension, as suggested by the notation that “the war excitement in Tampa keeps at fever heat.” Wilson’s inspection tour ran along without incident, and as he prepared to depart from Tampa he was accosted by reporters who sought to know whether their city was safe from enemy attack. Wilson, exhibiting both wisdom and tact, deflected the question by stating that he would make his report upon returning to Washington. However, he left his audience with some calming words. “Any foreign power that attempts to attack any of our fortified ports will meet with a warm reception, for the coast defense guns will shoot considerably farther than those of any warship afloat.”

General Wilson’s words calmed the increasingly anxious citizens of Tampa for a time, but he was unable to spread his message across the entire state, and as the specter of war became increasingly more tangible the degree of uncertainty in Florida began to rise. Whatever economic benefit might be gained by new dollars from soldiers and potential infrastructure expansion by federal investment, nothing could cause the citizenry to forget that they lived in what could theoretically become the front line in a war with an empire that many of them still feared. As war became increasingly more likely in the early months of 1898, Governor Bloxham was inundated with requests for additional troops and defensive works from all areas of the state. The people of St. Augustine, located on the east coast, were particularly concerned about a report...
that the artillery which had been stationed there was to be removed. The Governor took this
issue up with the secretary of war, Russell Alger, on March 12:

If artillery is to be taken from St. Augustine, let me urge that it be made Headquarters for
Infantry, with suitable force to protect that section. The East Coast Railway from
Jacksonville to Miami is the shortest route from Washington to Key West, and will be at
[the] mercy of [the] enemy if protection is not given.

This message served to alleviate some of the concerns of the people of St. Augustine, but they
remained on edge until the military agreed to reoccupy the local barracks. Governor Bloxham’s
message also clearly demonstrated the growing importance of Henry Flagler’s newly completed
railway to Miami. The situation was not confined to St. Augustine, however. On April 13,
shortly before the war was officially declared, Governor Bloxham wrote to Senator Samuel
Pasco in Washington to request additional arms for some of the more isolated regions of the
state:

We have… a large number of keys and other small islands where inhabitants… have been
living for years. Some of these settlements are quite prosperous and important. Let us
take for instance, Sanibel Island… the ocean cable from Key West lands there… On that
island, there are probably two hundred men; they have no guns nor ammunition, and
could be over-run at any moment by a small armed band of marauding Spaniards in the
event of war.

The Governor’s message to Senator Pasco was not based solely on some abstract fear of Spanish
marauders. The content of much of his incoming correspondence was dominated by requests for
arms to supply local militia units and allow for the protection of vulnerable locations. In the
closing lines of his letter to Pasco, Bloxham noted that “I am having, daily, applications for arms
and ammunition for this purpose [defense of distant islands and keys] and am unable to supply
them.”

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23 William Bloxham to Secretary of War Alger, March 12 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter Book, SAF; William
Bloxham to Samuel Pasco, April 13 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter Book, SAF
When the Governor’s letter to Senator Pasco was not promptly dealt with, he turned his efforts to Secretary of War Alger. On April 18, he dispatched a letter with the purpose of calling “attention to the unprotected condition of the ports of Apalachicola and Carrabelle.” In the same letter, he stated that “at present any foreign force could destroy either of the cities without opposition, as there is not a gun at either port.” In hindsight, the prospect of marauding bands of Spaniards terrorizing the coastline and destroying undefended harbors is ludicrous, but in the fevered moments leading up to the outbreak of hostilities many absurd notions took on a surprising air of plausibility.24

Perhaps nothing better demonstrates the degree of apprehension felt by citizens across the state than the story of Professor J.K. Melcher. As the story was told to the Advocate, Melcher was savoring a balmy weekend afternoon in early April by napping in a lounge chair in the cool breeze on his back porch. He was suddenly awakened by a loud bang and found himself covered in shards of glass and a thick, red liquid. Immediately, “he thought the Spaniards had opened fire on him with a Howitzer.” As his initial panic subsided and he examined the red liquid, he realized it was not blood but strawberry jam. Glancing above him, he noticed that he had fallen asleep below a shelf containing jars of preserves, one of which had apparently fermented to the point of rupturing. His story became an amusing anecdote for the last page of the local newspaper, but his initial reaction –absolute certainty that a Spanish attack was underway-demonstrates more than a little fear. Nor was his story unique. There are numerous other examples of individuals hearing loud noises and immediately assuming the Spaniards had

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24 William Bloxham to Secretary of War Russell Alger, April 18, 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter Book, SAF 48
arrived, only to find out later that the truth was far more mundane; a broken barrel of molasses in one case, fallen dinnerware in another. Still, the fear was real, even if it was unwarranted.25

One profound irony of the concerns nurtured by the people of Florida during the run up to the war with Spain is that they were so preoccupied with visions of invasion that they missed the one true enemy that had the potential to threaten them: disease. Florida had established a State Board of Health after a particularly virulent outbreak of yellow fever in Jacksonville in 1888, but little progress was made over the intervening decade with regards to combatting the disease. The era’s scientific knowledge regarding the causes of malarial diseases was still largely theoretical, and when combined with the few preventative measures available, the State Board simply was not up to the task of conquering such maladies. In late April, as troops prepared to embark for their liberation of Cuba, the Chipley Banner ran a small piece detailing the true menace:

It is, therefore, necessary that the defense of Florida should consist not only of guns and torpedoes, but also of a formidable array of disinfecting apparatus and quarantine regulations. The diseases which originate in Cuba are more to be dreaded than the soldiers which Spain could send to Florida.

Sadly, disease was an enemy for which the United States Army was not particularly well prepared. Floridians, by virtue of enduring their state’s peculiar climate and maladies on a regular basis, were not especially concerned with potential outbreaks, having been, in the parlance of the day, “seasoned.” The vast numbers of men who soon flooded into Tampa, however, were not so fortunate. In August, Governor Bloxham requested a report from the military camp at Fernandina detailing the condition of the men, as he had been hearing disturbing reports of disease. “The regiments here were sent lately from Tampa, very much infected with Typhoid and Malarial fevers,” began the commanding general’s reply. “On arrival numbers were reported sick with insufficient means to properly provide for them. In addition an epidemic

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25 Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate (Starke), April 26, 1898
Illustration 5: 8\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Camp.

The sanitary conditions of many of the camps where troops awaited their departure contributed to the outbreak of disease. This camp, occupied by the 8\textsuperscript{th} Infantry just outside Tampa, showcases crowded conditions and proximity to scrubland with a propensity to breed mosquitoes. The camps were in keeping with military standards, but that did little to combat disease.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{26} Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-USZ62-92728]
of measles broke out in the 1st Florida Regiment. Every effort was made to take care of the sick as well as possible under the circumstances.” Not wishing to alarm the governor, the general assured him that the necessary supplies had been received and that “there is no occasion for anxiety in the future.” The question of a potential outbreak of some virulent strain was brushed aside, and culpability for the army’s negligence on the subject was not fixed. The unfortunate reality remained that so long as there was even the slightest chance of Spain attacking American soil the people were less interested in stories of disease than they were in preparing their defensive works or fleeing outright.27

The Semi-Weekly Advocate noted on April 8 that “many families are leaving Key West for Miami, not regarding Key West a safe place in the event of war.” Two weeks later, an article noted that “the exodus from Florida has been great, and much of it has been due to the fear that war might impede travel out of the State. Many citizens have gone north with the hope of getting out of the way of hostilities.” Perhaps in an effort to combat these trends, as well as the clear apprehension felt by many within the state, the Advocate ran an article on April 12 recounting the long history of Spain’s fall from prominence, beginning in the mid-sixteenth century. Whether it was intended purely as a history lesson or as a salve for the nerves of the citizens is open to conjecture, but the final line tends to suggest the latter is the case. “Is the United States,” the paper asked, “to be the instrument of putting the finishing touches in the closing hours of the nineteenth century on what England began about the middle of the sixteenth?”28

27 The Chipley Banner (Chipley), April 30, 1898; Commanding General, US Camp at Fernandina to William Bloxham, August 16, 1898, Series 578, Box 15, SAF
28 Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate (Starke), April 8, 1898; Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate (Starke), April 22, 1898 Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate (Starke), April 12, 1898.
As the question of whether or not the state of Florida had anything to fear from potential war with Spain grew more intense, officials in Washington entered the fray. When the citizens of Miami began howling for troops and fortifications, as well as potential support from naval vessels, officials of the War Department declared that such requests were impossible. “The officials… have no hesitation in declaring that the apprehension among the people of these towns is largely groundless,” observed the *Miami Metropolis* in a front page article concerning the coming war on April 22. Unwilling to let such a statement go unanswered, especially when extremely lucrative government expenditures and soldier dollars were at stake, the *Metropolis*’ editor fired back three pages later:

> Officials of the War Department say that no troops will be stationed at Miami, and that the apprehension among our people is largely groundless. This being the case, then what need have we for “fortifications?” The War Department is evidently in need of a revised map of Florida.

It is difficult to determine what motivated the editor, E.T. Byington, to offer his rebuttal of the War Department’s statement. While it is certainly possible that genuine concern for the safety of his city drove him on, the *Metropolis* remained a calm voice of reason for most of the first quarter of 1898. In March, the paper had even gone so far as to state that “Spain could never land an invading force in this neck of the woods.” It is far more likely, then, that when the *Metropolis* questioned the War Department’s stance, it was more for reasons of economic self interest than true fear of enemy attack.29

Miami, while quite distant from most of the nation, was close enough to Tampa for its citizens and newspapermen to be quite well aware of the economic windfall their northern neighbors were experiencing due to the influx of men and material for the war effort. There appears to have been a growing animus on the part of certain elements in Miami with regards to

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29 *The Miami Metropolis* (Miami), April 22, 1898; *The Miami Metropolis* (Miami), March 18, 1898
Tampa’s preferential treatment. “In the event of war between this country and Spain there can be no doubt that Miami will play an important part. Very early in the fray the navy department will recognize its superior advantages as a base of supplies,” noted the Metropolis in early April. A week later, the paper discussed the pending fortifications for Brickell point, stating that “the work of construction will give employment to between fifty and sixty mechanics.” This, combined with the potential of soldiers stationed in the city, boded quite well for Miami’s coffers and continued expansion. And while there were undeniable economic rewards reaped by the city, they never approached those garnered by Tampa as the army awaited departure. Once it was apparent that Tampa was to be the big winner in the contest, the Metropolis lamented the decision:

By reason of the massing of troops at Tampa the merchants of that city are reaping a rich harvest. The private expenditures of the troops alone amount to thousands of dollars daily. The Government also makes heavy purchases of supplies there. Visitors are so numerous that it has been necessary to reopen one of the large winter resort hotels. And yet, Miami… has seen nothing of war preparation beyond the location of a pair of small guns at Brickell’s point. We are patriotic all right, but when this near to the seat of war it would be more satisfying to have some of the recognition which ought naturally to fall to us.

To hear the Metropolis tell it, it would seem that Miami was a bustling city whose obvious importance was being overlooked by a stubborn government that had been effectively lobbied by the local interests in Tampa. Such a sour note was untrue in several key respects.\(^\text{30}\)

Despite Miami’s rapid growth and expansion once Henry Flagler’s railroad reached it in the late 1890s, it was still a miniscule settlement. At the time of the city’s incorporation in July 1896 there were approximately 500 residents. In January of 1898, as Hugh Willoughby prepared for his trek into the Everglades, he observed “a town of two thousand inhabitants.” The

\(^{30}\) The Miami Metropolis (Miami), April 8, 1898; The Miami Metropolis (Miami), April 15, 1898; The Miami Metropolis (Miami), May 13, 1898
surviving census records from 1900 suggest that Willoughby had, in fact, overestimated, as even two years after the war there were only approximately 1,700 people living there. With roughly ten times the population, Tampa clearly had a better chance of being able to offer the supplies and amenities the army required as it staged its invasion of Cuba, regardless of the *Metropolis*' suggestions to the contrary. Miami was “a town consisting of a hotel shuttered for the season and a clutch of raw buildings that might have dropped down from the sky.”

Miami’s unenviable state of development as the war approached notwithstanding, there was enough concern on the part of the War Department that approximately 7,000 troops were dispatched to garrison the city. They were not overly pleased with what they found upon their arrival, and the situation did not much improve as they sat in tents situated far too close to swampland and awaited further instructions. In fact, the sites selected for encampments were so unpleasant that the troops began to refer to the area as “Camp Hell”. Adding to their misery was the state of the water supply. One of the principal reasons for not simply staging the entire invasion from Key West, as might have seemed logical given the distances involved, was that the island had a very limited fresh water supply, and could not hope to accommodate the men as they awaited their embarkation. The people of Miami, as part of their pitch to acquire a military camp, had assured army officials that there was a ready, clean supply of water available for as many soldiers as were assigned to the area. That turned out to be a lie. The water was dirty, hot, and foul-smelling, and caused illness in many. Beyond that, many of the camps had not been properly cleared of brush, and since the men seemingly had nothing else to do with their time, they were tasked with its removal. As they labored under the scorching summer sun, most of the men began to realize that they would never see any real action, and their present pursuits would

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mark the entirety of their war experience. Some wrote of their disappointment, others bought up the available alcohol and passed the time in a stupor, several were killed in a lightning storm and at least one is reported to have committed suicide. Still, the presence of soldiers and federal money did offer some benefits to the city. 32

“One of the urgent needs of this section of the coast,” commented the Metropolis in early April, “is a signal station… one should be established on the Coast opposite Miami.” Unlike some of the city’s other requests, this one was regarded as legitimate, and had been under consideration by the state for some time. “The Naval militia will make an extended trip along the eastern coast of the state… to determine the best locations for signal stations in time of war” reported the Indian River Advocate in March. Miami’s lobbying was successful, and as soon as a suitable location was selected work was begun upon the station with all possible speed. The city also received its first telephone exchange, likely to assist in communications for military operations, in early 1898. Articles in the Metropolis point to a movement to bring electricity to Miami, though that was not achieved before the end of the hostilities with Spain. And despite the lamentations of the local paper upon determining that Tampa was to receive the lion’s share of gain from war expenditures, even the sole pair of guns installed at Brickell Point was a boon to the economy. “The establishment of the battery on the bay front has been a good thing for our mechanics,” stated the Metropolis in late April. “Over six thousand dollars will be disbursed for labor alone. It has helped to tide over the dull season very nicely.”33

33 The Miami Metropolis (Miami), April 8, 1898; The Indian River Advocate (Titusville), March 4, 1898; The Miami Metropolis (Miami), April 29, 1898.
Ultimately, the investments of men and material made by the government in Tampa and Miami proved unnecessary, as Spain was never able to mount even so much as a raid against the Florida coastline. After considerable debate, the 55th Congress officially declared war on Spain on April 25, 1898. The troops who had been massing at Tampa and several other staging areas across the state were loaded onto ships at a painfully slow pace, their departure delayed incessantly by the poor railroads in Florida and the resultant inability to transport provisions with any haste. The invasion of Cuba finally took place between June 22 and 24, east of Santiago, with the goal of capturing the city. Under the command of former Union general William Shafter, whose subordinate was former Confederate general Joseph Wheeler, the US forces pushed against scattered Spanish opposition until they managed to lay siege to Santiago in July. Spanish opposition remained stiff until their naval forces were annihilated just off the coast as they attempted a breakout on July 3. By August, US troops began to redeploy to Florida, yellow fever having taken a dreadful toll on their numbers and reduced their combat effectiveness by approximately 75 percent. The disastrous losses in Cuba, combined with the annihilation of their fleet in the Philippines in May, compelled the Spaniards to accept peace terms, effectively bringing the war to a close on August 12, 1898.\textsuperscript{34}

The Spanish-American War did not lay waste to the state of Florida. There were no bombardments by Spanish flotillas or incursions by marauding bands. But the war did change the state in several profound and lasting ways. “Through Congressman Sparkman the government has made Tampa a permanent military post,” noted the Chipley Banner in late May. The sheer volume of dollars pumped into Tampa’s coffers revitalized the city, and its position as a military outpost assured that it did not slip into obscurity again. Miami saw more tangible

\textsuperscript{34} Trask, \textit{The War With Spain in 1898}; George Philip III, “Naval Cadet Taussig Goes to War,” \textit{Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal}, Vol. 8, No. 3, (Spring 1998)
results, but it was such a small settlement that any development would have been substantial. “The war was over by August,” notes Les Standiford in his work on Henry Flagler, “and the troops were soon gone, but still, Miami had become a place in the eyes of the world.” That introduction did not bear immediate fruit, but it did lay the foundation for future development on the peninsula’s southern tip.  

Miami and Tampa certainly gained the most from the outlay of cash prior to the invasion of Cuba, but other regions of the state also shared in the bounty. Key West, by virtue of its location, became a large storehouse for naval munitions and fuel. “Every vacant storehouse in the lower part of the city has been rented by the United States government to be utilized as a storehouse,” noted the Semi-Weekly Advocate in reference to Key West in mid April. At the northern end of the state, the Young Men’s Business League of Tallahassee petitioned the governor “to establish telephone service between Tallahassee and the lighthouse at St. Marks.” The request was made in the belief that it would be strategically significant to have early warning should the Spanish attempt to attack the Gulf coast, but however ludicrous the reasoning a telephone line was put into place. Many of the changes across Florida were small, but they paved the way for what was to follow in the twentieth century.

Prior to 1898, Florida was a state that few people outside the wealthy winter tourists ever ventured to, and with good reason. Substandard rail lines that made travel more difficult than in other regions of the United States were a significant liability, and many of the distant tropical outposts they serviced were little more than a single hotel surrounded by ramshackle buildings simply awaiting a stiff wind to provide an excuse for collapse. The economic troubles that

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35 *The Chipley Banner* (Chipley), May 21, 1898; Standiford, *Last Train to Paradise*, 68
36 *Florida Semi-Weekly Advocate* (Starke), April 15, 1898; William Bloxham to Stephen Mallory, May 2, 1898, Governor Bloxham’s Letter Book, SAF
plagued the country for much of the decade were equally devastating to Florida, and several unfortunate seasons without adequate rainfall took their toll on the state’s agricultural interests. What the state desperately needed was an event to attract attention, something that could replicate for Florida a small fraction of what the Gold Rush had provided to California half a century earlier. Despite the fact that “the majority of our people are hoping for and looking forward to a speedy settlement of the all-absorbing question without our having to resort to hostilities,” in truth the war brought nothing but benefit. The greatest benefit, however, was one that few on the ground would have recognized at the time. For the war laid bare the weaknesses in Florida, the pitfalls that would need to be addressed if the state was ever to attain the prosperity so many of its residents regarded as an inevitability. Miami, for example, was undone by its remote location in conjunction with Florida’s weak infrastructure; its citizens had no desire to see that pattern repeated. But that was a concern for another time. In mid April, the Chipley Banner examined the potential benefits a war might bring to Florida, and the nameless author captured the vision of many Floridians in the opening months of 1898: “Let Florida work as well as fight and pray, resting confident in the assurance that a brighter day is dawning for her, as well as for all the world.”

37 Indian River Advocate (Titusville), April 8, 1898; The Chipley Banner (Chipley), April 16, 1898
CHAPTER TWO: DISEASE, DISASTER, AND DEVELOPMENT

The brighter day that the Chipley Banner so optimistically predicted on the eve of the Spanish-American War proved somewhat more elusive than the people of Florida had hoped. The war came and went much like one of the seasonal tropical storms that Floridians were accustomed to, fierce but fleeting. It had been a boon to the state’s permanent residents, but it was so brief that its long-term results were significantly less than had been hoped for during the heady days of 1898. Miami did see an influx of new residents, and Tampa’s economy was able to avoid slipping back into the doldrums in whose grasp it had languished before soldiers poured their pay into the city’s coffers, but by the turn of the century it was clear that predictions of Florida’s meteoric rise were somewhat premature. There had been hopes that the expanded military presence in the state would gain some degree of permanence, but that fantasy was put to rest with startling rapidity. The draw-down and return to normalcy hit local guard units very hard, and by early 1905 there was “the possibility of the two military companies in Pensacola being disbanded.” The militia companies were understaffed, but the residents of Pensacola still felt they served a vital defensive purpose. “This city cannot afford to be without a military company (conditions requiring same),” suggested a former commander of both companies in
question, in a letter to Governor Napoleon Broward. Whatever the future might have appeared to be in 1898, it was clear that the situation had changed.¹

Some Floridians, like Tampa’s Peter O. Knight, never doubted the bright future that lay ahead. Regarded as something of an eternal optimist, Knight spent much of his life looking for new ways to improve and elevate Florida as a whole, and Tampa specifically. “Tampa is the coming city of the United States,” he once opined, adding that “within a few years it will be a great city and its prosperity will always continue.” That optimism was wedded to a sturdy pragmatism that afforded adaptability. Military expenditures might not have become the permanent salve many hoped for, but that simply meant that new methods would need to be developed to help Florida attain a more lasting prosperity. First, however, there were problems to address. Steps were taken to eradicate several maladies that proved to be perpetual irritants, new methods of road construction prompted lively debate and slowly chipped away at the vast distances the state covered, and general infrastructure improvements were made in an effort to move Florida away from its frontier heritage and into the view of average Americans.²

Disease in Florida was not a new phenomenon. Until 1888, questions of health had been left up to individual counties, and issues ranging from quarantine to clean-up varied in their effectiveness based on the participants. In 1888, however, a potent outbreak of yellow fever in Jacksonville, with more than 5,000 reported cases and over 400 deaths, prompted the creation of a State Board of Health, with Dr. Joseph Yates Porter of Key West as its first head. The State Board of Health quickly determined that “the major public health problem… in Florida was prevention of introduction of yellow fever at its port cities.” Realizing that yellow fever often

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¹ Letter from Pensacola militia members to the Chief of the State Militia, February 18, 1905, Series 664, Box 8, Folder 7, SAF; Letter to Governor Napoleon Broward, February 21, 1905, Series 664, Box 8, Folder 7, SAF
Illustration 6: Yellow Fever.

Drawn shortly after Jacksonville was devastated by an outbreak, this image depicts Florida being dragged down by a demonic personification of Yellow Fever.¹

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¹ Matthew Somerville Morgan, Florida Memory, Image RC08563, unknown date between 1890-1895, SAF
originated in cities which boasted a vibrant trade network that included numerous equatorial areas, Porter determined that quarantine was an integral first step in eradicating the illness. To that end, new procedures were established and standardized, but “Florida’s seacoast was one of the most difficult to protect due to its length,” and progress was very slow. Nor was yellow fever the only malady with which the Board of Health had to contend.⁴

Malaria ravaged the troops camped outside Tampa and Miami during their brief sojourn in 1898, and the State Board quickly determined that this pestilence also needed to be addressed if there was to be any realistic hope of meaningful development. In January, 1902, the annual report to the State Board of Health outlined the situation on a county-by-county basis. “It is disappointing not to be able to show more real sanitary work,” lamented the report’s author, most likely Dr. Porter, in his introductory remarks. Such work, which had received support and appropriations the previous year,

no doubt would have greatly benefitted the State by increasing its health reputation, aiding physicians in a disagnostication(sic) of disease, have prolonged life, by decreasing sickness and mortality, and would also it is thought, have contributed very materially to the commercial growth and prosperity of the State.

The report went on to make mention of a decade’s worth of birth and death records, as well as notations from correspondence and “papers relating to the habits, occupation, and general welfare of the people in the different Counties and sections of the State.” This vast collection of data, the author declared,

disclosed interesting as well as convincing proofs of the superior excellence of the climate and healthfulness of Florida, as well as a peculiar natural exemption from epidemic influence of those contagious diseases, which when existing or introduced into more northern climates tend to spread or become alarmingly prevalent.

⁴ Florida State Board of Health, “Millstones and Milestones: Florida’s Public Health,” Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal, Vol. 18 No. 1, (Fall 2007); Dr. Porter served as the head of the State Board of Health for seven consecutive 4-year terms, from 1888 to 1916
Florida, it seemed, was immune to the ravages of disease that the rest of the nation endured; the problem, then, was to find a way to deal with the state’s indigenous maladies, as well as those that entered through its many ports connected to far-flung locales. “Florida recognized the acute need to protect itself from epidemic diseases from other countries,” noted the State Board of Health in 1964 when considering its early days. But quarantine with regards to port cities and incoming vessels could not prevent maladies that were already ashore from spreading. “Faced by the terrorizing epidemics, counties also sought to prevent the introduction of diseases from other counties,” even going so far as to open fire on suspected carriers moving from an infected region to one where an outbreak had not yet occurred. Dr. Porter’s work was cut out for him as the 1890s gave way to the 1900s, and that was when sickness was his only enemy; not long after the century turned, another would appear.⁵

Jacksonville, at the time the most populous city in Florida, served as the base of operations for the physicians gathering data and preparing reports for the Board of Health. As a city which experienced rapid growth, particularly in the decade following the yellow fever outbreak in 1888, there was a great deal of construction that was hastily planned, similar to Chicago some thirty years earlier. Like that Midwestern metropolis, much of Jacksonville’s construction was wooden, and on May 3, 1901, that yielded disastrous consequences. Brooke White was on her back porch around noon and:

> saw the sparks as they lighted the inflammable material on the roof of the Cleveland Fibre Factory… The roof of the building was perfectly flat, and moss, fibre and other material used in the making of mattresses… was placed on the roof to dry. It was thought that the sparks were generated from a short circuit in the electric current… The fire spread with great rapidity, as there was a strong wind, and while I watched I saw blazing pieces of fibre wafted through the air start seven different fires... It was a terrible

⁵ Report to the State Board of Health of Florida, January 1, 1902, Series 596, Box 13, Folder 4, SAF; State Board of Health, “Millstones and Milestones,” Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal
thing to stand and watch and feel so helpless - the buildings blaze up, then crash to the ground with a terrible clatter. Every street was blocked with debris.

The conflagration described by Brooke White wiped entire sections of the city off the map, and was only truly stopped by the fortunate location of several waterways which checked its progress. Efforts were made on the part of workers at the fibre factory to stop the blaze before it grew beyond its source, but “the building was of pitch pine with a roof of shingles combustible as tinder – water evaporated or seemed but fuel to the flames.” It took less than half an hour for the inferno to spread beyond the ability of the local fire brigade to contain it, and at that point the only thing the citizenry could do was flee or pray that the wind pushed the flames in another direction. By the end of the day, seven people were dead and an estimated $15 million in property had been consumed. Jacksonville went on to rebuild, of course, but the damage to the State Board of Health, whose office was not spared, was irreparable. “In a few moments the work of twelve years, in research, compilation, and accumulation was reduced to ashes.” It is unclear exactly how much of a setback the loss of data was to Florida’s efforts to combat sickness and disease, but progress was certainly slowed. Dr. Porter was not one to surrender to the whims of fate, however, and thus the 1902 report was compiled as best as could be managed after such a devastating loss, offering an analysis of the various counties across the state. 6

“The general health of the State for 1901 was fairly good,” observed the report’s author. There were, as expected, examples of fevers and some life-threatening maladies, most notably smallpox and scarlet fever, but they were scattered across the fullness of Florida and did not contribute appreciably to any spike in the state’s mortality rate, which stood at approximately 10

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It is also worth noting that the panics which had swept the state in the 1890s at the hint of an epidemic were nowhere to be found in the 1902 report, suggesting that even at its slow pace, the progress made by the State Board of Health was reassuring the populace. There was one sickness, however, to which all of the reporting county physicians made reference, either to note its virulence or happily report its absence: malaria. The illness, long associated with tropical and swampy regions, was a regular fixture in Florida. The general populace was still not entirely educated on the source of malaria. In late January, the Miami Metropolis ran a small piece under the guise of advice for farmers:

Frequently wet places that produce more frogs and mosquitoes than any crop that can be planted can be drained with a good plow and team and a day or two with a shovel or hoe… It will always pay to do such work, because such places, well drained, are very fertile… wet places should be made dry.

The advice was sound, and the idea that the previously swampy land would be fertile was quite correct, but there was no mention of the health benefits of removing a spawning ground for mosquitoes, either for the people or livestock. Such serendipitous advice began the campaign against the pest as an afterthought, but while general knowledge was still lacking with regards to malaria, a number of physicians were quickly closing in on the truth. In 1900, Dr. Porter demonstrated his own developing understanding of the situation with the observation that “while it is not denied that mosquitoes may convey malarial germs . . . yet to ascribe to these insects the sole power of production of this disorder as well as that of yellow fever, is to reject equally convincing and potent facts.” Given his uncertainty, Porter remained a strong proponent of quarantine, as it did provide tangible results.7

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7 Report to the State Board of Health of Florida, January 1, 1902, Series 596, Box 13, Folder 4, SAF; Miami Metropolis, 1/24/1902; State Board of Health, “Millstones and Milestones,” Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal
For the populace of Florida, questions of quarantine and the transmission of deadly diseases were not the subjects of daily conversation. There were, however, continual mutterings about the insipid mosquito and its ability to turn a pleasant summer evening into a Hellish exercise in irritation. The pest was so prevalent that its absence was worth reporting. In West Palm Beach, situated just to the north of Miami, the summer of 1903 proved remarkably quiet. “It is a matter of general comment and rejoicing with the people… that this summer the city has been practically free from the mosquito pest,” noted the editor of the *Tropical Sun* as August wore on, closing with the observation that “those who endured the siege last summer have good reason to extend heartfelt thanks that they have been spared this year.” Oddly enough, Key West also avoided the ubiquitous summer pest, a fact the *Tropical Sun* reported a week after observing its own good fortune. The editor of the Key West paper was puzzled by the serendipitous occurrence. “What can be the reason?” he asked rather bluntly, closing more pointedly with “can any scientist explain?” For most of the residents of the fortunate regions of the state, it was enough to be free of the mosquito and its malevolence for a season; the why of the situation was not a particular concern. That very issue, however, had been under consideration for quite some time, and the findings of those scientists so plaintively addressed by the Key West newspaperman were already beginning to bear fruit.8

The question of a link between mosquitoes and the transmission of malarial diseases was being studied far beyond the borders of Florida, and new information had already adjusted the opinion of the state’s chief medical authority. By 1902, Dr. Porter could state that “the transmission of yellow fever to man through the agency of the infected mosquito of a certain species is no longer theory but a well determined fact.” The speed with which such certainty

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8 *The Tropical Sun*, August 19, 1903; *The Tropical Sun*, August 26, 1903
arrived was staggering, and considering Florida’s particular geographic and climatological circumstances it is little wonder that the information was disseminated throughout the state’s medical practitioners at a breakneck pace once it was confirmed. By the time of the 1902 health report, a county doctor was able to inform the State Board of Health that “we have had our full share of mosquitoes, but no noticeable increase of Malarial troubles.” Once it was determined with certainty that mosquitoes were responsible for the transmission of both malaria and yellow fever, a more detailed understanding of the insect was undertaken.9

In April of 1905, a gathering of the Florida State Medical Association in Jacksonville was treated to a detailed paper prepared by Dr. Hiram Byrd, of Kissimmee, which sought to enlighten as to the particulars of the pest. While much of the paper concerned the life cycle of the various species of mosquitoes and their physical differences, there were several practical pieces of information provided to Florida’s medical community. If there had been any lingering doubts, “the paper brought out the certainty of the transmission of disease by mosquitoes and… those diseases positively known to be transmitted are malaria [and] yellow fever.” But, of course, the medical professionals were by and large already convinced of this fact, and were indeed far more concerned with steps that might be taken to deal with the newly-unmasked marauder. It was observed that, while it had been anecdotally known for generations, there was scientific evidence that colder temperatures subdued the insects, lending the weight of fact to the belief that malaria and yellow fever were diseases of the summer. The report explained that “of the malaria-carriers only five species have been found in Florida,” and then went on to detail their life-cycle, noting that the development from the egg stage to full growth required “from a week to ten days.” This offered the exciting prospect that the beasts might be wiped out by simply destroying the areas of

9 The Tropical Sun, August 26, 1903; Report to the State Board of Health of Florida, January 1, 1902, Series 596, Box 13, Folder 4, SAF
standing, stagnant water in which they spawned and matured, though in Florida that task would prove more Herculean than anyone yet realized. Dr. Byrd began his closing remarks with the observation that “the time is coming when it will be a municipal crime to tolerate a mosquito,” and he called on both the physicians and citizens of the state to “assist in… the extermination of these disease transmitters and pests.”10

Despite the best efforts of men like Doctors Porter and Byrd, the populace at large remained mostly ignorant of the direct connection between mosquitoes and malaria, though they were “becoming better informed every year as to the importance of strict sanitation as their only means of guarding themselves against diseases that are preventable.” To that end, numerous “clean-up” campaigns were launched across the state, which consisted of acts ranging from the simple, such as tipping over receptacles after a rainstorm to prevent the accumulation of stagnant water, to the more complex efforts involved in improving drainage along roadways. In Tampa, construction of an effective sewage system had been underway for some time, but progress was slow and numerous residences still relied on outhouses, small bastions from which the ravenous mosquito might launch raids upon the unwary citizenry. The physician reporting to the State Board from Tampa remained optimistic, however, noting that “when the sewerage of the City [Tampa] is completed and thorough drainage is established I think from the present outlook this fever [malaria] will prevail very little in this City.”11

Dealing with potential outbreaks and sanitary conditions within the State of Florida occupied much of the State Board of Health’s time, but of equal importance were the new quarantine procedures implemented to stop the importation of unexpected maladies. In this regard, Dr. Porter was a uniquely gifted choice to head the agency, as he had spent his career in

10 *The Tropical Sun*, April 22, 1905
11 Report to the State Board of Health of Florida, January 1, 1902, Series 596, Box 13, Folder 4, SAF
Key West and was very well acquainted with the difficulties involved in keeping foreign plagues safely offshore. Porter wasted no time in establishing standard quarantine procedures for all port cities in Florida. The steps, in retrospect, seem rather obvious: boarding and inspecting vessels, establishing official quarantine stations, requiring certificates of health, and so on. But the very fact that these procedures are common is a testament to the ingenuity of Florida’s Board of Health, as “Federal authorities accepted with few changes the rules and regulations [related to quarantine] previously developed. Thus a service conceived and developed by …Florida… provided the foundation for the further growth of this modern system.”

The State Board of Health’s quarantine practices also received an unexpected bit of aid related directly to the Spanish-American War. Florida, specifically Key West, had long traded with the port city of Havana. Many words could be used to describe Cuba in the 1890s, but stability is not one of them. The goods shipped out of Cuba were in exceptionally high demand, but they had to be regarded as highly suspect from a sanitary perspective, and the protracted quarantine and inspection procedures damaged profits. That began to change once Spain was evicted from the island. The 1902 report to the State Board of Health observed that “a change of Civil Government in Cuba within the year will probably bring about an altered state of health supervision of the municipal sea-ports of that island.” Cuba, long regarded as just another foreign port, could now be seen as a region whose health standards would measure up to those of the United States, diminishing the need for costly and time-consuming quarantine. “Aside from the increased freedom from Yellow Fever introduction into our southern sea-ports which we have enjoyed,” continued the report, “our commerce has increased and those restrictions which prior to 1898 were considered needful against shipping from Havana…have been so greatly

12 State Board of Health, “Millstones and Milestones,” Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal
lightened that our trade with Cuba has been largely benefitted.” Put more directly, as the United States expanded its zone of control, more regions could be deemed “safe” from the menace of the mosquito and the diseases it carried.\textsuperscript{13}

Many of the quarantine procedures pioneered by the State Board of Health were eventually adopted by the Federal government for general use across the United States. The efficacy of the new regulations was demonstrated quite quickly. At some point over the summer of 1905, yellow fever arrived in New Orleans. When, precisely, the outbreak began is a matter of contention, as there were immediate accusations that “the New Orleans authorities… concealed the existence of yellow fever in that city for several weeks.” In any event, by late July there were enough cases being reported that there was no longer any hope of hiding them. Almost immediately upon learning of the official reports of the outbreak, the \textit{Weekly True Democrat} reassured its readers that “Floridians need have no anxiety concerning the recent appearance of yellow fever in New Orleans as long as State Health Officer Porter is in charge.” The paper’s faith in Porter was well-founded, as the doctor’s expertise in relation to quarantine was easily demonstrated by a persistent decrease in imported maladies during his tenure in charge of the State Board of Health. New Orleans had insisted on retaining its own standards for quarantine inspections, rather than adopting the procedures pioneered in Florida and adopted by the Federal government. Florida ports traded with many of the same locales as New Orleans, and yet they did not experience a similar issue. In fact, when yellow fever did finally wind its way to Pensacola several weeks later, it came from New Orleans, not some distant port. By August 11, Dr. Porter could confirm that:

\begin{quote}
Florida has… quarantined against… New Orleans and the infected districts in Louisiana, [and] requires all passengers entering the state to produce satisfactory and confirmatory
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{13} Report to the State Board of Health of Florida, January 1, 1902, Series 596, Box 13, Folder 4, SAF
evidence that they have not been in New Orleans for ten days previous to coming into the state.

While New Orleans suffered nearly 400 reported cases by August 11, with 79 deaths and more to come, the numbers in Florida never approached that level.\textsuperscript{14}

As the summer of 1905 wore on and the outbreak of yellow fever refused to be put down, earlier assurances by the various authorities were insufficient to calm the populace. In July, the \textit{Tropical Sun} informed its readers that “yellow fever has entered Florida and the fight against its spread is on.” The case reported by the \textit{Tropical Sun} was located in Tampa, brought on by a refugee from New Orleans who had somehow managed to elude the quarantine authorities. That did little to instill confidence in the ability of the medical personnel to stop the spread of yet another outbreak. The article then commented on the new, as yet untested approaches to the question of malarial diseases:

\begin{quote}
The strongest fight of the medical boards is…along the line of the mosquito theory. This will be watched with great interest by the general public for the reason that it is only recently that the theory was advanced and accepted by experts in the matter. In the meantime it is the duty of every person to rigidly observe sanitary rules… precaution is a thousand times more valuable than care.
\end{quote}

Reassurances from the \textit{Tropical Sun} and \textit{Weekly True Democrat} notwithstanding, the \textit{St. Lucie County Tribune}, seemingly safe and secure on the lower east coast of the state, felt compelled to reassure its readers. “Florida need not fear an invasion of the yellow fever,” the paper declared, “as every precaution is being taken by the health authorities of the state to prevent any refugees from coming over the border line.” The article ended with the assertion that “a spread is most improbable.” Similar tones were taken by a significant portion of the newspapers and politicians

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Weekly True Democrat} (Tallahassee), August 5, 1905; \textit{Weekly True Democrat} (Tallahassee), July 28, 1905; \textit{Weekly True Democrat} (Tallahassee), August 11, 1905
around Florida, but the longer the outbreak lasted, the more they began to sound like whistling past the graveyard. 

Amid the optimists, there were a few pragmatic newspaper editors who urged caution. The *Gainesville Sun*, early in the outbreak, recommended preventative action: “while the State Board of Health is doing everything in its power to stamp out yellow fever…it is a very good plan to keep up the cleaning process.” The effort to “clean up” the state had continued unabated for years, and even those with no understanding of the mosquito-borne nature of the disease were able to note a significant decrease in instances of yellow fever in towns that were nice and tidy. For those who remained unsure as to the efficacy of cleanliness, the *Sun*’s next issue pinpointed the mosquito as the culprit, condemning the lack of sanitation in New Orleans in the process: “the filth of New Orleans and the allowing of mosquitos to propagate without the least interference is the cause of the outbreak of yellow fever.” The *Sun*’s suggestion was based on the idea that by minimizing the chances of a local outbreak, any such occurrence would immediately stand out and lead to potential quarantine breakers. “There is no telling when some person afflicted with the fever may escape from that city [New Orleans],” continued the article, concluding that, despite the Board’s best efforts, “the large coast line cannot all be guarded and there is danger in spite of the utmost precaution.” It was ultimately impossible to prevent the spread of yellow fever into Florida from New Orleans, which at least one editor blamed on “the failure of the United States Marine Hospital service to prevent people from New Orleans coming

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into Florida,” but the handful of cases reported in Pensacola (which was quickly cordoned off) and Tampa never amounted to more than a few dozen.  

There was no denying that the quarantine plans implemented by Dr. Porter and eventually adopted by the general government were a vital step in combatting the spread of deadly maladies throughout the southern United States. But that was insufficient to end the problem. By the middle part of the twentieth century’s first decade, there was no longer any real debate over the mosquito’s role in initiating and perpetuating outbreaks; if home-grown cases of malaria and yellow fever were to be eliminated, the insect’s dominion over much of the Florida peninsula had to be broken. The first evidence of a concerted effort against the pest, however, came from fever-ridden New Orleans. Even as Florida made its own preparations to prevent a spread of epidemic proportions, the people of New Orleans went on the offensive, assigning 800 men to the task of cleaning the infected portions of the city. The Gainesville Sun noted that “fire engines and steam disinfecting plants are being used in a ruthless raid against the mosquito.”

In faraway New York, physicians and scientists met to discuss new findings related to the insect even as the New Orleans outbreak grew worse in the summer of 1905. In a lengthy article published in late June, the Tropical Sun delivered the essential points to its curious readers. It began by once more settling the question of the mosquito’s connection to the diseases so prevalent during the summer months, a fact which by all rights should have been known months, or even years, earlier, but which continued to elude many of the more modestly-educated and less-informed members of the paper’s readership. “They are purveyors of disease, even malarial fever,” asserted the physicians in attendance. The Sun’s editor followed this pronouncement

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16 Gainesville Daily Sun, August 4, 1905; Gainesville Daily Sun, August 5, 1905; Gainesville Daily Sun, August 4, 1905; The Tropical Sun, August 5, 1905
17 Gainesville Daily Sun, August 9, 1905
with assurances that the state of Florida was quite healthy, but could still benefit from some action. “If we can become more healthy by disposing of mosquitoes…let us make war upon them.”18

The effort to eradicate the mosquito continued in earnest for the next fifteen years, and the sanitary campaigns that began humbly in 1901 only grew more expansive as time went on. The ultimate elimination of the mosquito proved impossible, but the advances made in combatting the pest helped to undercut one of the great disadvantages Florida had always faced: it was safe for locals who experienced its diseases year-round, but could be lethal for tourists unaccustomed to the climate and potential contagions. Partly as a result of the hit-or-miss health conditions, and partly due to the slow progress of rail lines and adequate roadways, most of the state’s tourism was confined to the wealthy, who could afford to spend their winters at one of the luxurious pockets of decadence surrounded by the unforgiving swamplands of South Florida. Dealing with the illnesses of the region was a necessary first step if Florida was ever to achieve national prominence, but to successfully complete that endeavor, to say nothing of taming the wilderness, would require more people. And that, in turn, demanded better means of transportation.

“Good roads are the greatest need today, outside of immigration, and the latter will come with the building of good roads,” observed the Miami Metropolis late in 1902. At that point much of Florida’s Atlantic coast was still sparsely populated, and it would remain that way until Henry Flagler’s East Coast Railway managed to claw its way down to Miami and eventually Key West. While awaiting the arrival of new rail lines, most Floridians were forced to make do with roadways that were not adequate to the task. Even within the towns themselves roads were often

18 The Tropical Sun, June 28, 1905
Illustration 7: City Streets, 1900.

Both Miami (top) and St. Augustine (bottom) possessed substandard roads in 1900.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{19} Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-det-4a25100; LC-DIG-det-4a17049]

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problematic, and occasionally dangerous. In 1903, the roads in Key West were so poor that on one instance they nearly caused the death of a local bicyclist; he was riding after a rainstorm, lost control of his bicycle in the muck that passed for the main street, was knocked senseless and landed face-down in a puddle. Fortunately, a pedestrian was passing by and was able to save him from drowning, turning the incident into an amusing anecdote rather than a tragic warning. Even well into the 1930s, much of the South was a patchwork of dirt and clay roads, with the occasional paved artery around large population centers, so it is not the least bit surprising that Florida had few paved, gravel, or brick roadways in the early years of the century. In 1909, at the request of incoming governor Albert Gilchrist, Henry Felkel, the clerk of the circuit court, provided an analysis of the roads in and around the capital of Tallahassee. His report noted “about 500 miles of public roads in our county; about 250 miles of sand roads, about 250 miles of clay roads, we have no clayed roads, we have no graded roads yet.” Tallahassee, situated in the long-developed northern portion of the state and far closer to the rest of the nation than the more distant frontier cities it governed, could boast no modern road construction nearly a decade in to the twentieth century. Worse still, Florida’s wet climate took a far greater toll on traditional earthen roads than was experienced in regions whose annual rainfall was somewhat more restrained. It was clear that something needed to be done to address the problem, but as with many difficult tasks there was little agreement on how to proceed.20

Between 1900 and 1915, a startling amount of time was spent by local governments at the town and county level grappling with the difficulty of improving, or in some cases creating, transportation networks. One of the first to approach the question of new roadways with any zeal was Dade County, whose principal population center was Miami. In August, 1902, the

20 Miami Metropolis, August 29, 1902; The Tropical Sun, November 4, 1903; Henry Felkel to Albert Gilchrist December 29, 1909, Series 613, Box 3, Folder 3, SAF
Miami Metropolis picked up a notation from the Gainesville Daily News which reported that “Dade county(sic) has been bonded for $100,000 to build a turnpike from one end of the county to the other.” The piece ended with the observation that “no county ever invested money in good roads and regretted it afterwards.” Work began, and a month later the Metropolis revisited the story, somewhat hyperbolically referring to the project as “An Appian Way Across the County of Dade.” The article explained that Dade was “constructing rock roads on a scale never before attempted in any county in Florida.” In an effort to reduce costs and speed the construction process, the road ran parallel to the pre-existing railways whenever possible. This allowed new construction materials to be brought in at a much faster pace than if the same had been attempted by wagon, and while the costs were high (more than $1700 per month to rent the necessary train cars) it was determined that in the end the accelerated construction pace would make up for any excessive initial outlays. A rate of one mile completed every four days was the estimate obtained by the Metropolis, and when combined with the fact that crews were working from each end of the roadway toward each other, it appeared likely that a stretch of 80 miles “from West Palm Beach, through Miami to Cutler” would be rapidly completed. The Metropolis ended its examination of the new road with the prediction that it would ultimately mean “the rapid and permanent settlement of farmers and fruit growers all along the line,” as well as “more tourists, hunters, pleasure seekers and invalids, most of whom will be glad of an opportunity to make trips over a hard road in Florida.”

Dade County’s construction of a new “Appian Way” did not remain simple local news for very long. Three weeks after branding and describing the project, the Metropolis observed

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21 Miami Metropolis, August 29, 1902; The Appian Way (Via Appia) is an ancient stone roadway constructed by the Romans over the course of the three centuries preceding the Common Era, and for nearly a millennium was regarded as the greatest road on Earth; Miami Metropolis, October 3, 1902
that “Dade county(sic) is being pointed to as an example by the progressive papers and people all over Florida…and as a result, we are getting valuable advertising.” The notion of advertising to benefit the state’s development and national image (beyond simply boosting the state in the presence of tourists) was one that had never really boasted many adherents before the turn of the century, but it grew increasingly more common as the twentieth century progressed. In 1902, however, those days were a faint glimmer in the distance. Still, the startling success of Dade County’s efforts to both raise funds for the project and then implement it in a smooth manner did begin to open eyes across the state. While the Metropolis was able to report in October that people were taking note, by December it could observe more than curious glances. “The people of Alachua, Marion, Duval, Brevard and in fact nearly all over the state, are agitating the question of good roads.” The issue still at hand, and one that would not soon vanish, was how to fund such projects.22

“We of Dade County… long ago settled the question as to how to raise the money, by bonding,” noted the Metropolis when comparing the counties of Florida and their varied approaches to funding future road projects. To clarify, bonding in this sense can be thought of as taking out a loan, but instead of contracting with a bank or investment firm the municipality seeks the money from the local populace on the promise of steady (though low) interest payments. Such a simple, direct approach was apparently not something many of the other counties were willing to attempt, at least not immediately. Indeed, in some of the more isolated portions of Central Florida, there were still debates raging over the bond issue in 1915, as Europe tore itself apart. In the interim, many road projects, both rail lines and more mundane routes, were commenced by private interests, often railroads or lumber operations, with the hope that

22 Miami Metropolis, October 24, 1902; Miami Metropolis, December 12, 1902
they might be completed through some degree of public funding at a later, as yet unspecified, date. Early in 1905, it was reported that “certain bankers in New York city… are anxious to construct a railroad from Tampa to the state’s capital.” In more remote portions of the state, endless reports on the importance of good roads did finally make some headway. Several weeks before the report arrived regarding the proposed rail line from Tampa to Tallahassee, “the new shell road from Daytona to New Smyrna was… finished and… opened to travel.” A typical example of the slow process by which the road projects were eventually funded can be found in Arcadia. There, the voters settled on the bonding technique, but they spread the money around to numerous projects. Of the $38,000 appropriated for improvements, the only expenditure to assist transportation infrastructure was “$5,000 for clay street(s).”

Of equal importance with the issue of raising money for the construction or improvement of roadways was the question of how best to construct them. In the fall of 1903, once Dade County’s “Appian Way” was no longer theoretical, investigations were made into which method of construction was the most efficient and cost-effective. James E. Ingraham, a longtime employee of both Henry Plant and Henry Flagler with experience as a surveyor, promoter, and land commissioner, studied the relevant data and made his report. “Convict made, or roads made with any kind of hand labor are superior to those laid by machinery,” he asserted. Moral or ethical qualms aside, Ingraham’s conclusions were based purely on economics and efficiency. Convict labor was cheaper, which had always been its attraction for large projects requiring intensive manpower. Further:

> wherever the roads in Dade county(sic) are made by hand they are smooth, well packed and not unlike asphalt. Where steam rollers are used the road is uneven and full of

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23 *Miami Metropolis*, December 12, 1902; *Weekly True Democrat*, April 7, 1905; *Weekly True Democrat*, March 17, 1905; *Weekly True Democrat*, March 24, 1905.
depressions… this makes a place for water to stand and also makes it less easy to ride or drive upon.

Ingraham’s observations pinpointed several flaws in the road-making techniques of the day, though it is not clear whether he himself realized that fact. While he was correct that machinery alone would lead to an uneven and depressed roadway based on the underlying rock, what he failed to consider was that grading the surface before employing the rollers would have solved the problem, in essence marrying the two techniques he compared. Still, as his observations were made with a promoter’s eye, what concerned him most was spreading roads to as many points in Florida as possible. To that end, he advised the people of Palm Beach County that “it would be a mistake for this county with the limited means at its disposal to invest in expensive road machinery.”

One potential flaw in Ingraham’s recommendations to the people of Palm Beach can be found by once more glancing at the progress of the “Appian Way”. While it was true that manual construction might have produced roads of better quality, it was also considerably slower. When predicting the future of the roadway in late 1902, builders and newspapermen, who were often little removed from state boosters, had estimated that the work from West Palm Beach to Miami and beyond would be completed in short order. Part of the work was done rapidly, as Ingraham’s observations were based on actual road mileage he examined, but in early 1905, fully two years after the project was begun, the Tropical Sun could report that in the coming summer months “an excellent rock road will be completed all the way from Miami to West Palm Beach.” Whether the road had been completed already and was being improved or had yet to be finished in any form was not made clear by the article, but in any event it is apparent that the rapid construction prophesied did not come to pass. Worse still, even this

24 The Tropical Sun, September 5, 1903
prediction turned out to be in error. Summer came and went, and the link between Miami and West Palm Beach remained elusive. It was not until the following January that the *Tropical Sun* could report that “Miami and West Palm Beach are now linked by one continuous paved highway, a distance of sixty-eight miles.” Three years for the completion of sixty-eight miles was hardly a ringing endorsement for convict labor over machinery, particularly if the benefits expected did, in fact, materialize.\(^{25}\)

The newspapers and boosters had been incorrect regarding the expected timeframe for the construction of the great roadway, but they were far more accurate in their predictions of its results. In the same article that heralded the project’s completion came the notation that “there is already a perceptible increase in the number of automobiles and touring cars both here and at Palm Beach… Miami also has many more autos than ever before.” In 1906, the automobile could hardly have been described as a possession of the common man, so the increase in its prevalence in Florida was an indication that the wealthy tourism base upon which the state depended was expanding. The previous winter, the state experienced a significant increase in its overall tourism, in part due to the improved infrastructure. “The streets are daily thronged with strangers, and the businessmen of the city are working ‘overtime’ to meet the demands of the trade,” reported the news in February of 1905. That increase over previous years was conservatively estimated at 25%, and was largely the result of railroads completing new routes and offering more luxurious accommodations for the journey. The travel time from Chicago to Jacksonville, for instance, was reduced to approximately thirty hours, all aboard a posh car and with minimal stopping along the way. In 1905 and into 1906, roads for automobiles were still

\(^{25}\) *The Tropical Sun*, March 4, 1905; *The Tropical Sun*, January 20, 1906
The Royal Palm Hotel in Miami was typical of the amenities of the day: luxurious and beyond the reach of most people.  

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Illustration 8: Royal Palm Hotel.

26 Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-det-4a06238; LC-DIG-det-4a12564]
regarded as ancillary to the ubiquitous railroads, but they were cheaper and far easier to
construct, and thus afforded people who might not be privileged enough to live in a location with
a railhead an avenue to connect to one. Florida as a whole was, at that moment, still mostly a
playground for the wealthy, but the more developed the infrastructure became, the more varied
were the options for the future.27

The development across Florida during the first decade of the twentieth century was not
confined solely to road improvements and the attempted eradication of the mosquito. The
disparate regions of the state sought equally distinct advancements, ranging from the simple
restoration of disbanded militia companies to the dredging of deeper ports. During the Spanish-
American War, citizens of Miami had lamented its timing, as their port was not able to
accommodate deep-draft vessels, and therefore rendered the city unable to host any significant
naval presence. The quest to deepen the port began even before hostilities with Spain broke out,
and it continued at a frenzied pace over the subsequent years. Early in 1902, the Miami
Metropolis summarized the city’s position:

Miami is the nearest port of the United States to the West Indies and South America, and
it should be given water deep enough for the needs of trade. Such facilities would not
only increase the business of Miami, but would add to the trade of the United States with
the Latin countries of America… The strategic position of the port on the lines of trade
furnishes claim enough, but a further reason for liberal treatment is the fact that one man
has done there work that the government does for other ports

The paper alluded to the fact that there was, at that time, a motion in Congress to provide federal
assistance, through a Rivers and Harbors bill, to various communities around the nation. All of
Florida’s coastal settlements desired some portion of the federal appropriations, as the biggest
obstacle to development in the state, as already seen in the struggle for new roads, was the
raising of funds. However, the cutthroat element that had existed during the war, with various

27 The Tropical Sun, January 20, 1906; The Tropical Sun, February 22, 1905; The Tropical Sun, February 25, 1905
cities battling for a limited pool of federal dollars, was greatly diminished. This time, the cities were willing to lobby for one another.\textsuperscript{28}

The \textit{Times-Union} described Miami as “the nearest of our continental ports to the struggle of national rivalry in peace and the scene of danger as predicted by Captain Mahan in war.” The military aspect of a deep-water port at Miami was not a new argument, of course, but as the city grew larger it took on a new air of importance. From a strategic standpoint, Miami’s location was a great asset, within a day of both Cuba and Puerto Rico and able to command entry into the Gulf of Mexico. “In the case of war, our insular possessions would be the weak point in our defense- the point that most needs to be strengthened,” opined the \textit{Miami Metropolis} in early March. “A naval station on Biscayne Bay (the location of Miami’s port) would give them the highest possible guarantee of safety.” The essential argument made was that many of the defensive positions were isolated, and in the event of a war they could find themselves cut off and in need of aid, rather than providing the protection they were designed for. As an example, until the advent of the Overseas Railroad in 1912, Key West remained dependent on ships for everything from provisions to travel, a crucial vulnerability in a time of war. Who, exactly, the newspapermen expected to be fighting was never made clear, but the argument ended with the assertion that a naval power might be able to cut off an island base, but “not strong enough to capture a station which could be reached over an all-land route by the forces of the United States.” Clearly, a deep harbor and naval station at Miami were essential.\textsuperscript{29}

Congress, true to form, was not particularly swift in determining the appropriations for the new Rivers and Harbors bill. As the weeks rolled past, many in Miami began to despair, certain that if the results were to be in their favor they would have had some indication. In early

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Miami Metropolis}, February 7, 1902
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Miami Metropolis}, February 14, 1902; \textit{Miami Metropolis}, March 7, 1902
April, however, things began to look up. The *Metropolis* reported that the senate committee considering the question had recommended “an 18 foot project for a canal,” which would open the port to vessels with a much deeper draft. The paper assumed that the recommendation would naturally be followed, and predicted some of the results. Beyond the commercial benefits to be had from new steamship lines and commensurate lower fright rates, “it will mean also the establishment of a naval station by the government, and possibly an army post.” All of that appeared well and good, assuming the *Metropolis* was correct in its predictions, but even in May there were still doubts as to whether or not the appropriations would pass the remaining hurdles and actually deliver the needed funds to south Florida. In a turn of events in keeping with many of the other infrastructure projects in the state, the solution turned out to involve private funds alongside the federal dollars.  

“The consummation of this effort for deep water and a good harbor can be largely credited to the East Coast Railway Company,” reported the *Metropolis* in July. The rivers and harbors bill did eventually pass, with an appropriation for Miami of $300,000 for a deepened channel, but only after Henry Flagler’s company agreed to invest a significant amount of private money to supplement the federal outlay. While the money from Congress would facilitate the actual channel work, Flagler’s company was pledged to “deepen the bay at its own expense and…provide dockage and storage warehouses for vessels entering the port.” It was not altruism that motivated Flagler, to be sure, and his company was assured that “fair remuneration” would be permitted for the use of the docks and warehouses, under the supervision of the Secretary of War. Beyond that small incentive was the far greater potential for profit if Miami did, in fact, develop into the military and trade center that was forecast in the event of a deep-water harbor.

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30 *Miami Metropolis*, April 4, 1902
being available. After all, the city itself was essentially created as a terminus for the East Coast Railway, and anything that would improve it from a commercial standpoint could only benefit the operators of that company. The marriage of public and private efforts ultimately proved to be exactly what Miami needed, and it was not long at all before the solid announcement of the deep-water port began to provide dividends, even before a single load had been dredged from the channel’s floor.\footnote{Miami Metropolis, July 18, 1902}

An assortment of new residents and businesses began to flood into Miami at an accelerated pace in the fall of 1902, a fact gleefully reported by the Metropolis. “Miami must now begin in earnest to look up and encourage location of manufacturing enterprises,” asserted the paper’s editor in late September, closing his thoughts with the observation that “the deep water and cheap transportation will make this an ideal location.” Without skipping a beat, the editor went on to observe that Miami’s population had nearly doubled over the course of the previous year, with the bulk of the new residents becoming permanent fixtures, rather than the typical seasonal visitors. Of course, when dealing with a population of less than ten thousand souls, the doubling effect was far less impressive than suggested. Still, considering that the city had nearly been wiped out less than a decade earlier, its growth and permanence were worth noting. More telling than the paper’s vague notion of a doubled population was the announcement in November that a new electric light plant was under construction. “It will be a modern and up-to-date plant in every respect with power sufficient, not only for the present, but for the future city, which will demand vastly more than at present.” Still, in the closing days of
1902, no actual work had been done to make the new and improved harbor a reality; that would take more time.\footnote{Miami Metropolis, September 19, 1902; Miami Metropolis, November 7, 1902}

“It seems that the work of dredging will begin in a very short time,” reported the \textit{Metropolis} the following February. The necessary inspections had been completed, personnel were on hand to observe, and the proper plans had been drawn up. All that remained was the long process of actual construction. Despite all of its previous lofty predictions, the paper did stumble on to one solid, grounded, fact:

\begin{quote}
It is more than likely that this work will be continuous, once it is started, and that during the next two or three years there will be hundreds of men employed and thousands and thousands of dollars turned loose to be distributed amongst our home people… The docks are to be erected on a scale that will accommodate the future business of one of the most important seaports in the South. There can be no doubt but that through this port there will be a very large business during the construction of the Panama Canal… This gigantic undertaking will call for much in the way of men, material and supplies… through this, the nearest port, a large volume of this business may be done.
\end{quote}

Initially, it appeared that the \textit{Metropolis} was correct in its assertion that work on the proposed harbor improvements and channel were about to be under way. Before the end of February, the paper reported that work had, indeed, begun. In May, the \textit{Tropical Sun} informed its readers that “already more than 4,000 feet of the temporary channel has been cut,” and as soon as Flagler’s work crews reached a pre-determined point, the government would take over the duties and complete the project. The report detailed the speed with which the dredging was being carried out, as well as observing that there had been no difficulties in cutting through the sandy bottom. However, something went wrong. The following February, fully a year after its last discussion of the harbor project, the \textit{Metropolis} reproduced an article written for the \textit{New York Herald} which stated that “work on the proposed new harbor… and deep water anchorage [in Miami] is about to be begun.” There had been almost no mention of the project by the local paper for
nearly a year, which was telling in and of itself, as it had been discussed in nearly every edition for the better part of six months. What could have derailed a project with such ambitious funding and universal support?\textsuperscript{33}

The lengthy article written for the \textit{New York Herald} related to the pending construction of Miami’s new harbor and channel offered its readers several details that clarify what had bedeviled the first attempt at the project. Apparently, when Henry Flagler instructed his subordinates to begin construction on a deep-water channel to Miami, the site selected was Norris’ Cut, which was “blasted out of the coral bottom of shallow Biscayne Bay.” The route was direct, but it was also untenable. Due to its long, narrow construction and its particular placement, the new channel was prone to filling with sand and silt, requiring almost constant dredging to keep it open to any traffic above a certain draft. The steamship \textit{Miami}, in fact, had grounded while attempting to negotiate Flagler’s channel the previous year and remained stranded for nearly a week before efforts to free her were successful. By 1904, it was reluctantly admitted that the project would have to be scrapped and begun anew at a more viable location. There was evidently some discussion regarding whether or not Miami was, in fact, the best choice for a deep-water port in southern Florida, but that concern was also addressed by the report delivered to the \textit{Herald}. “From Fernandina… to Key West [more than 500 miles]… there is not a single harbor of any kind,” noted the author when considering the efficacy of Miami’s claim. He went on to assert that “Miami, in the judgment of all engineers and experts, is the only available place for a harbor.” The city would still have its deep-water port and lucrative shipping trade; it would simply have to come in from a slightly different direction.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Miami Metropolis}, February 6, 1903; \textit{The Tropical Sun}, May 23, 1903; \textit{Miami Metropolis}, February 26, 1904

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Miami Metropolis}, February 26, 1904
It took the better part of two years, including one disastrous false start, before Miami’s improved port was finally underway. By then, other concerns had arisen to occupy the imaginations and ambitions of forward-looking Floridians. There was one avenue of development which started very slowly, but would take on greater importance in the following decade: the cultivation of plants which could not mature anywhere else in the United States. Certainly, there is little surprise that Florida would attempt to unseat California as the nation’s orange producer, and other tropical fruits from pineapples to mangoes ultimately made their mark on the state as well. One little-known product was the camphor tree, whose extracts could be utilized for a variety of purposes, from cooking and medicinal treatments to embalming and explosives. The tree was native to Asia, but as early as 1905 there were small groves being planted in Florida. In April of that year, Washington dispatched Professor W.O. Richtman from the Agricultural Department to “test the camphor producing qualities of the Florida camphor tree.” Richtman had visited the previous year and conducted experiments which suggested that the Florida variety of the tree might prove the equal of its foreign brethren. The hope among some was that “a new and great Florida industry is on the eve of development.” That hope proved a bit premature, as with many such predictions in the first decade of the new century, but camphor was not finished; it would simply take longer to develop than was expected. That, more than anything else, summarized many of the new businesses and plans: they were correct, but their timetables were a bit too accelerated.35

Florida entered the twentieth century in a state of transition. The tumult that closed the 1800s, with both Miami and Jacksonville devastated by conflagrations, to say nothing of the financial calamities and the eventual war with Spain, placed the state in a mood where a decade

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35 *The Tropical Sun*, April 19, 1905
of steady growth and development was both needed and appreciated. It was, in many respects, a brief interlude before the rising tensions in Europe boiled over and complicated life once more. The people of Florida, though certainly unaware of what lay ahead, made the most of their temporary respite.

Disease, which had been the bane of many equatorial areas since time immemorial, was finally beaten back by the onset of more modern medicine. For the first time, Florida’s citizenry were able to take proactive steps to prevent future outbreaks, rather than simply relying on “seasoning” to endure the blights that periodically descended on the state. The mosquito, long regarded as a mere irritant, was finally unmasked as a villainous perpetrator of biological warfare and condemned to death, though it proved impossible to ever fully eradicate the beast. But while its elimination may have proved elusive, the removal of its forward positions, in the form of stagnant pools of water and piles of refuse throughout the various cities and towns, significantly reduced the insect’s ability to spread its deadly contagions. And new quarantine procedures – so effective they were adopted as the standard by the United States government – helped to ensure that whenever yellow fever or malaria did rear their ugly heads, they were contained.

Even as the specter of disease was declawed by ever-improving methods of separation, other strides were made to bring the people of Florida closer together. New roads and railways gradually conquered vast distances, and improved seaports brought the state much closer to the rest of the nation than it had been only a few years before. The craze for good roads received its first significant boost when Miami began construction on what was termed a new “Appian Way” and gradually swept across the state, bringing new residents and increasing the value of both property and crops. New industries arose, and improved infrastructure brought everything from electricity to telephones to the citizens of the more prosperous locales. Though growing rapidly,
many regions of the state still retained echoes of their first days. “When you think about it,” mused an article in June, 1902, “there are very few towns that have any pioneers living at all… in Miami, pioneers may be found among the little children… and they delight in telling you about the tents that people lived in first.”36

Miami’s status as a latter-day frontier town notwithstanding, the state of Florida was making rapid strides towards modernity as the first decade of the twentieth century drew to a close. There were not as many citizens as the boosters wanted, and there could never be enough tourism to satisfy them, but if the gains were at a reduced pace, at least they were permanent. At a speech given in Tampa in 1911, celebrating the success of the Tampa Hardware Company, the ever-optimistic attorney Peter O. Knight, who also served as president of the company, commented on the growth he had witnessed across the state, and in that city particularly. “This town,” he said, “is supposed to be a ‘one industry town’, but I want to tell you that in four or five years at the present rate of progress and development… Tampa can get along without a single cigar factory.” As ever, Knight exaggerated his point to a degree, but it was true that Tampa was becoming less dependent on the lifeline afforded by its cigar manufacturing. He saw diversification on the horizon, of the sort that would finally catapult Florida forward to her rightful position of prominence in the nation. The quest to claim that position would yield both triumph and tragedy, and would shortly receive assistance from an unexpected source: the Great War. 37

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36 *Miami Metropolis*, June 6, 1902  
37 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
CHAPTER THREE:
A SMALLER WORLD

Florida remained a work in progress on the eve of the First World War (hereafter the Great War). In many ways, the state was still very much a region with a frontier aesthetic, despite the numerous internal improvements secured over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century. Disease was tamed, though its ultimate defeat would take considerably more time and effort. New transportation arteries were in place, allowing formerly distant points like Miami and Tampa to receive more traffic than any but the most enthusiastic boosters would have dreamed possible only two decades earlier; Peter O. Knight looked less like an optimist and more like a prophet with each passing year. Even Key West was accessible by railway beginning in 1912, an accomplishment that seemed the stuff of fantasy not long before. But it was becoming increasingly apparent to many that providence would not simply drop opportunities and cash onto the state, and that federal largesse could only go so far. If Florida was to become what its disciples envisioned, it would require attention from the masses. The question, as always, was how to obtain it. A decade into the twentieth century, the most pressing stories of the day still related to the continual march of improved infrastructure, though new sources of growth were being eyed by many localities. The cattle industry, a significant part of the state’s overall income, received added attention as stockmen from Texas realized the untapped potential of the peninsula. And for the first time, concerted efforts were made by various communities to advertise and attract attention, a trend which would only gain steam as time slipped irrevocably
forward. For the moment, the peninsula had settled into a comfortable, languid pace of development. All of that began to change anew shortly before the Great War enveloped Europe in its destructive throes.¹

One of the most significant developments during the first two decades of the twentieth century in Florida was the arrival of the local Board of Trade as a driving force in most communities. Best thought of as precursors to modern Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade were made up of the prominent businessmen and citizens of a given municipality, their goals always revolving around the expansion and development of business and tourism. The functions of a given board could vary wildly depending on circumstances, but one of the most common activities in the years running up to the boom of the 1920s was the publication and distribution of brochures and pamphlets which showcased an individual city or town, highlighting its assets, industries, and potential for growth. In Tampa, for instance, the Board of Trade published *Tampa: Today and Tomorrow* in early 1915, with the assertion that “the present is prosperous and the future is more than assured.”²

The empty rhetoric with which *Tampa: Today and Tomorrow* began was not indicative of its contents as a whole, however, nor did the numerous other boards of trade around the state fill their own works with meaningless hyperbole. Tampa’s pamphlet reminded readers that the city’s population was steadily increasing, going so far as to claim 596% growth between 1890 and 1910; despite the seemingly absurd rate of growth, population statistics are not accurate enough to entirely debunk the claim, allowing the numbers to suggest a grounded assessment of

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² Tampa Board of Trade, *Tampa: Today and Tomorrow*, (Tampa: Clyde Glenn Co., 1915) P. 8.
the city, despite their dubious nature. More subdued were the assertions that “it is just sixteen years ago that the first street was paved and now we have seventy-five miles of various kinds of pavements,” and that theirs was the “first county of the United States to vote $1,000,000 for the construction of brick roads.” This was an avenue of advancement that was highly regarded in most communities, and there was seldom a publication from one of the numerous boards of trade that did not make note of the growth of good roads.3

Just to the north of Tampa, St. Petersburg also released a pamphlet heralding the city’s virtues, entitled *St. Petersburg Florida, the Sunshine City*, which took great pains to inform readers that “over half of the streets [were] paved or hard surfaced, [with] 18 miles of vitrified brick paving [and] 70 miles of concrete sidewalks.” And, to finish the point, St. Petersburg assured readers that “good hard roads connect with the county distracts.” In keeping with the trend, the St. Lucie County Board of Trade made sure its own publication informed readers that their “network of good roads [was] not surpassed by any other Florida county.” Echoing Tampa, they reported that “nine years ago there was not one mile of hard surfaced roads… today there’s a hundred miles… and another hundred miles being built by the land development companies… in five years there will be close to five hundred miles of hard surfaced roads in a county of only 40 miles square.” Jacksonville, which fancied itself as the gateway to Florida, boasted “more than 60 miles of splendid paved roads, [and] one magnificent boulevard or brick and cement… stretching 18 miles from Jacksonville to Atlantic Beach.” It was even suggested that only through the improvement of transportation could the state ever hope to advance, an opinion supported by J.E. Ingraham, Vice President of Henry Flagler’s Florida East Coast Railway. “Prior to the commencement of the era of road construction very little was known of Florida and

3 Ibid, P. 3
its possibilities,” commented Ingraham in an essay he penned for a work entitled *The Truth About Florida* in 1915. Ingraham further reasoned that “a country may abound in natural resources, but it will remain dormant as long as there is no means of transportation,” a fact which helped to explain Florida’s accelerated development in the new century as roads and rail lines finally penetrated the peninsula in a meaningful way. His opinions may have been shaped by his avocation, but Ingraham’s theory certainly fit the evidence on the ground. Of course, it was all well and good to suggest that roads were vital to the development of the state, but there were tremendous amounts of money and time invested in their development as well.⁴

“Florida spends more per capita for road improvement than any other state,” reported J.H. Reese in his work *Florida Flashlights*, which was far more informative than its title would suggest. Reese worked in the same vein as other Florida publicists of the day, seeking to clarify some of the murkier points about the state with facts that were only slightly massaged to favor the peninsula. “County and district bond issues for building roads in Florida amount to $17,600,000,” Reese continued, clarifying that “the constitution does not permit bonding the State [*emphasis mine*] for road building.” That was, in effect, one of the great obstacles that had vexed Floridians for at least a generation, and explains some of the rationale behind every board of trade emphasizing the work they had put into their own road systems. Since each county was on its own, it was important to demonstrate how modern their individual infrastructures were. However, Florida did have a “State Highway Commission composed of five members [with] a competent engineer in charge of the work and… the authority to designate State Roads and State Aid Roads.” However, since bonding was not constitutional for the state, funding for any such

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projects had to be undertaken through taxation. To demonstrate the Byzantine nature of funding for many of Florida’s roadways, Reese then turned his attention to the Tamiami Trail.\(^5\)

A paved route from Tampa to Miami was not a new idea during the second decade of the twentieth century, but it was not until that point that such an undertaking was truly feasible. To begin with, any such route would naturally have to pass through the Everglades, a region which had not been exhaustively explored until only twenty years prior. The terrain itself injected new challenges beyond raising funds, as “it was impracticable to build a hard-surfac ed highway upon soft muck land from six to ten feet deep.” To deal with this issue, twin canals were constructed along the proposed route, with the muck bring removed down to the level of the local bedrock, in this case limestone. Then, the rock was “excavated from the bottom of one canal and used to fill the other canal up to the surface level, thus making a solid rock road.” Ingenious, to be sure, but also very expensive. “To pay the cost of this road, a special road district was created in Dade county [where Miami is located]… and bonds to the amount of $250,000 were issued.” This circumvented the constitutional ban on state bonding, as the debt was being assumed by the county instead, though “to encourage the enterprise, the State gave land to the value of $100,000 in each of the counties through which the highway passes.” Proceeds from the sale of those lands could not go towards road work, but the counties could use the new funds for other projects; one cannot help but think it would have been simpler to adjust the constitution rather than feverishly work to get around it.\(^6\)

While the state constitution may have made the funding and construction of modern roads difficult, it could only delay the process; it could not be stopped. In late 1915, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, one of Miami’s most renowned luminaries and the patron saint of the

\(^6\) Ibid, P. 35
Everglades, arrived from the north to take up residence in the city and work at her father’s newspaper, which would evolve into the modern *Miami Herald*. Decades later, Douglas recalled:

> My first job on the paper was to cover the arrival at the northern city limits of a string of early automobiles, called a “motorcade,” the first to drive, in four or five days, all the way from Jacksonville along those varied bad roads, rough rock or sand, of a narrow brick trail with sand shoulders. Many had broken down on the old bone-shattering washboard roads, logs laid side by side. They were a battered lot of cars and men, but they were the first to get through.

That description of the earliest complete road network in Florida demonstrates several important points. First, though rough, the roads were already passable and in full use. Second, there was demand for those roads, and undoubtedly such demand would increase once hard, smooth surfaces had been added and the taxing nature of a long trip was dramatically reduced. Finally, the arrival on the scene of the automobile, even in its earliest form, indicated that Florida was no longer a distant point on the map, accessible only by rail or ship. Three years later, Clifton Johnson could honestly write that “automobiles from all the states in the Union frequent Florida… the highways have been greatly improved in recent years, and in many sections the motoring conditions are ideal.” And while “the country roads [were] usually sandy,” it was possible to travel from Jacksonville to either Pensacola (the western extreme of the state) or Miami (at the extreme south before the Keys) without having to traverse anything other than modern, paved roads. That ease of access, if J.E. Ingraham’s earlier observations were correct, would lead to a new influx of settlers and tourists. The roads would bring them, but it would take more than balmy weather to keep them. To that end, the various boards of trade, as well as the publicists whose works sought to “enlighten” the public as to the truth of Florida, shifted
their attention from the foundational importance of infrastructure to the necessity of maintaining a level head when seeking one’s fortune in paradise.\textsuperscript{7}

“Florida is just now… being discovered,” observed Mrs. Neal Wyatt Chapline in her work \textit{Florida The Fascinating} in 1914. “The eyes of the world are turning southward, and Florida is the mecca of all. It is a great garden in which men can sow and reap a golden harvest.” This theme, that Florida was somehow “new” in the eyes of the nation, and was a place where the ambitious could go to strike it rich, was not confined to railroad promoters, like Ingraham, and those writing travel logs, like Chapline. In fact, the common refrain suggested that the peninsula was somehow the continuation of the frontier. “It has not been many years since California passed through the same inquisition that is now on concerning Florida,” remarked L.H. Cammack in his work \textit{What About Florida}? And that was a comparison that was not soon to be forgotten; many of Florida’s luminaries appear to have harbored an unhealthy obsession with California, either as a direct competitor or a role model.\textsuperscript{8}

“The lure of gold first brought attention to the Golden Gate,” continued Cammack, illustrating another point of comparison between Florida and her western rival. The peninsula could not attract settlers and investors in quite the same way, but it had resources all its own which could be nearly as lucrative. “The lure of the gold in the orange has not been so bright but it has attracted the eye of many.” Cammack closed out his observations in this vein with a supposition that placed Florida squarely in line to be the next land of opportunity. “While the great West was being peopled with the hardier multitudes, and the pathways of civilization were being worn from the Atlantic beyond the Rockies,” he mused, “Florida had scant attention,

because transportation was limited and uncertain and Chambers of Commerce and Boosters had not yet been discovered.” This was yet another position where Cammack and Ingraham were of one mind, as the latter also suggested that “the call of the west seems to have been the main cause for Florida being overlooked. Few eyes were turned in her direction until after the great western movement had commenced to subside.” Rounding out the chorus was Chapline, who took the more abstract concepts at play with both Cammack and Ingraham, and used terminology that was unlikely to leave room for doubt. “At one time the advice to the young man was ‘Young man go West,’” she stated, but “now that Florida has been ‘found’ wise heads have changed the advice to ‘Young man hurry to Florida and get in on the ground floor.’” Florida was not just a land of opportunities, it was the spiritual successor to the west.9

In addition to being the successor to the western frontier with regards to opportunity and escape, Florida absorbed at least some of the attitudes associated with the concept of Manifest Destiny. That term, coined by John O’Sullivan some seventy years earlier, contained a myriad of meanings, but most prominently it referred to the inevitable march west of American civilization. Implicit in the term were the understanding of American exceptionalism, and the superiority of the modern, western world to the primitive peoples who occupied the land in question. This was another way in which Florida could claim kinship with the western states. In 1911, John Gifford, a former professor at Cornell University, collected a series of essays under the unassuming title of The Everglades which told the tale of the efforts to “convert a vast, useless waste into what promises to be the most productive part of Florida.” He referred to the efforts begun by governor Napoleon Broward some five years earlier to drain the Everglades. And herein was the echo of Manifest Destiny, for the Everglades were hardly the vast wasteland

envisioned; many Seminoles called the region home, and were quite content with the manner in which they lived their lives. But Gifford was unmoved. The Seminole, he said, “is merely a renegade; and the time will soon come when he will have to put on pants and go to work on the land, join his relatives in Oklahoma, or die from the effects of too much bad whisky.” The condescending dismissal of a people he regarded as inferior would not have gained Gifford many supporters in a later age, but at the time his views were still widely held; besides, if the Seminoles and their way of life had value then it would be harder to justify the drainage efforts. Perhaps worse, that was the only mention the natives received, as the bulk of the work went on to describe all the wonderful crops that could be grown once the vast area of “waste land” had been reclaimed. Lest there be any doubt, Gifford included a quotation from an issue of the *Atlanta Georgian* which exclaimed that “making these lost acres serve the use of man and the good of civilization is a worthy task.” Of course, closer examination of Gifford’s work revealed that it was published by the Everglade Land Sales Corporation, so there is little wonder that he was such an ardent supporter of the efforts to drain the region. Again, in keeping with the western link, this was not unusual, as many of the largest promoters for western expansion were the companies, generally railroads, who stood to gain the most from continued development. When the west closed, the scene simply shifted to the south. ¹⁰

Unlike the cutthroat days of 1898, when cities of Florida, particularly Miami and Tampa, actively competed with one another for federal dollars, by 1915 Floridians seem to have adopted the idea that they were all on the same team, a fact made apparent in the promotional literature. “We all realize,” mused the Tampa Board of Trade’s publication, “that the march of the settler to the westward has stopped and the eyes of the nation are all turned southward.” This portended a

new wave of settlement across the peninsula, but it was important that those interested in seeking their fortunes do so with their eyes open. Though Florida’s notorious land swindlers would not rear their insidious heads for nearly another decade, the state had grappled with unscrupulous charlatans since at least the turn of the century. It was with this in mind that the Tampa board stated “our advice to every prospective land buyer in the State of Florida is to see the land first, if possible, before making a purchase.” In retrospect such advice seems painfully obvious, but in 1915 Florida was still a distant point on the map for many people in the United States, and buying land unseen, based solely on descriptions or the foolish notion that all property on the peninsula was equally valuable, was distressingly common. Even if the land was viewed, prospective buyers were urged to “be sure and buy good soil. Find out what the land IS first, then find out the price. Cheap land is high priced land.” Tampa wanted new citizens, but the residents of the city, and the state at large, were increasingly aware of their reputation across the nation, and were unwilling to gamble it on the activities of disreputable men.\footnote{Tampa Board of Trade, \textit{Tampa: Today and Tomorrow}, Pp. 33-35}

As it turned out, Tampa’s fears were well founded. A year after the city’s promotional pamphlet warned \textit{caveat emptor}, buyer beware, L.H. Cammack penned \textit{What About Florida}? In the introductory remarks, Cammack explained that “so many ludicrous stories have come back [related to Florida], and they have been so conflicting, that people would actually like to know whether it is a bonanza or a frost,” and his purpose was to clear up the confusion. It was not as simple a task as it might first have appeared. “A million people from the North have passed through Jacksonville… in the past decade,” Cammack informed his readers, and that created an overabundance of conflicting narratives about the state as a whole. There were some who saw nothing but beauty and opportunity, and urged anyone who would listen to drop everything and
relocate to Florida. Others did not share that enthusiasm, and saw little more than heat and insects, warning their confidants to avoid what they regarded as a southern cesspool. But, while they could be irritating, Cammack did not regard these sorts as a great problem. “More insidious and more misleading than either of these is the shrewd promoter,” he warned his readers. As a result of the state’s newfound public presence, Cammack observed, “a half million have considered Florida investments,” and “a hundred thousand have bought without seeing.” That ignored the sound advice of the Tampa publication, and the results were not especially pleasant.12

“The promoter purchases, for a song, some large boundary of land, which may or may not be attractive to the eye or useful to the husbandman,” Cammack explained as he delved deeper into the problematic nature of Florida real estate. Rather than investing any time or money to make the land worth settling, the promoter “engages the most adept handlers of English, and stipulates that they must bring out all the picturesque, alluring, teasing, convincing and inviting adjectives in their repertoire, and these he masses in solid, glittering phalanx, in a gorgeous description of his property.” Promoters would then hire the best possible photographers or illustrators, ensuring that whatever imagery accompanied the flowery prose would support, rather than undermine, it. The hapless victims of such chicanery were easy marks, and upon arrival in Florida would find, much to their dismay, that they had purchased unimproved scrubland, or perhaps a tract of low-lying marsh territory. “This sort of public pillage has had a rude shock in the last few years,” remarked Cammack, noting that some of the more notorious of the swindlers were arrested and tried for their activities. But this was not the unadulterated victory it appeared to be. Cammack certainly saw it as a positive step, as “it has

12 L.H. Cammack, What About Florida? Pp. 4, 12, 13
had the desirable effect of clearing up the atmosphere and of putting the sale of Florida lands and
groves on a strictly business basis.” But that was precisely the problem: with the worst of the
swindlers locked up, public confidence was restored and people again believed any purchase in
Florida was a good one, since it was “illegal” to deceive buyers. That renewed confidence would
prove disastrous in the coming decade.¹³

The new wave of settlers that swept across the peninsula and captivated many Floridians
with an eye for profit would proceed apace until catastrophes, both natural and man-made,
brought an end to the steady migration, but the state did not exist in a vacuum, and as the second
decade of the twentieth century marched ever forward the events in Europe caused the focus of
many to shift yet again. The Great War did not cause the same level of concern to Floridians as
the previous conflict fifteen years earlier, but it did afford new opportunities that equaled, or
even surpassed, the nation’s last foray into battle. And this time, the benefits were spread to a
much larger area, not just the handful of cities that had existed in 1898.

The sleepy town of Kissimmee, halfway up the Florida peninsula, could not boast the
luxurious hotels and pristine white beaches that gave many of the other, more prosperous, locales
their initial surge of interest. But the town did have a board of trade, and its members were
constantly on the lookout for an avenue that might jump start their ambitious visions. As war
spread, some of Kissimmee’s more enterprising souls cast their gaze across the Atlantic and
spied opportunity. At a meeting in late August, 1914, the board of trade observed that
“American tourists accustomed to winter abroad [would] probably spend the coming season in
Florida or California because of the European war.” Noting that the estimated number of
potential tourists hovered around 200,000, and aware that California had a vast head start with

regards to national recognition, the board of trade stated that “it behooves the cities of Florida to plan immediate publicity campaigns to acquaint the traveling public with the advantages of this state and to induce them to come here.” Roughly three weeks later, an article in the *Kissimmee Valley Gazette* proclaimed that:

> Not in another century will the opportunity present itself to us as it does today. The foreign nations being engaged in war at present has caused Americans to flock home by thousands… Give us 500 tourists this winter, all new to the place, and what does it mean? They will leave on an average say only $50 apiece, $25,000; and another year $50,000, and so on just for personal expenses, to say nothing of the thousands they will invest here.

The article then went on to list several ideas for improving the town, all in the interest of attracting and keeping outside dollars. The idea was not confined solely to Kissimmee, as schemes to attract tourists seldom left the public forum for the next few years. A week after the financial estimates were published, the *Gazette* ran an article on the Kissimmee Progressive Club, asking all residents to be prepared to chip in with money or time in an effort to “provide entertainment for the winter tourists.”

> “The tourist business,” noted L.H. Cammack, “is one of the most important sources of income to Florida, and the sum total of these expenditures every season will run up into the millions.” This was not new, of course, but as has already been noted the clientele in previous years were largely drawn from the wealthier classes. “Florida is the most accessible of our nation’s playgrounds to the mass of the people,” observed Clifton Johnson, adding that “fifty thousand persons visit it each year.” But what was becoming clear as the years passed was the fact that Florida could cater to “those of slender means as well as… those of wealth.” Fully aware that they could not court the wealthy, it was those tourists of slender means that localities

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like Kissimmee wished to attract. In addition to raising the overall numbers, which seemed quite likely due to the difficulties brought about by the war, forward-thinking boosters were also interested in redefining the boundaries of the state’s tourist season. “Florida is known the world over for being a winter resort,” reported the Tampa board of trade, and as such most of the business dried up by mid-March. That made sense, as “the chief attraction [was] climate,” and Florida, assurances from the locals notwithstanding, lost much of its charm once the snows in the north melted away and the tropical weather transformed the peninsula into a slightly less agreeable locale. But while the state “depended heavily on its winter season… it had no intention of remaining only a winter resort.”

Not content to simply lure tourists down for the traditional winter season, several local newspapers desired to keep their newfound bounty for a longer period. In early 1915, having taken notice of the larger-than-usual tourist crowd the previous winter, the “St. Petersburg Times has started a campaign to keep tourists in Florida later in the spring than they are wont to stay and to even induce them to remain here the year round.” Kissimmee’s efforts were not in vain, and by the following year the newspapers could boast of record crowds. In February, the Gazette reported that “there are more tourists in Florida this year than ever before… It is said that right now in the East Coast resorts it is next to impossible to get accommodations… The climate this year has been especially favorable and it is reasonable to suppose that every tourist who goes back north will be a booster.” In fact, the efforts to attract tourists and boost the state were so successful that the following week the Gazette was able to claim that:

Florida is at last coming into her own in the matter of national publicity… In fact, so widespread has become this publicity that neighboring states are becoming jealous and

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are using the Florida program as a spur to urge their own states to adopt some method of getting before the public.

This was a far cry from the Florida of only a few decades prior, which was “looked upon as a resort for invalids and a winter resort for a few of the wealthier class.” Echoing the Gazette’s sentiment, W.A. McRae, the state’s Commissioner of Agriculture, declared “a new era is dawning on the great state of Florida.” He pressed on with the observation that “residents from other states of the Union… are coming by the thousands, and they are coming from the four corners of the earth.” Hyperbole notwithstanding, Florida’s tourism industry had been birthed, and over the ensuing decades would grow ever more important.16

The expansion of tourism as an actual industry, and the potential many saw for the future, sparked an infectious wave of enthusiasm on the part of local boosters and select officials, but the governor and legislature were more guarded in their assessments of the situation. In his annual address to the Florida Legislature, delivered on April 6, 1915, Governor Park Trammell candidly addressed his state’s economic trials. “Considering the more or less depressed conditions prevailing throughout the United States on account of our disturbed foreign trade conditions due to the great European War,” the governor told the assembly, “Florida people and her industries are getting along remarkably well.” Tourism was booming, after all, even if other parts of the economy were flagging. “Unquestionably,” continued the governor, “some of our large industries are very much hampered at present on account of being shut off from the markets in which they dispose of their products.” Those industries affected varied by region, but most keenly felt, at least in the areas not dominated by citrus growing, was the “reduction in the exports of turpentine and rosin,” or what had been referred to in an earlier time as naval stores,

which had been a key element of the state’s development for decades. That state of affairs, though certain to be brief, offered incentive for those with new ideas to press forward with renewed vigor.\textsuperscript{17}

Even as many of the smaller communities, as well as large municipalities, in Florida were gearing up to take advantage of the potential tourist boom provided by the ever-growing war in Europe, a few astute businessmen happened upon what they perceived to be an even greater opportunity: camphor. The camphor tree was examined by Floridians more than a decade earlier, but at the time their chief concern was its potential as a peacetime profit driver. As events in Europe escalated, attention shifted to the plant’s more accepted uses. Camphor was a key ingredient in numerous high explosives, and in 1914 Japan held a virtual monopoly on the commodity, as nearly all of it was grown on the island of Formosa. In June, 1914, the \textit{Bradford County Telegraph} noted that the United States would be essentially defenseless should the supply of camphor be disrupted by some dispute with Japan, or due to the intervention of a third party. The article then told the tale of C.N. Munson, of New York, who tested the soil and determined that “it was possible to raise camphor trees in Florida not only with extreme swiftness, but to gather the camphor harvest from them without killing the trees, as the method used in Formosa does.” Munson’s findings suggested that an industry which could be established in as little as three years could generate between four to five million dollars annually. “Camphor trees seem to flourish best in sandy, sparse soil such as much of that in Florida,” the paper noted, before finishing with the not-so-subtle observation that “the cost of obtaining the

\textsuperscript{17} Park Trammell to the Florida Legislature, April 6, 1915, Series 613, Box 5, Folder 5, SAF; Frank Hastings, \textit{Florida: An Ideal Cattle State} (Jacksonville: Florida State Livestock Association, 1918) P. 37
Illustration 9: Camphor Laurel Tree.

A Camphor Laurel tree, from which camphor is extracted for use in numerous culinary activities as well as certain high explosives.\(^{18}\)

\(^{18}\) Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-prok-11511] 108
land for camphor plantation would be very small.” As it turned out, C.N. Munson was correct in nearly all of his assertions, but there was one fundamental flaw: the camphor which was planted earlier in the century was still being cultivated, even if he was unaware of it.19

A month after C.N. Munson’s piece was run in the Telegraph, Moses Folsom, the secretary of the Palatka Board of Trade, wrote in to the same publication with a rebuttal. The letter alternated between complimentary and dismissive, beginning with a notation that “there is no doubt about the possibilities of growing camphor trees in Florida. Fine specimens of the tree can be seen in all parts of the state.” He then went on to note that much of the work recommended by Munson was already underway, with nearly two thousand acres already under cultivation and over ten thousand pounds of camphor produced the previous year. Folsom then informed readers that:

the United States Department of Agriculture has for several years maintained in this state a station for experimental work on the commercial production of camphor drugs and essential oils… there is probably no state where the cultivation of so many species of economic plants and experimenting with same are tried as in Florida.

These facts were both praise and damnation for Munson’s suggestions; he was correct, he was simply late to the party. Perhaps wishing to end with a conciliatory note, Folsom closed his letter with an observation and suggestion: “very little is being done in Florida, one of the largest citrus growing regions of the world, to produce citrus oils, extracts and essences, of which not less than a million and a half dollars’ worth is annually imported.” Munson, and those of a like mind, could find agricultural bounties in Florida, but they would have to look past the obvious camphor tree.20

19 Bradford County Telegraph, June 26, 1914
20 Bradford County Telegraph, July 31, 1914
Citrus and camphor trees were not the only agricultural products to catch the attention of savvy Florida businessmen as the world descended deeper into the morass of the Great War. The state’s cattle industry, important as far back as the Civil War, saw impressive gains. “The whole of America is interested in everything that offers a good agricultural or stock-raising possibility,” reported a publication of the Florida Live Stock Association. A West Virginia cattleman, who conducted a great deal of business in Florida, wrote to his local newspaper in early 1915 with the observation that “there is a growing demand for cattle and that it is also evident that the United States is short on cattle and that the greatest beef producing states are drawing on Florida for their future supply.” By August, that observation had ceased to be the theory of a handful of national cattlemen, and was rapidly becoming front page news. “The possibilities of cattle raising, especially in South Florida, are remarkable, and is gradually being taken advantage of as well as noted increase of attention to citrus fruits and vegetables,” proclaimed the Gazette in an article noting the shipment of 2000 head to Chicago. While no direct connection was made, a smaller notation elsewhere on the front page spoke of “a cablegram from Liverpool… asking that an estimate be made of the cost of 1,000,000 head of American beef cattle delivered at Liverpool.” It need not have been a shock. As the summer of 1915 drew to a close, Europe had been at war for a year. Foodstuffs are generally among the first commodities to inflate in price during wartime, and Floridians found themselves ideally placed to profit from that axiom.21

It is strange to think that Florida, with so many natural advantages almost begging for the production of livestock, only ever began to expand that industry when wartime economics forced the issue. “Florida lands will carry from two to three times the number of cattle that the average Texas range does,” remarked Frank Hastings, who could speak from firsthand experience;

21Frank Hastings, Florida: An Ideal Cattle State, P. 14; Kissimmee Valley Gazette, March 19, 1915; Kissimmee Valley Gazette, August 20, 1915
Hastings operated a large, successful cattle business in Texas. But the state’s advantages were not being exploited. Much of the peninsula remained unfenced, large quantities of cattle were infested with ticks, which reduced their weight and thus value, and those who ostensibly made their living from the sale of their animals were surprisingly hands-off. Or, in the words of J.N. Whitner, who operated a ranch near Sanford, “raising beef in Florida has long been profitable, but it has been so not by the help of man but rather in spite of him.” Moreover, Hastings had seen “vast areas of cheap and hitherto waste lands in every part of the state… which need only the expenditure upon them of money and labor to fit them for the support of herds greater than any other region can maintain.” Beyond the sheer acreage, Florida possessed three specific benefits that both cattlemen pinpointed as essential. First, the peninsula had access to an “unlimited and unfailing supply of water, which is absolutely essential in every country to the successful production of livestock.” Second was the “adaptability of the soils of Florida to the production of all kinds of forage crops and at less cost of production than elsewhere,” which meant that putting meat on the bones of the cattle was a much cheaper proposition. Lastly, the climate was such that cattle could subsist on the aforementioned forage for up to nine months each year, reducing the need to provide feed for them for long periods of time, as was necessary in places where cold winters killed off the grass much earlier. All of those factors combined to make stock raining in Florida a lucrative venture, and once the Great War caused prices to spike, there were few reasons to resist.22

But if wartime raised the profit potential of foodstuffs and the implements of battle, the true fortunes were to be found once the fighting had ceased and the work of rebuilding a shattered continent began in earnest. In the same issue that documented the remarkable rise of

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the Florida beef industry, the *Gazette* printed an address by W.D. Manley, the president of the Bankers’ Financing Company, in which he outlined the state’s future. “In the work of reconstructing the devastated cities of Europe,” Manley began, “Florida lumber and naval stores will be needed and you will find that your export trade is going to exceed anything ever contemplated.” Florida’s natural resources, once again, were looked to as a means of elevating the state. But Manley saw more than simple resources in Florida’s list of advantages. “Owing to your state’s convenient location and your admirable seaports it will be possible for Florida to engage in shipment of these necessities to the foreign market with greater profit and facility than any other state on the Atlantic seaboard.” As with the Spanish-American war a generation earlier, Florida’s providential location would prove to be as important as the goods the state was capable of providing, possibly more so. Additionally, the fact that the necessary infrastructure to access the myriad natural resources the state could offer had only just been completed meant that Florida had timed its emergence from the national frontier perfectly.²³

From 1914 to 1917, the primary interest most Floridians had in the European war centered on their ability to profit from the opportunities it provided, be they increased prices for select products or the certainty that fortunes could be made when the time came to rebuild the shattered continent. A handful of men from the local towns did depart to join the Great War, despite America’s neutrality, most notably Frank Vans Agnew, the postmaster of Kissimmee. Vans Agnew:

was a member of Roosevelt’s Rough Riders, and soon after England declared war he and several others from Kissimmee enlisted… there were others identified with Kissimmee closely enough for that town to claim the honor of having sent a larger number of men to the front than any other place in the state.

²³ *Kissimmee Valley Gazette*, August 20, 1915
Vans Agnew had the distinction of enlisting as a private and clawing his way up the ranks, ending the war as a captain in command of a group of tanks. He was captured near Cambrai after his tank was hit several times and disabled, and he spent the remainder of the war as a German prisoner. But even with the notable exception of a select group of men, like Vans Agnew, for most people in Florida the struggle engulfing the globe seemed very far away. All of that changed in April, when the United States declared war on Germany. The war declaration was noted by the *Gazette* on April 6th, and by the 13th there were already calls to prepare Florida for potential enemy action. In a prominent front-page article, the *Gazette* made mention of the lack of any defense around Kissimmee’s municipal water supply, observing:

> the open manner in which the reservoir is placed would invite tampering with same… The cost of constructing a cement covering would be nothing compared to the damage that might be inflicted upon the community… It is a matter a great deal more serious than one would at first suspect, and in line with the placing of guards at such important points in Florida at this time.

Concerns about enemy action and the possibility of saboteurs were a national epidemic as the United States mobilized for war, and they would only grow worse as time wore on.24

In early 1918, the authorities in Kissimmee arrested a pair of men that they suspected were German agents. When the two were spotted walking along one of the railroads that passed through Kissimmee by the local sheriff, I.H. Ingram, he initially arrested them on the assumption that they were tramps. However:

> they had with them a book about 8x4 inches which contained free-hand drawings of submarines, cruisers and sea-going vessels of every description and minute data concerning the steel and other material of their construction. There were drawings of canals, rivers and other water ways, giving depth and full information. These drawings showed the men to have traveled all over the country from California to Florida.

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The material found in the two men’s possession was so suspicious that Sheriff Ingram reported the incident to the United States Marshalls, who promptly dispatched an agent to interrogate the two suspected German spies. One of their local acquaintances was also arrested, despite there being no evidence of any wrongdoing on his part. After an exhaustive investigation, it was determined that, while the circumstances had indeed warranted action, the three men were innocent of anything other than excessive eccentricity. Nor were they the only victims of such heightened concern. Clifton Johnson, author of *Highways and Byways*, recounted a similar incident in the introduction to his work. He apologized to his readers in the introduction, for there were no photographs to supplement his words. He had fully intended to take pictures, as was his standard practice when writing an informative book, “but our part in the World War interfered with my plans.” He was on the wharf at one of the Gulf ports with his camera when he was “arrested as a suspected German spy. For two days and a night I was behind prison bars.” He was eventually released, but was warned that he would have “further disagreeable experiences” if he attempted to take more photographs. He opted for discretion over valor. All of this may have been a tad excessive, but such was the state of mind prevailing in Florida once the war was joined; enemies were everywhere, and no precaution was excessive.25

The concern that Florida might experience enemy activity, either covert or direct, did not end with the local water supply or the suspicious activities of wanderers on the railroad tracks and men with cameras. In a letter to the editor written in June, 1917, William Bowron examined the collapse of Russia, and saw potential dangers to the United States in general, and Florida in particular. “It is conceivable,” Bowron asserted, “that fog [of war] would enable the German navy to get out of the Kell Canal and win over to American waters. Florida would be an ideal

25 *Kissimmee Valley Gazette*, January 18, 1918; Clifton Johnson, *Highways and Byways of Florida*, P. V
place for an airship base... We would, in that case, possibly, but not at this moment probable, be the undoubted objective.” Bowron’s suggestion was that the government should proceed to construct a series of canals to alleviate stress and congestion on the railways, as well as providing an easily-defended avenue for the movement of patrol vessels. Bowron’s fear of a trans-Atlantic German invasion never materialized, but he proved remarkably prescient in his statement regarding Florida’s ideal location as a military air station. In September, the Kissimmee Board of Trade was notified that “the government is looking for aviation school sites.” The Gazette then listed the various pieces of information required before any decision on a location could be made, and assured its readers that “no time will be lost in shaping this matter up and... Kissimmee can present as desirable a location as any in the state.” Several weeks later, a government agent inspecting potential sites for the proposed aviation school passed through the region. The Gazette was optimistic, listing numerous benefits from available land to proximity to both rail lines and newly-paved county roads. The writer may have been putting the cart before the horse, however, as his gaze was rather clearly set on the potential windfall for the local community:

Should Kissimmee secure the school for this vicinity it would mean the bringing here of from 1000 to 1200 men belonging to the institution, which with the number of the wives and other relatives would necessarily live at the hotels in the nearby towns would swell the number to a much larger figure.  

The aviation school question was not settled with any great haste. In October, Senator Duncan Fletcher, one of the leading forces in Florida politics and a Progressive voice on the national stage, dispatched a letter to the treasurer of the Kissimmee Board of Trade in which he assured those concerned “I think we ought to have three stations in Florida at least... Florida

26 Kissimmee Valley Gazette, July 6, 1917; Kissimmee Valley Gazette, September 7, 1917; Kissimmee Valley Gazette, September 28, 1917
offers advantages for these stations not equaled by any other state.” Rather distressingly, at least for the locals who so yearned for the windfall an aviation school might provide, the question was still under consideration six months later. In April, 1918, even as the war slogged toward its climax, Dr. A.C. Hamblin of the State Board of Health toured the area surrounding Kissimmee, ostensibly as an advisor for general health improvement, but truly—many suspected—in order to prepare the region for the construction of the proposed school. When pressed, Hamblin informed the locals that “the government… will take no chances that the men may contract typhoid or malaria whom it has made such an effort to train for service.” Dr. Hamblin then delivered a prescription directed “chiefly against flies and mosquitos but he gave a number of valuable suggestions for the bettering of [the] sanitary conditions of Kissimmee.” Interestingly, as Dr. Hamblin’s visit and statements make abundantly clear, the problem with disease that hampered military operations twenty years earlier was far from resolved when Uncle Sam considered a return trip to the Sunshine State. Dr. Porter’s earlier efforts to educate the citizenry on the proper methods to combat malaria and yellow fever, mostly by removing the spawning grounds used by mosquitoes, had produced valuable results for the local population by the outbreak of the Great War, but the end of that particular endeavor was still years off.\textsuperscript{27}

The Kissimmee City Council made note of Dr. Hamblin’s recommendations as they met to consider new business in early 1918, but while the issue of an aviation school was still of great interest it was joined by other concerns, at least one of which was shared by many localities. Among the issues addressed was the passage of an ordinance against sedition. The text of the ordinance, which proclaimed that “no person in Kissimmee may utter a disloyal word or commit a disloyal act against the government,” is evidence of the rising fears and passions of the local

\textsuperscript{27} Kissimmee Valley Gazette, October 19, 1917; Kissimmee Valley Gazette, April 19, 1918
populace. Penalties for violating the ordinance, which offered no clear definition of what qualified as a “disloyal act or utterance”, included “a fine of $500 or imprisonment of 60 days or both.” In nearby St. Cloud, the citizens “organized a vigilance committee, the purpose of which [was] to spot pro-Germans and disloyal Americans.” The specter of Floridians observing and reporting on one another bore a chilling resemblance to vigilance committees assembled during the Civil War, when Unionists in Jacksonville came under assault for their stance on secession, to say nothing of the horrors that were to come later in the century in both Germany and the Soviet Union. However, Kissimmee and the surrounding towns only preceded the Espionage Act by a few months, a piece of national legislation that edged dangerously close to overriding the First Amendment. Given the national mood, the acts of the small communities around Florida were not especially extreme, and they were, in fact, mirrored at the state level. Representative Walter Kehoe, of Pensacola, introduced a bill in late May requiring that “all registered alien enemies should wear an identification button marked ‘Registered Alien Enemy’.” The unfortunate parallel there should require no deeper discussion.28

Sedition was not the only thing on the Kissimmee City Council’s mind. As soon as war was declared against Germany in 1917, Florida laid the groundwork for there to be local “Home Guard” units across the state. Some localities jumped at the opportunity and assembled groups of eager citizens with startling rapidity, but Kissimmee was not one of those. In May, 1918, C.A. Carson, Chairman of the Osceola County chapter of the Council of Defense, situated in Kissimmee, wrote in to the local paper to bemoan the fact that “our county has been rather backward in organizing these home guards.” Aware that there were some among the citizenry

28 Kissimmee Valley Gazette, May 10, 1918; Bradford County Telegraph, May 17, 1918; The Espionage Act, passed June 15, 1917, severely curtailed freedom of expression in an effort to prevent the activities of potential enemy agents, and portions of it remain in force; Bradford County Telegraph, June 7, 1918
who were not especially concerned by the lack of a Home Guard in Kissimmee, Carson pressed his case. “We never know when there will arise home disturbances,” he reminded those who read his missive, “or when German propaganda may become unbearable, or when our homes, our property and our lives may be in jeopardy.” It is telling that among those concerns he listed was a fear of excessive German propaganda; his letter appeared in the same issue of the *Gazette* that detailed the new ordinance against sedition.²⁹

While counties across the state assembled motley units of Home Guards, law enforcement personnel were faced with a problem from the opposite end of the spectrum, namely a concerted effort to avoid conscription. For many, perhaps the majority, of the men in Florida and across the nation there was a degree of excitement at the prospect of serving overseas; notions of glory and honor compel the earliest volunteers in most wars. It must have come as a surprise to many when, in January of 1918, the *Bradford County Telegraph* ran an article concerning “a gigantic conspiracy to encourage resistance of the draft act.” Gigantic may have been a bit of an exaggeration, as by all accounts the numbers ran somewhere between thirty and forty men, but it still qualified as “one of the biggest conspiracies against the United States since the war.” The resisters were apparently aided by leading citizens of both Suwanee and Lafayette Counties, and had secured large stockpiles of weapons and ammunition at Bumble Bee Island along the Gulf Coast with which they intended to “resist to death.” The situation was resolved peacefully, as the local Sheriff was able to take the resisters by surprise, but the incident added fuel to the fears that German agents were attempting to undermine the American war effort by instigating resistance and preaching disloyalty. If anything, the existence of draft dodgers, or

²⁹ *Kissimmee Valley Gazette*, May 10, 1918
slackers as they were called at the time, lent credence to C.A. Carson’s later call for Home Guard
volunteers; there might indeed be trouble to deal with on the home front.\textsuperscript{30}

While the events transpiring in and around Kissimmee were certainly large news in that
locality, the rest of Florida was hardly a bastion of tranquility and calm as the United States
mobilized for war. At the northeastern corner of the state, Jacksonville encountered unexpected,
though certainly understandable, difficulties of its own. As Florida’s most populous city, and
with long-established ties to both ship construction and trade, it was inevitable that Jacksonville
would experience an influx of men and materials once the war effort was underway. Several
camps were erected to accommodate the personnel, among them Camp Johnston. In 1918, the
camp experienced perpetual trouble with “women and girls.” Though the reports were
intentionally vague, it is not difficult to guess what sorts of problems a camp comprised of single
young men in uniform might encounter with young women. The commanding officer,
Lieutenant Colonel Willard, issued a general order to establish a specified zone for visitors and
“prohibit women from entering the camp after 9 pm [without] special passes.” The colonel’s
order went further, however, stating that “if found outside the visiting zone after dark… they will
be taken into custody and turned over to the civil authorities.” Perhaps aware that his order
might appear unduly harsh to the civilian populace, Lieutenant Colonel Willard closed his
commentary on the matter with the statement that “this has been found necessary to maintain the
discipline of the camp.” At least there was no assertion that the women sewing so much strife in
the camp were German agents; such a charge would not have been out of place at that time.\textsuperscript{31}

Amidst the uncertainty of an expanding war, the people of Florida did whatever they
could to exploit the European conflict for the benefit of their state, regardless of whether they

\textsuperscript{30} Bradford County Telegraph, January 4, 1918
\textsuperscript{31} Bradford County Telegraph, June 7, 1918
were residents of one of the larger metropolitan centers or one of the countless small towns scattered across the peninsula. As the opening months of the nation’s direct involvement in the war waned, notions of exotic trees and increased tourism were replaced by the drive for military expenditures. Not surprisingly, many of the smaller settlements saw little in the way of direct military spending. But while hamlets like Kissimmee had to content themselves with a few guns and a handful of additional guards for vital infrastructure elements, other parts of the state experienced an impressive windfall. This was demonstrated most clearly in Key West.

Since the Civil War, Key West had been regarded as an important military station by the United States. Its positioning along one of the primary sea lanes into the Gulf of Mexico and proximity to the islands of the Caribbean made it vital to any defense of the southern coast, and the recent completion of the Overseas Railroad in 1912, “which cost upward of one hundred thousand dollars a mile,” allowed the island an opportunity for growth which had simply been impossible during earlier conflicts. However, Key West still remained a remote location, with limited water supplies and under the very real threat of vicious tropical weather systems. As Clifton Johnson noted in his observations of the state, Key West had “no public supply of water, and much of what is used is brought from the mainland by long trains of tank cars.” What it did possess was an optimal marriage of conditions for the purposes of exploiting a new technology being adapted to warfare: flight. “At the time of the entrance of the United States into the war (WWI) there was but one American Naval Air Station in existence, that at Pensacola,” observed Lieutenant Commander N. Mason, commanding officer of the Key West Naval Air Station, in a report he submitted regarding his own command in 1919. He went on to note that the entry of the United States into the European war and the surprising importance of air power mandated “a
tremendous expansion in the equipment and personnel of the Naval Air Service,” which included a series of new posts from which to launch patrols and train new airmen.32

Construction of the new Naval Air Station at Key West began on July 13, 1917, and the first personnel reported on December 17th of the same year. Initially, the station was rather modest, comprised of only one hundred men and seven officers, but it developed quite rapidly and by war’s end could boast just shy of one thousand men and forty-five officers. Lieutenant Commander Mason estimated “the total building cost of the station to date as $1,032,000.” While there is no way to determine exactly how much of the cost went into the coffers of the local economy, there can be no doubt that a significant percentage of it was paid out to local providers for materials and labor. The location for the station itself required a considerable amount of work, as it was reclaimed land which had to be dredged and smoothed before construction could even begin. Years of local experience in such endeavors could only have been a benefit. The commander did not offer a detailed list of all his post’s expenditures, but he did note that an average of $12,000 was spent on gasoline alone each month, suggesting that local entrepreneurs stood to make a sizable profit if they dealt with the air station. But here an old, familiar Florida problem reared its head: the local community was not established enough to truly squeeze every potential benefit out of the military presence.33

In September, 1918, flight trainee Harold Jobes arrived in Key West to complete his schooling and earn his wings. As he travelled south, he wrote a letter to his father in New York,

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commenting that “the boys say it is a wonderful station [NAS Key West] but the town is a joke.” Key West had only recently been the beneficiary of a direct rail connection, and until that point it had relied entirely on sea trade, leaving the town as little more than a fishing village. Jobes wrote to his father again the following week, once more lamenting the absence of recreation available: “This is the first Sunday I have not been in town in many a day but it is useless to put on a hot uniform and go to a dead town where there is absolutely nothing to do.” From a military perspective, it was probably beneficial that there were few distractions for the men, as many of them simply poured their spare time into additional training. Many of the pilots took to “stunting” and pushed their aircraft to the limit, drawing crowds of onlookers from the rest of the base personnel. That had the added benefit of occasionally providing practical information. Commander Mason felt compelled to address this very fact in his report at the close of hostilities, observing that, to his knowledge, no other station was experimenting with the so-called “flying boats” that made up the bulk of the training force. “So far as known,” he reported, “no other station has attempted to institute a series of tests to determine how to right these machines when “out of control” – it having been thought for a long time that a spin in these boats meant a certain crash.” There is no record of how useful these findings proved to be for the subsequent aviators assigned to flying boats, but the antics of Key West’s flight instructors certainly kept things from becoming dull. But not all of the diversions the men cooked up were so practical or benign. One of their favorite pastimes involved shooting at sharks and stingrays from low-flying blimps:

Yesterday I was on a 5 hour patrol and we spent an hour shooting “at” sharks and stingarees(sic). We would fly 200’ over shallow water and there were plenty of big brown sharks about 15’ long. We had a Colt 45 caliber and had 7 shots apiece. Darned if any of us could hit them but we came close and had good sport.
Admittedly, there were military applications to practicing gunnery skills from aloft, but even in the early days of military aviation a 45 caliber pistol was not an ideal weapon for air-to-air combat; Jobes was correct when he labelled the practice as sport.  

The observations of both Commander Mason and trainee Jobes would tend to suggest that there was little beyond flight training taking place at Key West during the Great War, but the pilots stationed on that southern island did, in fact, take part in regular military patrols. Mason closed out his report with the fact that “during hostilities seaplanes or patrol from this station sighted two hostile submarined(sic) which might have been destroyed but for the fact that the type of plane in use at the time did not permit the carrying of bombs.” Jobes was either unaware of this incident or simply made no mention of it to his father in their correspondence, but he did allude to the active patrol work and hinted at the disappointment he and many other trainees felt as it became increasingly apparent that the war in Europe would be over before any of them could actually see combat. “All men on this side [of the Atlantic] who are actively engaged in Submarine Patrol work for 3 months rate a gold chevron on their arm – same as the men on the other side… all of us prefer foreign service but as the government considers this patrol important they grant us the same decoration as the foreign pilots.” Jobes may have been disappointed at his inability to serve overseas, but he still saw more of war than most of the people of Florida, claims of German saboteurs and rabble-rousers notwithstanding. There were other spots that also shared in the windfall most clearly demonstrated by Key West, however.  

34 Harold D. Jobes to his father, September 7, 1918, as reprinted in Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal, Volume 9, Number 4; (Summer 1999); Harold D. Jobes to his father, September 15, 1918, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal; Commander Mason’s 1919 Report, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal; Harold D. Jobes to his father, September 19, 1918, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal  
35 Commander Mason’s 1919 Report, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal; Harold D. Jobes to his father, October 30, 1918, Florida Keys Sea Heritage Journal
Key West, by virtue of its remote location and recent connection to the mainland via the Overseas Railroad, probably experienced the most obvious growth as a result of federal spending during the war, but there was more than enough defense money to go around. At the opposite extreme of the state, Pensacola also enjoyed a burst of growth. While Key West was an ideal location for a Naval Air Station due to its strategic position astride the trade routes into the Gulf of Mexico, Pensacola also received a training station, which opened much earlier, in January, 1914. As might be expected, the installation of a naval training station provided a host of new jobs. And the newly arrived servicemen poured their money into the local coffers, as was the case in nearly every other post. But while the airmen certainly injected new energy into the social scene (each graduating class was adored by the local young women) the city itself did not prosper as quickly as many would have predicted. This was due to an assortment of factors that plagued Pensacola for generations. The city had been a distant frontier during the Civil War, and while its port was important it never compared with New Orleans or Mobile. During the Spanish-American War, it was relegated to a secondary status in favor of Tampa. There were hopes that it would become an important hub of trade, particularly once the Panama Canal opened new routes, but once more the city was undone by having better-developed competitors relatively close by, again in the form of New Orleans and Mobile. It appeared as though Pensacola was doomed by the old axiom that location trumped all other factors. There was one thing that did work in the city’s favor, however. While its port may not have been ideally situated to attract the desired trade routes, it was deep enough and secure enough to merit the creation of a new, major shipbuilding enterprise. The Naval Air Station had already been in existence for several years by the time the Pensacola Shipbuilding Company was slated to open its doors, indicating that the trend of Pensacola as a military city was becoming more firmly
established. Early in 1918, the *Bradford County Telegraph* reported that the material for the construction of the new facilities had been unloaded, and predicted “an expenditure for materials and payrolls of $5,000,000 to $7,000,000.” This was an undeniable windfall, and it seems silly to suggest that the people of the city were anything but pleased with their acquisition, but just as envy had soured the disposition of Floridians during the Spanish-American War, so too did it wreak havoc in 1918. Pensacola did not want to simply be a city that saw gains, it wanted to be transformed. That was not in the cards, at least not yet. Pensacola would continue to develop new military connections and become a major military center, but that was still in the future; by the close of the Great War the city was not much better off than many of the small towns which dotted the peninsula, aided by war spending but not truly transformed by it. The war did provide significant opportunities, however, to individuals who were less wedded to a specific location and could adjust to better exploit unexpected options. 36

Even before the United States was officially involved in the European hostilities, some of the more far-sighted businessmen in Florida sensed approaching opportunity and made tactical moves to be in better positions to profit by whatever might come. By 1917, Peter O. Knight was firmly established as one of the pre-eminent boosters for the state of Florida generally, and the city of Tampa specifically. In October of that year, he travelled to Washington with a delegation to see what could be done to secure some benefits to the state. “The navy and war departments are thoroughly familiar with Florida, and especially Tampa and its magnificent harbor,” Knight informed the residents of the city upon his return. Knight then pressed on with one of his typical optimistic forecasts:

36 The *Pensacola Journal* noted in October, 1931, that by then more than 100 local women had married Naval officers, a trend dating back to the inception of the Naval Air Station in 1914; *Bradford County Telegraph*, February 15, 1918; Harry A. Kersey, Jr., “Pelts, Plumes, and Hides: White Traders Among the Seminole Indians, 1890-1930,” *Florida Historical Quarterly*, Vol. LI, No. 3, (January 1973)
The departments are rapidly coming to the conclusion that our splendid state, with its wonderful climate, bays, harbors and locations for cantonments, aviation sites, hospitals, etc., will be a necessity for governmental work should the war be prolonged. However, amidst Knight’s assertions that the military departments were well aware of Florida’s natural benefits and would certainly invest in the state should the nation take up a more direct role in the European war, there was a subtle admission that brief investments, such as had taken place during the Spanish-American War, were not to be courted. “I did not make much effort to secure for this section the location of anything of a temporary nature,” Knight admitted after a thorough discussion of the economics of war and a prediction of a swift end to the conflict. “The dislocation and disorganization of business and the life of the community would, I am afraid, more than offset any good that we could derive from anything temporary.” Knight never specifically alluded to the previous war and Tampa’s temporary boom due to federal dollars and the presence of soldiers at the host of camps erected in and around the city, but that episode must have been central in his mind as he spoke to reporters in 1917. After all, he and his fellow Tampa citizens had been among those most certain that their newfound importance in 1898 would translate into an immediate and permanent groundswell for the city; the crumbling of that prophecy must have been painful, even for an optimist like Knight who would never have let it show. “I would rather see [Tampa] normally healthy permanently than to have it abnormally prosperous temporarily,” Knight concluded, his meaning unspoken but certainly clear to those readers who had lived in Tampa since the previous war.37

Whether he intended to reference the brief war boom of 1898 or not when explaining his aversion to temporary industries for Tampa, Knight’s thesis was borne out rather rapidly. Tampa did receive some shipbuilding contracts, but by and large the city did not obtain anywhere near

37 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
the amount of federal attention it desired; the Gulf Coast simply did not warrant as much
attention for a war in Europe as one in the Caribbean. Shortly after the war’s conclusion, the
Tampa Gas Company held its annual meeting to discuss the upcoming year’s business and select
new officers. At that meeting, vice president David Collins spoke on precisely the danger Peter
Knight had warned against. “Tampa is in much better shape than a large percentage of the cities
in the north and east, that thrived so much in time of war by reason of war industries,” he told a
gathering of reporters. “The bottom has fallen out in many of these cities now that the war
industries are being curtailed,” he continued before reminding the people of Tampa that “here
you have the shipbuilding that came to you in wartime, but this is a permanent industry, and will
continue to grow with the city.” He went on to offer examples of towns which prospered during
the war, but had already seen cataclysmic results in the drawdown; Chester, Pennsylvania, for
example, lost 30,000 jobs when the war ended, and the DuPont Powder Company was compelled
to release 100,000 employees. It is highly likely that Collins’ remarks were made as a direct
reference to Knight’s earlier statements regarding war booms, as Knight was one of the directors
of the Tampa Gas Co., among his many other pursuits, and the two men were therefore very well
acquainted. However, while he opposed any brief wartime industry for Tampa on the grounds
that it would prove more detrimental than salutary, Knight was not one to turn down lucrative
opportunities, as he demonstrated shortly after the United States officially entered the war.38

Despite his prediction that the European conflict would end rapidly when he spoke to
reporters in 1917, “Colonel” Peter O. Knight, as he was routinely addressed, was quick to take
on an important role once the nation’s war effort was in full swing. Early on, even before the
United States entered directly into the conflict, a serious problem in relation to the nation’s

38 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
ability to produce adequate numbers of ships began to cause difficulties in all areas of industry. In early 1918, Edward N. Hurley, Chairman of the United States Shipping Board, wrote to C.A. Carson, Chairman of the Osceola County chapter of the Council of Defense, located in Kissimmee, outlining the problem and requesting whatever assistance the local boards could offer. “Our shipbuilding program contemplates the construction of six million tons annually,” Hurley reported, “but owing to the want of the necessary skilled men, we are not… in a position to turn out that tonnage.” Hurley then explained that factories had been shut down, trains diverted, and men furloughed all as a result of there being insufficient ships upon which to load the provisions needed for war. Hurley’s message was quite clear: productive capacity was meaningless if the nation’s rail lines were at a standstill, clogged with goods waiting to be transported on non-existent ships; he implored Carson to do whatever was in his power to urge some of Florida’s skilled ship builders to volunteer their services in northern shipyards. And, to hammer the point home, he urged Carson to remind “the employees of the industries of the nation that their own future depends on the construction of these ships.” It was in this context that, in March, Peter Knight “became vice president and member of the board of directors, as well as chief counsel for the American International Shipbuilding Corporation.”

Under Knight’s watchful eye, the American International Shipbuilding Corporation began work on the largest shipyard for the fabrication of steel vessels that the world had yet seen, located at Hog Island in Pennsylvania. During the war, Hog Island became known for two things: the startling rapidity with which it was able to launch new vessels, and charges of extreme corruption that allowed a select few to line their pockets at the government’s expense. It was alleged that the yard was, in truth, being used as a “government wrecking establishment”

39 Kissimmee Valley Gazette, February 22, 1918; Tampa Morning Tribune, March 26, 1918.
rather than for any serious construction efforts. An investigation was launched, but by August, 1918, it was apparent that there was no evidence to support such claims. The *Tampa Morning Tribune* opined that “in the building of great industrial organizations in the short while that sudden and hastening war preparation allows, there must, of a necessity, be loss of money, lost time, and lost motion.” There was waste and loss, to be sure, but it was not on account of greed or malevolence. That was bright news for the people of Tampa, as their faith in Peter Knight was seemingly vindicated by the inquest’s findings. Knight, for his part, did not make many public statements regarding the investigation; rather, he chose to spend his time addressing the second of Hog Island’s claims to fame: the speedy construction of new vessels.40

“The building of the ships speedily is as necessary a part of the successful prosecution of the war as are the operations on the battlefront in France and elsewhere,” Knight told an interested newspaperman in 1918, perhaps overstating the contribution of his shipyard, but not by much. But Knight was not content to limit his remarks to estimations of the military significance of the shipyard; in a separate interview several months later, he made note of the overall financial situation which the United States faced as result of the war in Europe.

“America’s wealth has increased since August, 1914,” he observed. “It has one-fourth of the commerce of the globe and has accumulated a third of the gold supply of the world.” Knight’s appreciation for the financial benefits gained by the United States was remarkably astute, and one of the few instances where his natural optimism and enthusiasm did not color the data to any palpable extent. His uncharacteristic restraint was soon wiped away, however, when he returned home to Tampa.41

40 Knight Scrapbooks, UF; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 13, 1918
41 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
In October, 1918, Knight returned to Tampa for some much-needed rest after a grueling stretch in the north. He promptly informed the local newspapers that, rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, he considered Tampa his home and would never leave it on a permanent basis. He lamented the attitude of many of the city’s residents, however. Tampa did not see nearly as much benefit from the war in Europe as the citizenry had hoped for, and the result was a bitter mood that hung over the city like an ominous dark cloud. Knight, ever the booster, was appalled. “I want to tell the people here that they’re missing their opportunities by howling and knocking,” he told a reporter in an interview that appeared on October 8th. “We made more progress in Tampa during the period between 1909 and twenty-four months ago than in all the rest of our history combined. That was because we were one big family, fighting together for Tampa.” The period referenced had certainly not been one of federal largesse for the city, so the point was made rather evident: grousing about being “left out” of the war profits was both foolish and counter-productive.42

“The tourists are coming to Tampa just the same as ever and with more money than ever before,” Knight told his fellow residents once he was done scolding them for their poor attitudes. He turned his eye to the future and, true to form, made a prediction of sunny days ahead:

The war will soon be over and hundreds of thousands of people who have been literally working themselves to death will be seeking a place to rest… Florida offers the best opportunities for them. Men who have worn themselves out will come here to retire and rest. They will bring families and friends and capital. Oh! There is no end to the glorious future ahead of us if we will only wake up and grasp the hand that is knocking at the door.

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42 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
As with many of his predictions, Knight would ultimately be proved correct, though in this case it was more accurate after the Second World War than the First.\textsuperscript{43}

As one of Tampa’s leading power brokers, and arguably wielding more behind-the-scenes influence than most Floridians of any station, Peter O. Knight was looked to for insights and opinions on a host of topics far afield from the law and his northern shipbuilding enterprise. Despite the adjusted priorities of most of the nation, the ongoing desire to improve Florida’s infrastructure did not vanish when war clouds first appeared on the horizon. Progress had been slow, and even seemingly simple additions to the state’s system of roadways took inordinately longer than was expected when plans were drawn up, a fact evidenced quite clearly by the protracted construction of the road between Miami and West Palm Beach. Still, the roads, once completed, did provide tremendous economic benefits to the communities they serviced, so it is little wonder that their construction continued whenever and wherever the funds could be obtained. Once the war was underway, however, priorities had to be adjusted. In late 1917, Knight spoke on the needs of the state and the best use of funds during wartime, while also obliquely demonstrating just how lucrative his decades in Tampa had been. “I have eleven thousand acres of land in Pasco and Pinellas Counties that will be tremendously benefited by the building of the road to the west coast,” Knight informed his audience, likely referencing the proposed Tamiami Trail which, among other things, would bring Tampa more fully into the state’s trade network. “I imagine,” he continued “I shall derive more direct and indirect benefit from the building of this west coast road than any other one man in Hillsborough County.” But Knight was not one to look solely at his own interests; he was always aware of them, but he was shrewd enough to realize that they could not always occupy center stage. Despite the prospect of

great personal gain, the attorney informed his audience that “I think it will be a mistake to add an additional indebtedness to our already heavy burdens at this time.” This would likely have come as something of a surprise to those who were so accustomed to Peter Knight in his traditional role of Florida booster, but he made his stance clear by ending with the assertion that “the building of county roads at this time is certainly not necessary for the war.” The war effort needed to be the first priority, even in a place that was in no real danger of military action, and as such certain projects would have to be set aside until a more tranquil time.44

While roadways may not have been a high priority during wartime, the people of Miami saw an opportunity to once more improve their harbor, this time under the guise of aiding the nation during its struggle. After the difficulties experienced during the original dredging effort in the first years of the century, the citizens of Miami had been content to allow the harbor to remain at the depth of 18 feet, enough to accommodate most shipping that passed through that city. But when the war began, some of the more astute locals suggested that 25 feet would be a more useful depth, allowing the port to accept smaller military craft in addition to the merchant vessels that plied the trade routes. This was not an altogether false assertion, but with the improvements already being made to Jacksonville, Key West, and Pensacola, Miami’s harbor was, in truth, somewhat redundant from a military perspective. By May, 1918, it was clear the city’s efforts had come to nothing. “The people of Miami have failed to convince the war department that the commerce of that port was large enough to justify a twenty-five foot harbor,” reported the Bradford County Telegraph, the hint of an editorial snicker almost audible from the text. It was a defeat, but when considered in the context of the time it was more illustrative of a growing realization on the part of the government that the war was winding down and the flood

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44 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
of cash to any and every defense project was in need of some scrutiny. Miami would have to wait, but not nearly as long as anyone might have guessed.\textsuperscript{45}

Part of Miami’s argument in favor of an enlarged port and deepened harbor was that the increasing interconnectivity of far-flung ports meant that steadily increasing commerce was inevitable. The argument, as noted by the \textit{Telegraph}, was not successful, but there was unexpected evidence that Florida was, indeed, growing closer to the rest of the nation. As the war ground towards its bloody conclusion in 1918, a new enemy arose to cause the citizens of Florida far more direct concern than they had any reason to exhibit in relation to the European hostilities: disease. Of course, dealing with infectious diseases was nothing new for the people of the state, many of whom had resided there long enough to have vivid memories of the days before the battle against malaria was joined in earnest. This time, however, the disease was not something specific to the tropical region Florida occupied; the Spanish Flu, as the outbreak would come to be known, was a ravenous predator unconstrained by geography or climate. The earliest cases reported in the United States appeared in early 1918 in the heartland, far away from the balmy winter air that soothed the southern coast. But by the fall, even distant Florida was beginning to experience the pandemic. It is unclear when, exactly, the contagion arrived. While the earliest recorded accounts appeared in late September and early October, it is highly likely that the malady had been present for weeks, or perhaps even months, before it received any significant attention; the European war occupied most of the headlines.

By 1918, the reassuring presence of Dr. Porter was no longer in charge of the state board of health, but the legacy of his careful work continued. Great strides had been made in the previous two decades with regard to keeping infectious diseases safely away from Florida’s

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Bradford County Telegraph}, May 17, 1918
citizenry, but quarantine against vessels from the Caribbean would do little good when the malady in question had already taken hold across much of the nation. Indeed, if there was any parallel for the people to consider it was the yellow fever outbreak in New Orleans a decade earlier, when despite the best efforts of Porter and his associates the disease had managed to worm its way into several cities across the state. Compounding matters, the men and material that were diverted to the war effort significantly hamstrung local measures to prevent and treat the insidious Influenza. In Miami, the dearth of manpower was so severe that the local Boy Scouts were enlisted to aid in relief work. “Their services [were] unlimited, ranging all the way from carrying messages to nursing the sick,” reported the Miami News in November, once the city’s situation had stabilized enough for the locals to take stock. The boys were stationed at the local Red Cross headquarters in rotating shifts, “dividing watches like a guard in the army,” and assisted the city health officer, Dr. W.J. Shisler, at his request. It was striking that there was not a high rate of mortality among the Boy Scout volunteers, as one of the oddities of the Spanish Flu was that it took a severe toll on the healthy and vibrant, where the more common strains were far more dangerous to the elderly and the feeble. That made it all the more alarming when cases began to appear at the various universities across the state.⁴⁶

In October of 1918, Joe Earman, editor of the Palm Beach Post and political lieutenant to then-governor Sidney Catts, took up correspondence with officials at several universities concerning the spread of the unpredictable new malady. On October 4th, Earman dispatched a telegram to Dr. A.A. Murphree at the University of Florida, where the outbreak was most severe. “[I] understand you [and] about one hundred fifty students [are] in bed suffering influenza,” he began before reassuring the physician that “it won’t kill but makes one feel it will.” Considering

⁴⁶ Miami News, November 11, 1918
the ultimate death toll of the illness, Earman’s assurance that it was not lethal was alarmingly far from correct. Still, the newspaper man did understand one crucial fact: the most dangerous period in the cycle was when the victim began to feel as though he or she was on the mend, and he warned Dr. Murphree that “there is danger of pneumonia during convalescence.” On the same day, Earman dispatched a letter to Wilmon Newell, Plant Commissioner in Gainesville, once more affirming that “the danger of Spanish Influenza is when convalescing… so, when you commence to get better, don’t take any chances.” Earman had one more letter to send on the fourth, this time to Dr. Edward Conradi at the Florida State College for Women (modern Florida State University). “Conditions are very bad at Gainesville,” Earman confided, “and I am inclined to think that if you establish a quarantine at the State College for Women at once, same will protect the students.” Earman’s advice may have been sound, but it came far too late to make any difference for the students and faculty in Tallahassee, as he learned in a communique that arrived the following morning. “I regret to know that you have thirty-eight patients in the infirmary,” Earman wrote to Conradi on the fifth. It was true that the students in Tallahassee had seen less of the disease than their counterparts in Gainesville, and it appeared to have struck fewer of the adults on campus as well, but it was becoming quite clear that there was no realistic hope of preventing its introduction in most localities. “Information by Associated Press is that the disease is prevalent in forty-three states,” Earman continued, finally closing his letter with the dazzling insight that “the situation is serious.”

47Joe Earman to A.A. Murphree, October 4, 1918, James B. Hodges Papers, Special and Area Studies Collections, George A. Smathers Libraries, University of Florida, Gainesville (hereafter Hodges Papers, UF); Accurate figures do not exist for the Spanish Flu, but estimates place the death toll at somewhere between 50 and 100 million people worldwide; some figures push the number even higher; Joe Earman to A.A. Murphree, October 4, 1918, Hodges Papers, UF; Joe Earman to Wilmon Newell, October 4, 1918, Hodges Papers, UF; Joe Earmon to Edward Conradi, October 4, 1918, Hodges Papers, UF; Joe Earmon to Edward Conradi, October 5, 1918, Hodges Papers, UF
Ultimately, Florida suffered less than many other parts of the nation with regards to the Spanish Flu. Still, the very fact that a state which had been a distant frontier only a decade before was able to share in a nationwide epidemic demonstrated quite clearly that Florida’s pioneer days were past. However, the scope and horror of the influenza outbreak were not readily discussed; Joe Earman’s tone in his telegrams suggested concern, but not panic, after all. But there was one final event that seized Tampa in the closing months of the decade which also hinted at a more connected state than had previously existed: a wave of labor unrest, mirrored across much of the United States.

The manufacturing of cigars was already a significant industry at the heart of Tampa’s economic life in the 19th century, and during the Spanish-American War in 1898 there had been much concern regarding what impact that conflict might have on tobacco prices locally. Peter Knight’s 1911 prediction that Tampa would soon expand beyond cigar manufacturing was significantly wide of the mark, one of the few instances when his public stance was undeniably wrong. So vital to the city’s prosperity was the industry, in fact, that in December, 1919, the Tampa Sunday Tribune observed that it was the “difference between the magnificent city of today and the fishing village that rested here only thirty years ago.” To support this assertion, the paper informed its readers that the cigar industry as a whole had just finished its most productive year ever, with “a payroll that reaches no less than $8,000,000 and more probably $10,000,000 to the cigar makers alone.” It was further estimated that another two to three million dollars was paid out to various other concerns that supported the production of cigars, including office staff. However, there was one very telling fact included in the article’s recounting of how the various funds were dispersed: the dramatic figures reported for the cigar makers referred specifically to the owners of the various production companies; every worker,
from the strippers who prepared the tobacco to the packers who placed the finished products in boxes, was included in the supplemental two to three million. And almost on the same day that the paper ran its assessment of the cigar industry, events that would lead to a bitter and protracted strike began to unfold. Following the end of the Great War, a ripple of labor unrest swept across much of the western world, from police strikes in England to steel strikes in Pennsylvania. Combined with the recent collapse of autocracy in Russia and the rise of communism, this series of labor agitations helped to usher in the first Red Scare. In Tampa, those strikes played out across the cigar manufacturing industry, while slightly to the east, in the small town of Mulberry, the unrest of labor forced a strike in the mining operations that pulled phosphates from the ground.48

The spark which ignited the multi-year strike in Tampa’s cigar industry was the firing and blacklisting of a large number of employees at several of the larger firms, all of whom had strong ties to the rather weak labor movement in the city. Ironically, the owners of the various cigar factories were more organized than their labor counterparts. They created the Tampa Cigar Manufacturers’ Association in 1899, and had essentially controlled all aspects of cigar production for twenty years. They skirted anti-trust laws by having their association act in a purely advisory fashion, rather than actually dictate policy. Of course, in practice nearly every suggestion was followed, giving the manufacturers de facto control, even if they legally had none. In response to the firing of the prominent union leaders across the city, the Joint Advisory Board of the Cigar Makers’ International Union of Tampa (hereafter J.A.B.) attempted to negotiate a compromise in which the ousted men were allowed to return to work while also securing some measure of pay increase for the workers to keep up with the rising costs of living;

48 Tampa Sunday Tribune, December 21, 1919; The First Red Scare (1918-1920) followed the collapse of the Tsar in Russia and marks a period where fear of radicals gripped much of the western world
the fired union men had been agitating on that point when they were terminated. The factory owners were in no mood to bargain, however, and on April 12, 1920, the J.A.B. issued an ultimatum: restore the terminated employees and turn the factories into closed shops, thereby giving the union some real negotiating power, or face a strike. When the factory owners ignored the demand, the workers walked out.\textsuperscript{49}

The J.A.B. hoped that a strike could force the factory owners to negotiate, as the reduction in productivity would hurt them in the one way that actually mattered: reduced revenue. Unfortunately, the J.A.B. dramatically misread the situation. Had the factory owners been an isolated group, the strike might have worked. But in yet another example of increasing interconnectivity, the owners had dealings with all of the local banks and numerous other businesses, from those who produced the boxes cigars were shipped in to those that actually did the shipping. The factory owners, therefore, had a deep well of support; the strikers could rely only on each other. In response to the strike, the owners set down new terms for employment and determined, as a group, that nobody would be permitted to work without first agreeing to them. This led to a significant number of non-unionists losing their jobs, and severely undercut the ability of the J.A.B. to successfully portray itself as the hero of the story; right or wrong was not especially important to workers who could no longer feed their families due to a conflict they had no part in. Legal challenges fared no better than the strike tactic. It was argued by the J.A.B. that the cooperation of the manufacturers was in violation of anti-trust laws, and that their efforts, including a move to prevent shipping boxes being sold to any factory that did not join the battle against the strikers, were clearly illegal. Few legal minds were inclined to listen, however.

By August, the writing was on the wall. In a scathing editorial, the \textit{Tampa Morning Tribune}

\textsuperscript{49} For a detailed analysis of the labor unrest in Tampa, see: Durward Long, “The Open-Closed Shop Battle in Tampa’s Cigar Industry, 1919-1921,” \textit{Florida Historical Quarterly}, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, (October 1968)
asked how long the city’s leading citizens would “permit this great injustice to the business interests and the people who desire to return to their labors.” The Tribune had never favored the strikers, but in this instance it did accurately depict the mood of many people, particularly a significant number of laborers who were unable to secure employment and unwilling to accept charity; for them, the chaos of the strike was an unending nightmare. The J.A.B. held out until February 4, 1921, but in the end it was unable to sustain the effort and its members returned to work without any significant gains. All that had been accomplished was to create a massive economic downturn in Tampa, force an exodus of thousands of workers who could not wait for the conflict to be settled to seek new work, and tarnish the image of both the city and the state. But at least the struggle in Tampa was bloodless.50

Far more troublesome than the cigar strike in Tampa was the struggle of the phosphate miners in nearby Mulberry. There, a collection of mining operations produced phosphates for fertilizer that was used across much of the eastern United States. During the Great War, the Mineral Workers Union recruited heavily in the region, and in April the zealous converts struck in favor of an eight-hour workday and 37 cents per hour. By May, more than 3000 workers had walked out, setting the stage for an unpleasant confrontation. The phosphate companies, in no mood to make a deal, began to ship in new labor from Georgia. An irate group of strikers ambushed the train cars carrying the new labor force, killing one strikebreaker and wounding a company guard. Events appeared to be spiraling out of control. Peter Knight served as legal counsel for the mining companies, and wasted no time offering his opinion on the matter. Speaking to the Tampa Morning Tribune in June, Knight observed that “to hear some of the flannel-mouthed, pin-headed, brainless anarchistic, bolsheviki labor agitators talk… you would

50 Tampa Morning Tribune, August 15, 1920; Durward Long, “The Open-Closed Shop Battle in Tampa’s Cigar Industry, 1919-1921,” FHQ
think we were living in Russia.” Such language was unusual for Knight, whose cautious, political tone was ever on display for whatever audience he was addressing. It is telling, then, that in the midst of the Red Scare he saw nothing in the opposition but lunacy and a disdain for the very fundamentals of capitalism. Still, as he was counsel for the mining companies, it is possible he was simply tying his clients’ interests to the broader fear of communism’s spread; he was, after all, both a gifted orator and a skilled lawyer. Regardless, his stance put him at odds with not only the strikers, but also the governor, Sidney Catts.51

As the spring faded into summer, reports began to arrive that unless production was rapidly resumed there could be disastrous consequences for agriculture across the eastern United States. In June, Governor Catts toured the strike zone with the local sheriff and unabashedly threw his support to the striking miners. He judged their cause to be just, and had little patience for the men who lent their support to the owners. In a Labor Day speech he delivered in Pensacola, Catts spoke of Knight’s “unpopular” opinions, stating that “I would not give two bits for his life if he walked the streets of Tampa.” The city council in Tampa, most of whom were business associates and personal friends of Knight, took umbrage at the notion that he was anything other than a beloved fixture of the community, to say nothing of the suggestion that lawlessness was rife in their city. The very evening that the governor’s remarks were reported across the state, the Tampa city council passed a resolution condemning the statement and demanding that “he make a public retraction of the gross libel he is alleged to have uttered against this people.” The governor was unamused, and responded forcefully in short order:

51 Tampa Morning Tribune, June 29, 1919
Dear Sir:

Your contemptible resolution concerning what I said about Peter O. Knight has been received. If you think you can make me take back what I said, suppose you come up to Tallahassee and try it, or the next time I am in Tampa, suppose you try it there.

Respectfully

S.J. Catts, Governor

That rancorous reply might have been the end of the matter, but the city council was not yet prepared to make peace. They moved that the governor’s discourteous response be framed and hung on the wall of the council chamber. At their next meeting, the framed document was unveiled, along with a small legend to be hung on the wall beside it. “On motion of Councilman Fielding,” the legend read, “the city council directs that this letter be framed and hung on the walls of the council chamber, as a warning of what comes of electing an ass to the position of governor.”

Sidney Catts never issued an apology for his comments on Peter Knight, but that was ultimately little more than a shouting match of schoolyard caliber when all was said and done; the governor’s more direct actions in favor of the striking phosphate miners were of far more importance. In August, tensions boiled over in Mulberry. Though details remain frustratingly elusive, at least four guards for one of the mining companies opened fire in the town, indiscriminately loosing several dozen shots from their rifles in all directions. At least two residents were killed, and several others were seriously wounded. Combined with the deaths from the train ambush earlier in the year, the strike was beginning to accrue an unacceptable body count. The sheriff immediately arrested the accused gunmen, but the fact that he had been unable to prevent the incident in the first place incensed the governor, who promptly demanded his removal, much to the dismay of the local populace who rather liked the man. The sheriff

52 Manatee Banner, September 2, 1919; Knight Scrapbooks, UF
defiantly refused the order to vacate his post. In early September, “Capt. W.S. Snead, commander of the company of National Guard at Daytona was ordered to organize his company for service in the Mulberry phosphate region.” There had been no additional violence since the riot in mid-August, but the region was still a potential tinderbox, and the sheriff steadfastly refused to surrender his post. “It is rumored,” continued the article, “that the governor intends to use the guardsmen to force [the sheriff] to vacate.” There is no record of what transpired when the guardsmen arrived in Mulberry, but thankfully the situation was already winding down. The strike ended before the year was out, and while the owners did claim victory the workers attained the eight-hour workday they were after, as well as an increase in wages, though not to the degree they had sought.53

Florida’s experience with the Red Scare and the wave of strikes that both precipitated and accompanied it was rather subdued when considered in the light of the nation as a whole. Still, the strikes were a final discordant note that signaled the end of the decade and the arrival of a new stage in the state’s development. Infrastructure would remain a perpetual concern for the state’s residents, and disease could always reappear; the Spanish Flu demonstrated quite clearly that taming the local maladies did not necessarily render the populace immune to outside contagions. But most importantly, the dollars invested in the state by the various defense contracts during the Great War were significantly more substantial than what was spent in 1898. After the Spanish-American War, Florida experienced a return to normalcy that once more saw the state as little more than a frontier region with much potential, but most of it untapped. That did not recur in 1919. Thanks to the combination of tourists diverted from Europe by war, servicemen stationed across the state who fell in love with the atmosphere (Harold Jobes

53 Uncited newspaper clipping, September 2, 1919, Knight Scrapbooks, UF
notwithstanding), and an ever-increasing network of good, safe roadways, Florida finally attained the new recognition that had seemed so tantalizingly close the last time Uncle Sam sent men south. Out of the crisis of war, Floridians found and exploited opportunity. During the 1920s, they would capitalize on it.
CHAPTER FOUR:
FLORIDA’S FRONTIER APOTHEOSIS

The First World War brought significant change to several portions of Florida, particularly remote areas like Key West that had yet to attain many hints of modernity on their own, but it was also disruptive to numerous projects that had been underway prior to the shift to a wartime standing. Notably, much of the work of buildings the state’s infrastructure was temporarily put on hold, as the legislators holding the purse strings had evidently shared Peter Knight’s opinion that roads were not a high priority during wartime. As soon as events calmed, however, the people of Florida began to agitate once more for newer, better roadways to aid in the transportation of both goods and tourists. But the renewal of old projects was not limited to issues of roads and canals. While the State Board of Health had attempted to eradicate the malaria-bearing mosquito earlier in the century, it was still more than a mild irritation as the Roaring Twenties dawned. If earlier efforts had been earnest, the battle against the pest was resumed with an almost religious fervor in the early part of the decade. No longer content to leave the task to the health officials, local governments took up the mantle and called for extensive clean-up campaigns, directed attacks against areas known to be mosquito breeding grounds, and injected the effort with a touch of drama, rendering the entire spectacle as
something out of a carnival, parades included. Yet there was more transpiring in the new decade than a simple resumption of old business.¹

Florida’s devoted disciples preached the state’s benefits and bright future for decades, but until the 1920s there remained significant room for doubt; it requires a certain eye to spot potential in chaos. In the lull after the war, however, their faith appeared to be borne out. “The state had changed; the war had brought a sharp end to its sleepy, nineteenth-century flavor,” recalled Marjory Stoneman Douglas, who returned to Florida in 1920 after time spent with the Red Cross. The state’s population rose, and investors from across the nation started to sink their money into Florida real estate, captivated by the idea that they might be getting in on the ground floor of a remarkable new opportunity, much as had been suggested by Mrs. Chapline back in her 1914 work *Florida The Fascinating*. Local real estate peddlers adopted new strategies to assist in their efforts to sell the idea of Florida along with the actual land. New towns and residential subdivisions appeared like mushrooms after a summer rain, and all eagerly reminded potential buyers that there were easy fortunes to be made. In early February, 1925, an advertisement run in the *Homestead Leader* looked to the past to predict the future. “If you were in Miami five years ago,” the advertisement declared in a broad, bold type, “you must admit that

had you possessed sufficient faith and confidence in Miami THEN, you could have caused a few thousand dollars to have made you independently wealthy today.” The message was remarkably simple: investments in the proposed area, Miami Shores, would make any investor wealthy, if only they had the courage and foresight to get in on the ground floor. And, as a final reinforcement, the advertisement closed with the tagline “America’s Mediterranean,” just in case any potential buyers might need a reminder of the tropical perfection that awaited them. Such efforts were common, ranging from the simple act of a newspaper editor asking his readership to talk up the town to anyone they might know in the north to the more direct actions of real estate speculators who hoped to strike it big with brand new localities in the increasingly settled southern portions of the peninsula. But as valuable as permanent residents and wealthy speculators might be to the state, it was becoming increasingly clear to those who could see the larger picture that tourism was to be the lifeblood of Florida’s future.2

As was the case in Florida from at least the turn of the twentieth century, one of the great problems related to tourism was the lack of accommodations for those who were not part of the wealthy elite that regarded Florida as their tropical hideaway. This is hardly surprising, considering the fact that many of the localities, particularly on the southern end of the peninsula, were barely out of their infancy. Miami, for example, was a thriving community of 30,000 in 1920, but it was still less than thirty years old and had labored for much of that time to simply tame the wilderness in which it was situated. In the newer communities, from Miami Shores and Homestead to the small pockets of humanity scattered along the proposed overseas highway route to Key West, the situation was even less advanced. A typical newspaper from any one of the towns might contain an announcement of new residences being constructed, followed a few

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pages later by an editorial bemoaning the fact that tourists were being turned away because there was simply no place for them to stay. This fact accompanied the newfound interest in Florida real estate which swept the nation, and together they combined to provide a very tempting picture for those with a little money to invest and dreams of turning it into a fortune.

One thing that Florida would come to be known for as the Twenties moved along, much to the chagrin of its boosters, was the unscrupulous, in many cases fraudulent, manner in which land was sold to distant investors. This practice, of course, was not new when the state experienced its inflated real estate boom on the eve of the 1920s. As early as 1903, the Miami Metropolis was casting aspersions on suspect sales advertisements. “Fine old grove… trees ought to bear 2,000 boxes… $6,000,” ran one such ad from a Tampa newspaper. The editor of the Metropolis added his own addendum to the piece, suggesting “if a victim should give up $6,000 for these trees, he should not accuse the real estate man… if the 2,000 boxes of fruit are not forthcoming; for they ‘ought’ to bear them.” Such misleading advertisements were miniscule in their effect when compared to some of the grand swindles that were to follow, but their success did suggest that foolish people with money to spend could easily be enticed into “investing” in Florida; the state was fast developing a reputation as a place where fortunes could be made overnight if one only had the foresight to act. And that was true. But the easy fortunes were not actually made by those who purchased the land in most instances; rather they were obtained by those who sold it. In many respects, the situation in Florida in the Twenties was remarkably similar to the image of California in 1849. It was not the men who flocked west in search of gold that struck it rich, it was the men who owned the general stores that sold the prospectors their provisions that retired wealthy. So, too, with Florida, only this rush valued land instead of glittering gold. Both L.H. Cammack, in What About Florida?, and the Tampa board
of trade, in their promotional literature, warned as early as 1914 that potential investors needed to be wary before sinking their money into the state, but their pleas largely fell on deaf ears. The boom that was about to sweep across Florida came on with the inexorable drive of a hurricane, and its effects were to be even more devastating.\footnote{\textit{Miami Metropolis}, January 16, 1903; L.H. Cammack, \textit{What About Florida}; Tampa Board of Trade, \textit{Tampa: Today and Tomorrow.}}

Miami was the initial flashpoint that attracted interest to Florida during the boom of the 1920s, and it did not take long for the city to capitalize on the stream of new funds that poured in between 1920 and 1924. There were early hints at real estate speculation as the Great War came to a close, but the true rush began in 1922 when certain parties in New York ran articles and advertisements describing a secluded, tropical paradise just waiting for investors to arrive and turn it into a gold mine. Intrigued, men with money to spend descended on the peninsula, and the locals were more than happy to indulge them. So reckless was the spending that it was entirely possible for a single piece of property to be purchased and sold multiple times in the same day, with each subsequent price higher than the previous. Through that chain of events, it was not impossible for a lot valued at $100 in the morning to sell in excess of $1,000 that same evening. “Nothing was talked about but the prices of lots, doubling and redoubling, city lots, bay front lots, business lots, hastily planned subdivisions out in the pinelands, marked only by sidewalks and auction flags,” mused Marjory Stoneman Douglas as she recalled Miami in 1923. “Shenadoah, a new subdivision close in town, sold out for $3 million the first day,” she continued, and it is a near certainty that the land in question should have brought less than half that ridiculous amount. Such madness should have sent up immediate red flags, but so long as
they were not the final buyer, left holding the metaphorical bag, investors were unconcerned; they had already made their profits.\(^4\)

The sale of land and its subsequent subdivision and resale was certainly one part of the boom mentality in Miami, but of equal significance was the improvement of existing property. In many respects, Miami’s skyline was born in 1924. Prior to that point, most construction at the southern end of the peninsula had been limited to two, or perhaps three, floors; threatening weather and a general lack of funds and people had made going any further impractical. But “the fever of millions made overnight was like an infection,” and caution was regarded as less of a virtue and more of an albatross around the city’s neck. Once the boom mentality took full hold, it was not long before Miami “began to envision its future as that of a great metropolitan seaport.” So sudden and extreme was the building boom in the city that the state’s infrastructure was unable to handle the influx of construction materials, such as steel and stone, which would be necessary for any large structures and which could not be obtained locally. The Florida East Coast Railroad tried to deal with the increased demand by double-tracking the lines from Jacksonville to Miami, but that barely made a dent in the flood of imports. The Seaboard Airline Railroad, which had generally been confined to the areas around Pensacola and Tallahassee at the northwestern extreme of the state, pushed southward with new lines, but still the demand was too great for the available facilities. So extreme was the dilemma that “all of the railroads leading to and entering Florida were compelled to place an embargo upon shipments of all but perishable merchandise.” Considering how much produce was shipped from the state, and how vital that was to the general economic security of Florida as a whole, the actions of the railroads

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Illustration 11: Miami and Miami Beach.

One of the numerous casinos in Miami Beach (above) and Flagler Street in Miami (below) both showcase the speed with which automobiles became ubiquitous in South Florida once the necessary infrastructure was in place. Also note the increasing size and complexity of the buildings, as well as the quality of the road surfacing. Both images date from the boom era.\(^5\)

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\(^5\) Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-USZ62-105756]; Ibid [LC-USZ62-46342]

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were understandable. But that left Miami scrambling for a new way to sate its hunger for building materials. 6

The solution to Miami’s woes was quite clear: seaborne cargo could replace the lost rail connections and fuel construction projects for the foreseeable future. To that end, “everything that could float, carry a cargo and negotiate the Miami harbor channel was pressed into service,” leaving the harbor a congested mess but allowing building efforts to resume. “Old sailing ships, recalled from obscure ports to carry building supplies, were lined up along the bay front in a forest of masts.” So overcrowded was the port, in fact, that a carelessly-lowered anchor from one vessel in an area where ships were generally not moored severed a Western Union cable connecting to South America, effectively shutting down communications for the better part of a week. It would not be inaccurate to draw a parallel with San Francisco in 1850, as both cities served as the principal ports of a significant rush, gold in California, land in Florida. Still, work progressed. Then, in an irony which was likely not appreciated by the eager builders and speculators in Miami, a money-making scheme brought the entire venture to a dead stop. 7

The Prins Valdemar was a Danish ship purchased and brought to Miami with the idea that it would be converted into a luxury hotel which would be permanently moored in the harbor, creating what the owners hoped would be a curiosity that would attract tourists and guests alike. In early January, 1926, it was being towed across the harbor to what was to be its final position when an unseasonable gale blew in and caused the ship to capsize in the middle of the channel, effectively blockading it. Efforts to remove the vessel only succeeded in forcing its large masts deeper into the bottom of the channel. Without warning, Miami found itself cut off from any

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6 Marjory Stoneman Douglas, *Florida: The Long Frontier*, P. 265; Stockbridge & Perry, *So This is Florida*, P. 127; Ibid, P. 128
7 Stockbridge & Perry, *So This is Florida*, P. 128; Marjory Stoneman Douglas, *Florida: The Long Frontier*, P. 265
avenue that might deliver the desperately desired building materials. At the time of the blockage, there were already more than fifty ships awaiting entry, the bulk of them loaded down with lumber, stone, and the other materials that had been such a hot commodity only hours before; they were left with no recourse beyond seeking a new port at which to offload their goods. Reacting to the situation, the Clyde line, a shipping concern, announced a “complete embargo on all freight to Miami from connecting lines via Baltimore, Boston, and New York.” In the wake of that announcement, the Merchants & Miners Transportation Company announced a similar embargo from their stations in Philadelphia and Savannah. So extreme was the situation that the “Seaboard Air Line Railway… lifted its embargo to the extent of permitting food containers and newsprint papers” to be shipped once more, though building materials remained on the line’s black list. But inconvenience was not the issue; tremendous amounts of money were being lost for every day the port remained closed.8

The *Miami Daily News* reached out to spokesmen of the various shipping concerns that frequented Miami in the days immediately following the capsizing of the *Prins Valdemar*, and was informed that the five leading companies estimated the stoppage was costing them $75,000 every day. Worse still, figures suggested that the situation was “penalizing the Miami district more than a quarter million dollars” for each day it persisted. Even allowing for exaggeration on the part of frustrated parties, the sums involved were not insignificant. Initially, city officials in Miami were hesitant to contract the clearing of the harbor out to one of the many wrecking firms along the Eastern Seaboard, believing that local men could dredge the ship clear and resume the normal flow of traffic. That proved untrue, and a small inconvenience was rapidly transformed into a staggering calamity. As a stopgap measure, “another line of old ships had to anchor on the

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8 *Miami Daily News*, January 16, 1926
reef off Miami Beach, from which their cargoes had to be brought ashore in lighters,” but such methods could never make up for the closure of the port, and so long as the *Prins Valdemar* remained in place Miami would continue to hemorrhage cash. The ship was eventually righted and the channel cleared, but the process took well over a month, and by then two significant changes had taken place: the people of Miami had been forced to pause and evaluate their situation, allowing some their first moment of clarity in years, and more broadly there was growing concern that the Florida boom as a whole was beginning to unravel. Miami’s building craze did not resume.9

Initially, the citizens of Miami looked on the incident with the *Prins Valdemar* as a catastrophe. For many, it was proof positive that their decades-long efforts to secure a deeper harbor and channel were justified, as a single overturned vessel could not be permitted to strangle maritime traffic in a major port. And harbor improvements did come. By the time Frank Stockbridge revisited the incident a decade later in his second work on Florida, the channel had been significantly improved at federal expense, and the amount of traffic flowing in and out of the port had indeed turned Miami into a major maritime trading center. Miami’s rise and fall, however, were only one part of the greater economic turmoil that griped Florida through the 1920s. “The fever of the boom infected all the cities,” remarked Marjory Stoneman Douglas, and so virulent was the call of avarice that almost no soul in Florida was wholly spared.10

“I don't ever want to see another boom,” lamented Mattie Jackson of Daytona Beach in an interview given in 1939 as part of the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Writers’

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Project. “It gave Florida such a bad name and ruined so many people,” she continued, recounting the plight of several friends who “sold their property on a down payment, and what they considered an enormous return on their investment,” only to meet with disaster. In that instance, the new owners had failed in whatever scheme they had envisioned as their path to fortune, and after they proved unable to keep up with the payments “the property went back to the original owners.” But the intervening years had not been kind, and the damage sustained to both the structure and the contents, combined with the fact that the new owners had evidently not bothered to pay their taxes, meant that one poor soul was forced to spend “$5,000 to restore his place to its former condition.” Mrs. Jackson herself was inundated with “frantic telegrams one after another from an excited real estate operator to name a price on our home,” but she was unmoved and refused to sell; her restraint was the exception in 1920s Florida, not the rule.  

“Businessmen gave up their businesses, doctors and lawyers their practices, to go into real estate,” recalled Marjory Stoneman Douglas. The lure of larger fortunes afflicted all but the most vigilant, and those doctors and lawyers inevitably joined the ranks of Mattie Jackson’s disappointed friends who saw their “shrewd” maneuvers explode in the face of economic reality. Even those who took no direct part in the madness suffered. R.W. Wishart had worked in the turpentine business for years, and by 1924 was able to purchase his own small operation. “Then the Florida boom began, and my laborers all left and went to the cities… where they could get higher wages,” he told an interviewer in 1939. He tried to make a go of it, but the lure of better money and easier work undercut him at every step. “I couldn't make a living on my place,” he ultimately realized, “so I quit and went to road contracting.” Wishart, and the thousands of Floridians like him who took no direct part in the madness of the land boom but suffered from it

11 Interview with Mattie Jackson, May 10, 1939, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers’ Project Collection
anyway, were indicative of the underlying instability of the peninsula’s sudden burst of growth. Had the boom been based on something solid, rather than a foundation of shifting sand, ancillary industries like Wishart’s would have been able to prosper alongside the real estate developers and promoters, rather than falling to the wayside as people scrambled to get what they could before the music stopped. “It was the kind of boom that has often marked the climax of a frontier, where there is more land than people,” remarked Marjory Stoneman Douglas years later. There was opportunity for those who could seize it, but not nearly enough to satisfy all, and the feeding frenzy would only get worse before it got better. But it still might have been contained if it had only been outside speculators and foolish locals who poured their resources into the ever-increasing financial trap that Florida was evolving into. While speculation in real estate was dangerous, it required the complicity of financial institutions to become truly calamitous.¹²

The flood of new investors into the state undeniably swelled Florida’s coffers. In this era of easy money and abundant confidence, new banks rose up in nearly every locality to serve what they expected would be a continuous flow of cash. Unfortunately, this was not often the case. As early as 1920, sporadic bank failures plagued the state. The State Bank of Kissimmee, for example, was closed down by regulators on June 16, casting “a temporary gloom over the business circles of [the town].” The people of the town hoped that the shutdown would only amount to a temporary setback, and that the depositors would recover the bulk of their money once a reorganization had been completed, but there was a considerable amount of trepidation; the failure was a shock to a locality that had demonstrated nothing but unbridled optimism for decades. A few days later, the Gazette’s editor attempted to soothe some of the frayed nerves. “Plans are even now being made to reorganize the bank and pay back the depositors dollar for

dollar,” he assured his uneasy readers. It might take time, but he advised that in the interim it would be prudent for “the public generally to become boosters again.” The people of Kissimmee took his words to heart, evidently, though perhaps not in exactly the way he might have intended: they simply created a new bank.  

The Merchants and Farmers Bank of Kissimmee was organized in early July, partly at the suggestion of the director of the nearby Bank of Orange, and partly from a practical need for a local banking institution. Realizing that his advice may have been misunderstood in the immediate aftermath of the previous bank’s collapse, the Bank of Orange president, J.P. Ange, issued a follow-up statement to clarify his words. He “wanted it distinctly understood that the new bank was in no way connected to the former institution… the idea was to organize an entirely new and separate bank founded on safe and sound financial principles.” But most importantly, he wanted it understood that the new bank “was not in position… to make any definite proposition to the depositors of the defunct bank.” But while the people of Kissimmee might breathe a sigh of relief at the prospect of a new bank with supposedly better, safer foundations, the failure of the previous institution was actually indicative of something far more dangerous than simple carelessness. In the same edition of the Gazette which ran J.P. Ange’s statement, the paper’s editor attempted to pinpoint one of the principle causes of the previous collapse, and he found it in a strange place: the tick. 

“The closing of the Kissimmee state bank is ascribed to the inability of the cattlemen to meet their obligations,” observed the Gazette’s editor as he laid out his explanation for the recent bank failure. Cattle represented a significant portion of the region’s business, and had been steadily rising over the preceding decade, so his claim was not as outlandish as it might have

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13 Kissimmee Valley Gazette, June 18, 1920; Kissimmee Valley Gazette, June 25, 1920
14 Kissimmee Valley Gazette, July 2, 1920

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seemed. “That inability,” he continued, “is caused by their inability to market stock at a
profitable figure, owing Osceola county being still under quarantine as part of the tick-infested
area.” This linked to a much larger and vexing problem, the eradication of the tick as a nuisance
to cattlemen in Florida. For decades there was a bitter debate over the efficacy of forcing
cattlemen to dip their animals and remove the pests; this was exacerbated by the free-range
nature of many of the smaller cattle operations, and dipping would have raised costs
significantly. After the Great War sparked greater interest in Florida as a cattle producing state,
the situation only grew worse. Eventually, quarantine procedures were enacted, and Kissimmee
fell into one of the regions regarded as something of a “hot zone”. In relation to banking
matters, this demonstrates in a very specific way a trend that cut a swathe through much of the
nation during the Twenties. On paper, most banks looked secure. But in practice, an unsettling
percentage of the rural institutions were entirely beholden to the cycle of crops or the sale of
livestock; one bad season could trigger a chain reaction of defaults that would eventually topple
the banks themselves. Thus, a tick which damaged cattle and reduced the cattlemans ability to
sell them might cause a bank to fail and potentially wipe out the savings of an entire community.
That, however, was a danger based on circumstance rather than foolishness; the madness that
gripped the state as the decade wore on was aided by greed and unscrupulous advertising men,
and when the largest wave of bank failures broke across Florida several years after Kissimmee
endured a preview the situation could not be contained to a single community.15

During the 1920s, advertising took on a new relevance for the state of Florida. As has
been seen, there were efforts made on the part of individuals and corporations dating back to the
late 1890s to publicize the state, but those often amounted to little more than unabashed

15 Kissimmee Valley Gazette, July 2, 1920
propaganda or quaint travel logs. Stories about land fraud were not new, and bank failures were adding to public unease as the decade reached its midpoint. It was in this context that a pair of newspapermen decided to release an authoritative work on the state which would both dispel negative images and tout the development potential of the region. In 1926, Frank Stockbridge and John Perry released *Florida in the Making*, a work that straddled an odd line between history and publicity. It ostensibly existed as an informative book whose sole purpose was to provide the necessary information for anyone who wished to become better acquainted with Florida, offering up details on various crops, exports, counties, and cities. In that regard it echoed many of the earlier travel logs, but with a supposed insider’s perspective that had not yet been put in print. However, the unabashed enthusiasm on display in the pages renders it a 300-page advertisement rather than a work of objectivity. So adulatory was the book, in fact, that the authors were able to secure a foreword from the sitting governor, John Martin. “The sun of Florida’s destiny has arisen,” remarked Martin in his opening, “and only the malicious and the short-sighted contend or believe that it will ever set.”

Governor Martin’s enthusiasm for *Florida in the Making* was understandable, but the motivations of the authors were almost certainly anything but altruistic. John Perry was the owner and director of the “Jacksonville Journal, the Pensacola News and the Pensacola Journal, and [directed] a number of banks, Trust and Mortgage Companies in Florida.” While the publisher, in a separate preface, suggested these facts gave Perry a “broad view” of Florida and thus allowed him a clearer perspective than an outsider, the man’s interests were so entwined with the state’s future that any pretext of objectivity would be ludicrous. Frank Stockbridge was

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a more reliable source, as he was a reporter rather than an industrialist with his fortune tied to Florida. He travelled the state extensively in 1924 and 1925, seeking out the regions most frequented by tourists so that he could observe “the economic conditions reflected in the superficial activities of the season.” It was Stockbridge who contributed the more grounded materials in the book, utilizing facts and observations in place of the grand hyperbole that would more closely have suited Perry. Though never explicitly stated, Perry’s broad range of responsibilities would certainly have kept him from contributing more than a specific flavor to the work, leaving the bulk of the text to be penned by Stockbridge. Thus, the overall tone and grand vision of the project were obsequiously in the state’s favor, but the hard facts, where presented, were accurate. For that reason, Florida in the Making provided two parallel visions of the state: the reality on the ground, and the soaring spectacle that the many boosters wished to showcase for the rest of the nation.17

Stockbridge began his work by pinpointing one of the topics he wished to address: the persistent stories about easy fortunes and massive swindles that could be found in Florida’s real estate business. While he did not discount such questions outright, he asserted that “not enough has been said about the underlying values upon which the rising prices of Florida lands are based.” At its core, the argument was simple. Yes, people had spent preposterous amounts of money on Florida lands, and yes they had on occasion been the victims of schemers peddling swampland. But that did not mean that Florida land was inherently without value. Indeed, the trend of rising prices had been ongoing for decades; only the intemperate gambling of those seeking to make a quick fortune had driven prices beyond reason. More than a decade earlier, John Lansley observed “activity in real estate has been continuous, with values steadily rising.”

17 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, Florida in the Making, P. ix; Ibid, P. x
and an overall “gain of 61 per cent.” The trend continued through the war and into the boom era, suggesting that Stockbridge was not far off the mark in his assertions. In a strikingly ironic moment, Stockbridge turned to Wall Street to shore up his case. “One might as well ask whether the Stock Exchange rests upon a sound and stable base,” he chided, concluding that “speculation in stocks would cease were there no values behind the share traded in.” One wonders if he recalled these words, penned on New Year’s Day in 1926, in the closing months of 1929. Still, Stockbridge reiterated one solid rule for any potential investors in Florida, originally put forth by the Tampa board of trade: “Investigate before you invest.”

Although the duo behind Florida in the Making may have had an exaggerated degree of faith in the stock market, though their basic understanding of how it functioned was accurate, much of what they had to say about Florida was at least based on solid facts. To begin with, Stockbridge was able to secure accurate figures related to tourism during his long trek across the state, and could assert without much exaggeration that during the winter months of 1924-1925, the traditional tourist season, 1,283,000 people visited Florida. At an average of nearly $1,000 spent per tourist, the estimated gain for Florida during those months was more than a billion dollars. Estimates for the 1925-1926 season suggested that the numbers could easily double, potentially flooding the state with cash. If those statistics were as accurate as Stockbridge believed, the optimism he and Perry displayed was not unwarranted. Stockbridge next switched to historic land values, observing that in 1880, when the state possessed barely a quarter of a million people, land sold for twenty-five cents per acre; in 1925, with five times the population, land was moving for sums in excess of $700 per acre. Such a dramatic increase over the space of

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18 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, Florida in the Making, P. xiii; Ibid, Page xvi; John Lansley, Jacksonville: City With A Skyline (Jacksonville: Arnold Printing Co., 1913) P. 36
less than fifty years suggested that anyone willing to view Florida land as a long-term investment, rather than a quick route to a fortune, would likely do well.\textsuperscript{19}

While part of the difficulty in convincing people that Florida was not a massive financial sinkhole rested with the unscrupulous souls who were willing to turn a quick profit by bilking naïve investors, the other half of the coin dealt with some of the rare, or potentially unique, aspects of the state. After all, the climate essentially had no counterpart in the United States, more tropical than southern. The exports were of a different nature, and the ports with which the people of Florida traded were not the same ones that the citizens of New York or Boston might know. The state, even in the 1920s, bore more similarities with the western frontier regions than any of its eastern brethren. All told, Florida was a place that few people understood, possessed of natural resources and opportunities that fewer would believe, and situated on the nation’s periphery. Those factors all combined to make it an excellent destination for tourists in the mood to see something new, but there was only so far the state could ride on tourism alone. As Stockbridge observed:

\begin{quote}
While it is to the growing volume of tourist traffic that Florida looks in the first instance for its future growth, as it has in the past—as California looked so successfully—thoughtful citizens of Florida are looking beyond the seasonal visitor toward the ultimate occupation of every one of the state’s twenty-two million tillable acres by permanent settlers.
\end{quote}

Tourism could be the gateway, but it was not an end in and of itself; it was only the first step on a very long path which would ultimately lead to unimagined prosperity. This inevitably led to two questions: what steps were necessary to turn visitors into residents, and was the boom Florida experienced in the 1920s truly a prelude to the expected surge in settlement, or a bubble

\textsuperscript{19} Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, \textit{Florida in the Making}
fit to burst at some as-yet unknown point in the future? For Stockbridge, the two questions were inextricably entwined.20

When considering whether Florida’s land boom was a speculative bubble or a true indicator of future prosperity, Stockbridge believed that comparisons with other regions which had experienced their own land rush were prudent. After all, in the nation’s infancy Ohio had been sparsely populated and looked, to a casual observer, like it might be a region rife with over-inflated prices. The same was true of Chicago on the eve of the Civil War, and to a lesser extent Los Angeles in the early 20th century. All of those locales had turned out to be solid places to invest in land, provided the goal was long-term security, not a quick cash-in. “Shoestring speculators,” Stockbridge observed, “investors who lost faith, lost out on the temporary setbacks which all the historical land booms… experienced.” And it was undeniable that those who speculated in land would inevitably make a poor choice and lose money. But it was not the speculators who stood to make the greatest gains from any such investment; rather, it was the settlers who purchased land to be kept in their families for generations that benefitted. Or, as Stockbridge himself put it, “the solid backbone of every land development is the settler.” Furthermore, booms would only end when there were no more settlers willing to move to a given region, and for Florida that seemed to be a point that had not yet been reached. It was the newspaperman’s absolute belief that, far from approaching the peak of settlement, new residents had only just begun to flood into the state, with “only a fraction of its wide-beached coastline…occupied.” If Stockbridge was correct, then the question became how, exactly, to lure new settlers in; the answer to that was one that Floridians had been pursuing for years.21

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20 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, *Florida in the Making*, P. xix
21 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, *Florida in the Making*, P. 286; Ibid, P. 287
“The first step,” the author noted, “is to make the land accessible, by building railroads and highways.” The process, as Stockbridge went on to explain it, was rather simple. The first arrivals on any new stretch of land, the pathfinders, naturally took a significant risk. But that risk was generally justified as settlers and additional speculators followed in their wake, driving up land values. Of course, roads facilitated the second and third wave of settlers. “The fabulous fortunes we hear about,” the author continued, alluding to the lure of easy money in Florida, “have been made by this simple process of buying a piece of wilderness and building a road through it.” Thus, patience was the ultimate key to making a profit in the wilds of the peninsula.

Every settler, by this arithmetic, drove up the value of every available acre through simple occupation and improvement. With that in mind, it was little wonder that Florida townships and counties had been attempting to establish a safe, modern transportation network for decades. If all of that sounded excellent, it did demand an explanation as to why more individuals were not flocking to the state to establish small homesteads, as had been the practice on the western frontier in generations prior. Stockbridge had an answer for that, too.

“While there are still more than twenty million acres of undeveloped land in Florida, mostly forest, the man who wants a piece of it for a ten-acre farm or a half-acre building plot can’t buy it,” the newspaperman informed his readers. Herein, Stockbridge presented a landscape that was both bursting with potential and rife with danger, as there were no small investments to be had in the land of sun and flowers. All of the raw land was, in fact, already owned in huge tracts by the interests that had located in Florida earlier in the state’s history, from railroads and lumber operations to cattle ranchers who grazed their herds on the natural forage. Because the land was tied up in holdings that ranged from ten thousand acres to more than a

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22 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, *Florida in the Making*, P. 287
million, it was both impractical and economically prohibitive to break off pieces small enough for a single homestead. The result was that “the purchase of raw land in Florida [was] a task for capital in large amounts,” investors who could then improve the land as needed to create the proper conditions for new towns or housing developments, which could then be sold off at a higher price for a smaller portion. What this meant, in practical terms, was that there could be no great wagon train to central Florida; that age had truly come to a close. Instead, the new breed of pioneer would follow a road to a site that had already been surveyed and prepared for whatever purpose the new owner might intend. Something of the mystique was lost, to be sure, but it was a fair trade for the removal of some of the more pernicious elements of frontier living.

Stockbridge sealed this particular point with a lengthy discussion of the various improvements that potential settlers in Florida could enjoy, essentials that in a previous era would have been constructed by the pioneers themselves. Besides a smooth, graded highway from the nearest railroad, Florida settlers could expect paved streets to their new lots, both electricity and water lines already in place, and in most places an effective sewage system. Beyond the physical improvements that new lots already possessed were perks ranging from police forces and firefighting brigades to the various conveniences to be found in whatever local town the settler happened to be closest to. All of these points, in the author’s mind, justified the higher prices that were being asked by those who already owned the vast majority of the Florida landscape.23

When considering Stockbridge’s assertions regarding the inherent value of Florida land and the unprecedented opportunities available to those with capital and vision, there is the unmistakable impression of a man protesting too much. The newspaperman made it clear that all of the evidence he gathered in his travels across the state suggested that major capitalists did “not

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23 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry., *Florida in the Making*, P. 288
believe that the Florida ‘boom’ [was] in imminent danger of collapse.” To further that particular statement, he pointed to estimates regarding the overall expenditures on Florida land during the time he was busy compiling his book. “One authority estimates that more than $450,000,000 of outside capital was invested in Florida lands in 1925,” Stockbridge exclaimed, before delving into a county-by-county breakdown of the sales. A layman with a healthy degree of skepticism might be forgiven for taking a look at such figures and immediately deciding that the situation had snowballed out of control. Perhaps seeking to dial his enthusiasm back a bit, or at least temper it with reason, Stockbridge did go on to admit that there was a real foundation for much of the growing apprehension regarding Florida land sales. “Florida realtors are not all plaster saints,” he mused, adding that “Florida tourists are human and have the ineradicable human tendency to let their greed run away with their judgment.” Before closing his thinly-veiled propaganda work, Stockbridge offered one final prediction for the future, which proved startlingly prescient for one so enraptured with his subject matter:

Long before the middle of the twentieth century Florida is destined to be one of the three or four most densely populated states of the Union, with at least ten million permanent inhabitants and a winter population of as many more. All that needs to be done to bring this about is the multiplication and perfection of transportation lines, already well under way.

Frank Stockbridge may ultimately have been proved correct in his assertion, but unbeknownst to him and the other boosters, Floridians would have to pass through a very long, dark tunnel before finding the promised land on the other side.\(^2\)

The release of *Florida in the Making* in early 1926 was both ironic and tragic. There had been early signs that the banking system in Florida was not built on a solid foundation, but when the entire façade collapsed several months after the book’s publication it took almost everyone

\(^2\) Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, *Florida in the Making*, P. 290; Ibid, P. 296; Ibid, P. 299
by surprise. If nothing else, the scale was unprecedented, at least for the local populace. Earlier in the decade, smaller institutions had suffered and occasionally failed due to their predominantly-agricultural depositors and loan recipients suffering a poor yield on a given year’s crops or herds, but the catastrophe that arrived in the summer of 1926 was tied directly to the speculative bubble surrounding land. When the music stopped in late June and early July, Florida had been experiencing steadily-increasing land prices for more than a decade, and that fact had attracted many speculators who sought wealth beyond the dreams of avarice. Despite the claims Frank Stockbridge put forth in *Florida in the Making*, the powerful capitalists who flooded the state were not always discerning customers with a keen eye for deals. And, worse still, many were not independently wealthy, instead turning to loans in order to secure their vast investments in the state; that fact was to be the ultimate undoing of Florida’s land boom. For every Henry Flagler, who financed his hotel ventures in the state via his railroad holdings, which also guaranteed him a secure stream of guests and minimized the risk involved in his schemes, there were two or three men working on a shoestring budget who could only succeed so long as real estate prices continued their astronomical climb. Perhaps the most significant of these was Addison Mizner, the man who sought to turn Boca Raton into a paradise reminiscent of the old world.

Boca Raton, located just under fifty miles to the north of Miami, was an obscure little town that few outside the state had ever heard of when Addison Mizner began his ambitious development there in the spring of 1925, the height of Florida’s real estate boom. Mizner’s development company obtained two miles of oceanfront property and more than fifteen thousand undeveloped acres further inland, with the idea being to turn the entire expanse into the premier resort on the planet. The crowning achievement was to be a six million dollar hotel named
Castillo del Rey, which would cater to the every whim of the thousands of guests that occupied its opulent rooms and apartments. The site was to contain golf courses, canals that would be plied by gondolas, a private airport, a marina, and, naturally, a polo field. Of course, this approach demanded that only the truly wealthy would be able to patronize Mizner’s resort, which would likely have become a problem had the project ever managed to get off the ground; it did not. Mizner was not wealthy, like Flagler, and as such was forced to coerce and con money out of the elite his project was intended to court. Old names, including Vanderbilt, du Pont, and Singer poured money into the scheme, unaware that their investments were being dumped into a black hole that would ultimately yield nothing but embarrassment and rage. But all of that, while hardly ethical, was not yet a problem which could topple Florida’s entire banking system. That came later.\(^{25}\)

Despite the fact that he was able to entice the wealthy and elite of society to partially finance his grand vision, Mizner required significantly more working capital to bring his plans to fruition. Accordingly, he began a series of dubious transactions with the local and regional banks, selling stock in his company to the bankers in exchange for generous loans from their institutions. This certainly skirted the boundary of legality, but if the value of Florida land had continued to appreciate and the project had proceeded as planned, nothing would have come of it. However, the boom began to subside as 1925 passed, and those banks which had loaned significant portions of their total assets (in some cases fifty percent or more) to Mizner’s corporation were forced to drag their unwitting depositors into the morass, using their savings to cover the losses incurred on their ill-advised loans. It all might have ended there, but Mizner was not one to accept defeat, and he enlisted more banks, expanding the blast radius of the

ticking economic time bomb he was busy constructing. Georgia banks became involved. The local newspaper, the *Palm Beach Post*, became an accomplice thanks to its publisher, Donald Conkling, becoming involved in Mizner’s scheme. Even as work had barely begun, Conkling’s paper ran stories heralding the impressive progress being made and assuring readers that an investment in Boca Raton was a surefire way to make easy money. This had an additional benefit to the newspaper itself, as the majority of the profits that particular periodical derived came from advertisements run by real estate peddlers in general, and Mizner’s Boca Raton venture in particular. But Conkling’s intervention on Mizner’s behalf ran deeper, as he was also a stockholder in many of the banks that financed the ludicrous development.26

The single greatest failing that ultimately allowed the Florida banking system to crash with such ferocity in 1926 was that so many of the state’s bankers had other interests that often caused them to place the needs of their depositors in a secondary position. In the case of Conkling, the pattern was rather straightforward. The banks which Conkling directed loaned money to Mizner’s operations, which, of course, Conkling was deeply invested in. Next, the *Palm Beach Post* lauded the genius of the Boca Raton venture, luring in buyers and forcing prices to rise. Lots were sold at inflated rates, and the developers then used the profits to repay their loans, at least in theory. Conkling, involved in all three facets of the operation, made money every step of the way, further encouraging his reckless endeavor. As Raymond Vickers put it in his detailed study of the entire collapse, “the pyramid scheme worked as long as new buyers believed in paradise.” But, of course, investors can only be conned for so long before the game is up; and the game was up in the summer of 1926.27

26 Raymond Vickers, *Panic In Paradise*
Through much of 1925, there was increasing concern that the Florida boom “was all on paper, titles, mortgages, options, promissory notes,” and that it was destined to collapse. It was largely to counteract that image that Stockbridge and Perry had produced *Florida in the Making*. Some of the more scrupulous directors of Mizner’s development company attempted to walk back the more outlandish projections being hurled about by both Mizner and the *Palm Beach Post*, believing that a more conservative estimate of Florida’s potential might reassure increasingly-concerned investors, but their efforts were quashed. Unable to right the ship’s course, half a dozen prominent members of the corporation walked away, determined to put distance between themselves and the impending catastrophe they saw on the horizon. Their fears were not, as it turned out, unfounded. Despite having sold nearly 22 million dollars’ worth of lots, Mizner had spent considerably more. He turned, once more, to the handful of banks whose officers were stakeholders in his venture, and secured enough new loans to limp along until the depositors in those institutions caught wind of the situation and toppled the banks with runs in an effort to salvage some small portion of their savings. Across the state, a panic that eerily foreshadowed the calamity in 1929 set in. Of the 127 banks chartered in the state in the 1920s, 122 closed, and a significant percentage of them met their fate in 1926. Confidence in Florida was shattered.\(^{28}\)

None of this is to suggest that Addison Mizner was the only, or even worst, offender with regards to reckless speculation and improper loan practices during Florida’s land boom. Mizner was simply a latecomer whose spectacular meltdown served as one of the principal triggers for the collapse of much of the Florida banking system; the system was already rotten long before he set his eyes on Boca Raton. But regardless of who was ultimately to blame for the banking

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failures and collapse of the real estate bubble, as the summer of 1926 drew to a close Florida found itself in an unenviable position. Then, in what could almost be regarded as a final punishment for the state’s intemperate foolishness over the preceding three years, things got worse. In September, one of the most devastating hurricanes to ever strike the peninsula made landfall.29

The storm which ravaged much of south Florida in mid-September, 1926, would be remembered for generations simply as “the hurricane.” It made landfall between September 17th and 18th, catching the locals almost completely by surprise and putting the final nail in the coffin of boom-era Florida. In its immediate aftermath, L.F. Reardon, a resident of Miami, put his recollections down on paper “to preserve as accurately as possible a record of the facts and conditions faced by those who suffered through the great disaster.” The storm itself was powerful, a category three by most accounts, but what aided the devastation immeasurably were the conditions on the ground when it hit. During the boom, “new buildings went up in imitation of every imaginable style, more than half flimsy,” and few were concerned with the potential damage a hurricane might bring. Moreover, many of the new residents were wholly unaware of how to grapple with nature’s fury. Compounding matters, a far weaker storm made landfall earlier in the year, and Miami’s residents reasoned that the odds against a second strike in such quick succession were exceedingly low. Most vexingly, communications were sporadic. At 4:00 on the afternoon of the 17th, with the storm mere hours away, Reardon was on his way to a golf outing, blissfully unaware of the night that awaited him. He and his golf companion purchased a newspaper while on their way to the country club and noted a warning about an

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impending tropical storm. “Of course,” he noted the following day in his journal, “we paid little attention. They [tropical storms] appear often down here this time of the year.”

After his golf outing, Reardon and his friends retired to his home for dinner, and by 11:00 on the 17th they noted that the winds were growing fierce. Reardon’s guests departed without incident, but within two hours it was clear that the oncoming storm was no mere tropical system. Fearing that his house would not survive the winds, and with no real idea what to do, Reardon piled his wife and children into their car and placed a mattress above them, reasoning that if the structure gave way the car would shield them from the worst. And then they waited, huddled in a dark garage with shrieking winds deafening them, all the while certain that doom was imminent. The winds died down as dawn was breaking at approximately 6:00 on the 18th, and Reardon quickly demonstrated his inexperience. Under the impression that the storm was over, and “believing there would be a run on food,” he cleared enough debris to get the car out onto the road and headed off in search of provisions. For those who have never experienced a hurricane, the circular motion of the storm creates an “eye” at the center, a patch of calm air that gives the unwary the sense that the worst is past, when it is little more than a brief intermission before the strongest winds arrive. And Reardon was surely unwary. “Light and telephone wires were strewn about in reckless abandon,” he noted as he made his way to a grocery store which was inexplicably open for business. He quickly made his purchases, though he was unable to secure any water, and the city’s water lines were already inoperable. He had not even made it back to his home when the winds resumed.

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31 L.F. Reardon, *The Florida Hurricane and Disaster*, P. 8
Reardon was remarkably fortunate, as he was securely home before the storm regained its full intensity; others were not nearly so lucky. Unable to return to the garage, as it was being thrashed by the renewed winds, Reardon and his wife placed their children in large wash basins in the laundry room and covered them with pillows, then braced their bodies against the storm. They were terrified and exhausted when the winds finally died down for good around noon, and much of their home had been destroyed, but they were alive. The family gathered what clothes they could and piled into their car to seek refuge at one of the large hotels nearby. They surveyed the carnage as they went. “Whole sides of apartment blocks had been torn away, disclosing semi-naked men and women moving dazedly about the ruins of their homes… Everybody was looking for a drink of water, and there was none to be had.” After navigating past flooded streets and bypassing others clogged with wrecked cars, Reardon managed to reach the Everglades Hotel and secure shelter for his family. That afternoon, acting Mayor James Gilman approved a proclamation enacting martial law, effectively handing control of the shattered city over to Major Robert Ward and a contingent of marines from Key West.

The unnamed hurricane of September 17-18, 1926 was an unimaginable catastrophe, but however horrific the death toll and destruction may have been, both were immediately exaggerated. With telephone lines down, getting reliable information regarding the southern end of the peninsula was nearly impossible. And in the absence of facts, rumors are born. “Reports have it Miami Beach has been washed completely away and the dead are decomposing in piles of thousands,” wrote Reardon on Sunday the 19th. A few lines later, he remarked that “it is reported Fort Lauderdale is flat with thousands dead.” People swarmed both the newspaper and telegraph offices in search of information, but with no electricity and extensive damage there was little to

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32 L.F. Reardon, *The Florida Hurricane and Disaster*, P. 11

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be learned anywhere. And so the rumors continued. “Reports [are] that Homestead has been wiped from the earth,” Reardon continued. “Two hundred are dead at Moore Haven… The bay gave up six more bodies in the last three hours… bodies will be rising for the next three days.”

There were scuffles between the marines on patrol and dazed citizens, and everywhere was a sense of shock. “Property damage is estimated from $50,000,000 to $500,000,000” reported Reardon, but he was quick to note that nobody cared much about the property while there were still dead to be tended to and missing residents to locate. The ultimate death tool remains unknown, ranging from as low as 240 to well over 1,000; in the aftermath of the storm, it became impossible to tell how many of those listed as ‘missing’ were dead and how many had simply abandoned Miami for greener pastures in the wake of the calamity. The departure of many of Miami’s newcomers, who pulled all of their money out of local banks before retreating northward, served as an additional factor in the statewide banking failures of 1926. Still, Floridians had proven time and again that they were a resilient bunch, and it was not long at all before encouraging words were once more being bandied about.33

“Too much money is invested here to permit of a desertion of an entire city,” declared the first editorial run by the Miami Tribune in an edition miraculously published on September 19th. “Shed a tear for the dead you loved,” continued the editorial, “and then look bravely to the future. That is the spirit of Miami.” Clearly interested in bolstering the flagging spirits of the beleaguered survivors, the editorial declared that “the storm has done no permanent damage,” and predicted the imminent arrival of “workmen in the thousands… this activity will mean prosperity.” That was certainly in keeping with the tone that held sway over most of the state for the preceding decade, and determination was undeniably better than despair. That same

33 L.F. Reardon, The Florida Hurricane and Disaster, Pp. 16-18
afternoon, acting Mayor Gilman issued another proclamation, reassuring the citizenry that they
would endure and overcome. After all, “thousands of visitors will be with us during the coming
winter, and we have plenty of time… to make ample preparations for their care and
entertainment.” Even knee-deep in blood, rubble, and waste the citizens of Miami would keep
one eye on the coming tourist season; nothing could be more endemic of Florida.34

Miami was a chaotic ruin for quite some time in the wake of the unnamed storm of 1926,
enthusiastic editorials and reassuring words from officials notwithstanding. On September 20th,
President Coolidge issued a statement in which he was “prompted to appeal urgently to the
American people, whose sympathies have always been so comprehensive, to contribute
generously in aiding the sufferers of this disaster.” Committees were formed to manage food and
water, and every able bodied man was put to work, either clearing debris, recovering corpses, or
patrolling the streets as part of the contingent enforcing martial law. “The military and special
police have orders to shoot to kill,” recorded Reardon in his diary on the 20th, noting that such
authority had been used against a pair of looters earlier in the day. Governor Martin directed
“the Tampa unit of the 116th Field Artillery to entrain at once for Miami,” bringing with them
beds and food for the beleaguered survivors. Even hundreds of Boy Scouts were involved, in an
echo of the 1919 flu outbreak, “directing traffic and running messages.” But while Miami and its
neighboring cities of Fort Lauderdale and Homestead received national attention and a
significant influx of aid, as communications were restored and the situation became clearer it
was apparent that the storm had done its greatest work elsewhere.35

34 Miami Tribune, September 19, 1926; L.F. Reardon, The Florida Hurricane and Disaster, P. 14, 26
35 L.F. Reardon, The Florida Hurricane and Disaster, P. 50-51; President Coolidge’s address, as carried by the
Associated Press, is reprinted in its entirety
Moore Haven was a small town on the edge of the Everglades, built almost entirely on land that had been reclaimed from the swamp after drainage efforts were begun earlier in the century under Governor Napoleon Broward. The land was fertile, which had been one of the principal motivations behind the drainage efforts, and the residents of the town were, in Reardon’s words, “smug and prosperous.” Moore Haven rested in the shadow of Lake Okeechobee, protected by a series of high dykes which, the citizens had been assured, would prevent flooding. Unfortunately, whatever force the dykes had been designed to withstand was easily outmatched by the storm, and sometime after 1:00 on the morning of the 18th “the mad waters rushed over the too-low protection… and swept over Moore Haven and its helpless populace to a depth of fifteen feet.” The town had already been cut off from outside communications, and a depressing number of people were still asleep in their beds when the flood poured in. Those who had been adroit enough to seek refuge on the roofs of their homes were spared an immediate watery grave, but were then confronted by “five continuous hours of rushing, roaring, slashing, deadly wind that drove fear and terror into the strongest hearts.” By the time the storm passed and sunlight lifted the veil on their town, Moore Haven’s survivors were greeted by a scene of Biblical destruction. “More than one hundred and fifty corpses lay in the mire,” Reardon recorded, and “thousands of vultures swarmed overhead ready to devour the bodies.” The first relief efforts did not reach Moore Haven until late evening on the 18th, and by then all that could truly be done was to evacuate the living and whisper a prayer for the dead.36

Almost immediately following the cessation of the storm, people began to seek some silver lining. “Chicago had her fire, and a new Chicago was born,” declared the Miami Tribune’s first post-storm editorial on Sunday the 19th. “San Francisco had her earthquake and

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36 L.F. Reardon, *The Florida Hurricane and Disaster*, Pp. 93-97
prospered thereafter.” These comparisons were not idly made, as both of those cities had emerged from their frontier stages at, or within a scant few decades of, their defining disasters. Though not referenced by Miami’s newspapers, Jacksonville would have easily fit in such a list, its own fire a mere 25 years earlier. Miami might rebuild in time, but that was cold comfort to those staring at the ruins of a proud city. Reardon himself took up the question a week after the storm in his final journal entry on the event. “The hurricane with its disastrous ravages did this one great benefit – it has knitted Florida into a closer Union with its sister states, some of which during the years of its growth dealt with it a little unkindly.” That Florida might have deserved that unkind treatment was not something Reardon considered, but given his circumstances such an omission is entirely understandable. Ohio’s governor, James Cox, evidently shared Reardon’s opinion, which he demonstrated in an editorial he gave to the Dayton Daily News on Friday the 24th of September. “Where many people were disposed to treat Miami and south Florida particularly with ridicule because of the collapse of an unnatural real estate boom, they will turn now in sympathy to the permanent population,” suggested Cox in the closing lines of his piece. By September of 1926 it was apparent that the boom was well and truly done, its demise visible even to those who never ventured into the feverish speculation that had ruled the day for years. All that was left was to rebuild. Certainly, at last, Florida’s trials were ended. But that was not so.37

The true end of Florida’s decade of highs and lows arrived two years later, to the day, on September 17th, 1928. Another storm, this one remembered as the Okeechobee hurricane, made landfall near West Palm Beach. Miami itself was spared another direct hit, suffering primarily from broken glass and downed power lines, but the people living near Lake Okeechobee were

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37 Miami Tribune, September 19, 1926; L.F. Reardon, The Florida Hurricane and Disaster, P. 105; Dayton Daily News, September 24, 1926

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once again subjected to nature’s wrath. Despite the hundreds of deaths, to say nothing of the property damage, brought about by the 1926 storm, no improvements had been made to the dykes around the lake, the thinking evidently being that such a calamity could not possibly happen twice, and absolutely not in such a brief timeframe. As with the 1926 storm, advance warning was not readily available in the region. “In 1928,” notes Eliot Kleinberg of the Palm Beach Post, “perhaps one in forty South Floridians owned a radio… Telephones [were] a rare luxury [and] the situation among the struggling farmers and the migrant workers in the interior was even worse.” So once more the people were caught unawares, once more the lake breached the dykes, and once more there was a tremendous loss of life. How many died is, and shall remain, a matter for conjecture. At the time, estimates suggested 2,000 souls had perished, though there was skepticism about so high a death toll. In the ensuing years, however, the number has been adjusted higher so that 2,500-3,000 is Florida’s official record. Most of them were poor, many of them were black, and a depressing number of them were buried in mass graves, the sheer number of the dead overpowering the available manpower and requiring a curtailment of the niceties of typical funerary rites.\footnote{Eliot Kleinberg, \textit{Black Cloud: The Great Florida Hurricane of 1928} (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003) P. 70}

The nation looked on in shock as Florida sustained yet another body blow from a tropical system. Aid was forthcoming, of course, but there was less confidence than there had been two years prior. Florida’s image was tarnished. For weeks, headlines across the country updated the death toll as more and more bodies were discovered buried under rubble or floating in the Everglades. “2300 Lives Taken In Terrible Storm,” declared the \textit{Washington Observer} on September 25\textsuperscript{th}. Senator Duncan Fletcher, one of Florida’s leading political figures, began agitating for federal aid to improve safeguards around Lake Okeechobee in a speech delivered at
Tampa earlier in the week. That project would eventually take shape, but the onset of the Great Depression a year later slowed it down considerably. And all the while, the bloom was off the rose in Florida. Fairly or not, it became difficult for people to think of the state and not immediately envision worthless land sold at a premium, collapsing banks, and deadly storms. That posed an entirely new problem. 39

1928 was an election year in Florida, and the man who took the governorship was Doyle Carlton. To suggest that he took over the helm of a foundering ship would be to cast far too rosy a light on the situation. The decade had been a turbulent one for Florida, even more than for the rest of the nation as it reveled in the marvels of the Jazz Age. For the first time, the boosters who preached the merits of Florida saw their state gaining national recognition and making real developmental gains. But rash decisions, a weak understanding of economics, and the not-quite-conquered distances involved in any endeavor on the peninsula were ultimately a recipe for a cautionary tale, not an avenue to rapid success. Some good came out of the land and building boom, including infrastructure improvements that would pay dividends in later years and the establishment of localities like Homestead and Boca Raton which would go on to be prosperous once the state regained its footing. But for many, the ultimate truth of the decade was that Florida entered the Great Depression in late 1926. More significantly, the state had finally set aside its mystique. Florida was not a place regarded as overflowing with easy opportunities any longer, and perhaps it never had been. That was partly due to the unscrupulous land speculators who sullied the state’s reputation, but equally important was the increasing exposure the peninsula had received for nearly thirty years. Since the turn of the century, boosters had been preaching of the “big things” coming to Florida, the inevitable boom that would create fortunes

39 Washington Observer, September 25, 1928
for those who were in on the ground floor. Then, shockingly, their predictions came true, only to collapse in spectacular fashion shortly thereafter. Once the dust settled, Florida was just another state. Then a pair of brutal hurricanes swept in, adding more fuel to the “too good to be true” discussions about the state. Simply having beaten back the mosquito and constructed improved infrastructure would no longer be enough to entice visitors. And blatant propaganda works like *Florida In The Making* held less sway in the aftermath of both economic and natural devastation.

With the frontier atmosphere fading and their national image in tatters, the denizens of the peninsula would have to find a new way to attract visitors and restore their economy.  

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Illustration 12: Florida Real Estate Ads

A single page from the Homestead Leader at the height of the Florida land boom in 1925; nearly every issue for the better part of two years was filled with such advertisements.
Illustration 13: National Real Estate Ads.

This advertisement for Atlantic View Estates is one of the more egregious offenders, promising to double the money of investors. The National Realty Company advertisement demonstrates another facet of Florida’s land boom, as much of the money they attracted to the region came from elsewhere, in this case Chicago.
“Our financial institutions have weathered the hurricanes and erroneous publicity splendidly,” remarked Peter O. Knight in a piece written for the *New York Evening Post* in early 1929. Knight, the eternal optimist, was shrewd enough to realize that Florida was in dire straits as the 1920s came to a close and the nation followed his state into the depths of depression. His article in the *Evening Post* was one of numerous pieces he penned as part of a concerted effort intended to restore the shattered confidence of investors and tourists. In that respect, it was the vanguard of a new tactic that Florida embraced with startling rapidity: direct, state-sponsored advertising.¹

In order to make his case as compelling as possible, Knight brought forth figures that suggested the worst was well and truly in the past. He reported that at the height of the boom several years earlier, the banks in Florida had boasted nearly a billion dollars in deposits, a figure so astronomical for the time that it should have been an immediate red flag for anyone observing the situation in 1925. After the bubble burst in 1926, the banks experienced a “continuous deflation” which reduced their holdings to approximately 500 million, a figure still well “in excess of the deposits of the banks prior to the boom,” which suggested that the gains made during the years of reckless spending had not been entirely wiped out. Beyond the banking collapse, the state endured two devastating hurricanes in quick succession, which temporarily

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¹ As reported in the *DeLand News*, January 14, 1929, though the article in question was printed several days prior, Knight Scrapbooks, UF
cast a pall on Florida that made even the most reckless gambler cautious with his money. Even so, Knight remained upbeat. “Florida still continues to have the same climate, soil, natural resources, possibilities… and proximity to eighty millions of people that have heretofore attracted the attention of the country.” The perpetual booster ended his article with the observation that “[Florida] is ahead of us and not behind us.”

It was easy for Peter O. Knight to look on the sunny side, as his personal holdings were not ravaged by imprudent speculation in the years prior to the decade’s close, and his property had been spared the devastation of the twin hurricanes; the same could not readily be said of many of his countrymen. Florida’s best days were ahead, but in the immediate future the state faced desperation and pain. Not long after his business with the Evening Post was completed, Knight gave an interview with the Wall Street Journal in which he once more attempted to downplay Florida’s weaknesses and showcase the state’s strengths. One thing that had never changed, observed the Journal, was the flow of winter tourists. “Florida is again the Mecca for thousands seeking midwinter relaxation and… it is apparent recent setbacks have had no effect upon the state’s attractions.” Investors might have been gun shy, but the burgeoning tourist trade was only gaining steam as panic gave way to depression. That was a providential observation which, if properly harnessed, could allow the state to find a perpetual source of revenue that was not so beholden to bankers and real estate barons. That shift also marked the end of Florida’s frontier days, at least by the terms of Patricia Limerick’s definition, which emphasizes “the popularization of tourism and the quaintness of the folk.” Tourism was to be the medicine that would cure Florida, and advertising was the delivery method.

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1 Knight Scrapbooks, UF
2 Wall Street Journal, January 19, 1929; Patricia Limerick, The Legacy of Conquest, P. 46
Advertising, in the modern sense of the word, was still in its infancy in the 1920s. The radio, which would become a mainstay of publicity efforts in the decades to come, was just beginning to make the transition from novelty to common household accessory, a fact that had led to numerous deaths during the 1928 hurricane. As such, most advertising work was still done in print media. More importantly, there was a great deal of reticence on the part of government officials to spend precious resources, which were increasingly scarce in post-crash Florida, on something that might yield results. However, Governor Doyle Carlton, who took office in January of 1929, was open to the possibility that a statewide effort at publicity might be beneficial.³

Proposals and requests in relation to publicity for Florida began inundating Carlton less than a month after he settled in to the governor’s residence. “Florida is in its infancy as to growth and prosperity,” began a letter from W.B. Shafer, who worked on the National Soldier Bonus Campaign and was certain he could produce similarly impressive results if allowed to turn his talents to Florida. Pressing on, Shafer informed the governor that “your tourist and industrial business could easily be doubled within a few years, if you had proper teamwork in development and advertising thruout[sic] the state.” The letter proceeded to briefly note the progress made by several western states due to their advertising expenditures before arriving at the main issue Shafer wanted to raise. “You can make Florida a great manufacturing state and an international social and tourist center if you will blaze the trail by appointing the first Prosperity Director,” a position that, as understood in the context of the letter, amounted to a propaganda minister. Naturally, Shafer volunteered his services for that position, and informed the governor that he believed he could produce results with a budget of $10,000 annually, including his own.

compensation. Governor Carlton was evidently intrigued by Shafer’s proposition, and wrote to him on February 2\textsuperscript{nd} requesting additional information regarding the specific costs involved in the advertising methods employed by the western states referenced in the earlier letter. That missive is sadly lost, but Shafer’s response endures. On February 8\textsuperscript{th}, he wrote back to inform Carlton that “California Agencies spend in advertising around two million per year,” that figure further divided by the specific municipalities and their individual contributions. Perhaps sensing that he had piqued the governor’s interest, Shafer sweetened the lure by observing that “they receive about one new tourist per year for every dollar spent in advertising, which returns to their communities about $50 for every dollar spent.” Shafer closed his second letter with a suggestion which he believed would benefit Florida’s efforts:

> Have your legislature create the position of Prosperity Director instead of Publicity Director which they are usually called for the new name will get your state an untold amount of free advertising, as the originality will cause newspaper discussion and the name Prosperity will create a favorable and attractive reaction.

There are no other extant communications between Governor Carlton and Shafer, but a detailed report on the advertising methods and results of numerous states across the country was delivered to Florida’s chief executive not long after. “How the State of Florida Can use Advertising to Increase Its Assets” (hereafter HSFCUAIA) was both anonymous and undated, but the material it contained was reminiscent of the questions Carlton had posed to Shafer in the missing letter of February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, and the dates contained within strongly suggest it was compiled in 1929, or possibly early 1930. It appears quite likely that Shafer was responsible for the report, but that can only ever be conjecture. The report did not prescribe any specific advertising
method, but instead attempted to demonstrate in broad strokes how a small expenditure on publicity could yield nearly inestimable rewards to every citizen of the peninsula.⁴

“Florida faces the problem not only of increasing the volume of tourist dollars but also of increasing the percentage of all-year residents from those who come first only as visitors,” asserted the report’s shrouded author as he attempted to outline the primary problems facing the state. Part of the struggle, of course, was that Florida faced stiff competition from other areas. California drained much of the tourist pool from the rest of the United States, and with the brief exception of the Great War, Europe was always an impressive candidate for vacation dollars. To illustrate this point, the report reminded readers that “Americans travelling in Europe in 1927 spent $1,700,000,000.” And, just in case that figure was not enticing enough, the report added that “$197,000,000 a year goes to Canada in the pockets of United States residents.” With nearly two billion dollars at stake, it was little wonder that some of the more forward-thinking business leaders in the state were interested in seizing a portion of the spoils. Those statistics should have been more than adequate to secure the attention of any potential readers, but the report’s author wished to be crystal clear before he entered into his lengthy discussion of various states and their efforts to secure tourism and immigration:

Florida communities see their group problem both as offensive, to attract visitors, increase permanent population and build industry and agriculture; and defensive, to prevent an outflow to other territories on the part of permanent residents or desirable business men who feel that greater benefits or rewards are to be gained elsewhere than in Florida.

The issue was complex, and would require a broad approach if the state was to secure the sort of long-term prosperity that had been tantalizing visionaries for decades. But not every influential

⁴ Though Shafer was unclear with this reference to his credentials, it is likely he was referring to the World War Adjusted Compensation Act (passed in 1924, amended in 1926), which established bonuses for veterans of the Great War; W.B. Shafer to Doyle Carlton, January 22, 1929, Series 204, Box 1, Folder 6, SAF; W.B. Shafer to Doyle Carlton, February 8, 1929, Series 204, Box 1, Folder 6, SAF; How the State of Florida Can Use Advertising to Increase Its Assets (undated), Series 204, Folder 6, SAF (hereafter HSFCUIA)
Floridian was necessarily in agreement with the idea of funding an agency whose sole purpose was to offer up a positive image of the state.\(^5\)

In February, 1929, Peter Knight dispatched a confidential letter to Governor Carlton detailing his opposition to any plan to divert tax dollars to an advertising scheme. “My views have been requested by some newspaper men about this matter,” Knight informed the governor, referring specifically to a report that a portion of the state’s proposed gasoline tax would be diverted to a publicity fund. “I have declined to express any opinion because I do not want to take issue with you in any matters you are interested in,” Knight continued before launching into the reasoning behind his opposition to the plan. “Florida has had more free advertising during the past three and a half years than the remaining forty-seven states combined,” noted the Tampa attorney, and while he did not specifically state it, the governor would certainly have been aware that much of that free publicity had been negative. After all, following the collapse of the inflated land boom in 1925 the state had endured bank failures, charges of corruption, and two severe hurricanes. In truth, the latter half of the decade had made paradise look more like perdition. Knight was unconvinced that attempting to spin that image would work as intended. “There are many people in the United States that are still angry with Florida because they came here, gambled, and lost; and to talk about Florida’s sunshine, palm trees, bathing beauties, wonderful resources, etc., only makes these people more angry.” This was an unusual departure for a man who was primarily known as an eternal optimist and perpetual booster for the state, but Knight’s ability to read people served him well through his long career as a litigator, and he was convinced that the ill will caused by advertising would outweigh any benefits it might provide. Or, as he more succinctly put it, “there is a time to talk, and a time to quit talking.” That was not

\(^{5}\) HSFCUIA
to suggest, however, that Knight wanted to end all publicity for the state; rather, he seemed to have grasped that the manner in which a message was conveyed mattered as much as, if not more than, the message itself. “The secretary of agriculture is sending out some splendid literature,” Knight mused, aware that reports of fertile farmland had been spreading the word regarding Florida for years. “This sort of advertising I approve of because it does not have the appearance of paid advertising.” The aging attorney reminded the governor that he had been involved in advertising matters during his stint in charge of the Hog Island facility during the Great War, and stressed that actions, not words, would be the most effective way of boosting the state. Still, he assured the governor that “if you have your heart set on an advertising program, I am going to keep quiet about it.” Knight’s opposition, though it was behind closed doors, clearly demonstrated that those seeking an advertising campaign would need a detailed plan to win over the state’s power brokers. Fortunately, the nameless author of HSFCUAIA was prepared to overcome a great deal of skepticism.6

The first step towards proving the efficacy of advertising was to offer examples of other states that had already seen benefits as a result of such outlays. One startling state that gambled on advertising and won was Maine. Beginning in 1925, the Maine governor, Ralph Brewster, made it his mission to attract tourists and permanent residents to the state, goals shared by Floridians. “In the first year of the campaign the general resort and tourist business increased 30 percent over any previous year.” More specifically, the average tourist in Maine spent just over ninety dollars while in the state, a figure which, when multiplied by the number of tourists, demonstrated that the new advertising efforts “brought in outside money totaling $100,000,000.” If that was possible in Maine, surely Florida’s pristine beaches and balmy climate could multiply

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6 Peter O. Knight to Doyle Carlton, February 22, 1929, Series 204, Box 1, Folder 6, SAF; Ibid, emphasis is Knight’s
the figure several times over. Additionally, Maine was able to demonstrate that “industry follows in the wake of increased tourist travel.” To support this assertion, the report’s author listed several large projects that were undertaken in Maine by individuals who had first set foot in the state as little more than tourists, including “a $4,000,000 hydro-electric plant… [and] a $3,000,000 bridge.” Considering Florida’s lengthy crusade to establish effective infrastructure and industry, those examples were especially pertinent.\(^7\)

The examples of advertising’s ability to attract new tourists extended far beyond Maine. In 1927, Idaho established a State Board of Publicity for the sole purpose of securing additional tourist revenue. The Board made use of the more traditional means of information dissemination, including pamphlets and newspaper advertisements, but by and large eschewed the newer methods, from radio to cinema. Even so, by late 1928 the results were able to stand on their own merits. “The new tourist money spent in Idaho during the advertising campaign was estimated at $2,000,000” the report continued, with that estimate based solely on the number of out-of-state cars that spent any length of time there. If that could be accomplished with a relatively minor cash outlay in a state that was not generally known as a hot spot for tourists, and utilizing only more traditional methods of advertising, the potential in a place like Florida was nearly beyond the scope of imagination. But the real comparison that could compel the government of Florida to embrace advertising as a means for growth rested with California, long considered the state’s primary rival for the coveted vacation dollars that jingled in the pockets of average Americans in the distant northeast.\(^8\)

California’s entry into the advertising arena came with the inception of the All Year Club of Southern California (hereafter AYCSC) in the summer of 1921. In that first year, the AYCSC

\(^7\) HSFCUIA
\(^8\) HSFCUIA
was able to observe “only a handful of out-of-state visitors,” but by the close of the decade they “counted over half a million.” There was one significant dip in the state’s tourism, however, which was of particular interest to Florida. In late 1924, observed Don Francisco of the California Fruit Growers’ Exchange, the “quantity of inquiries decreased from previous years.” That was not in itself particularly interesting, but Francisco’s explanation for the decrease was intriguing. “We reasoned,” he continued, “that the decline was chiefly due to the boom in Florida and to the fact that the eastern and mid-western public was ‘Florida minded’ and less interested in California.” That tended to reinforce the notion that Florida and California were direct competitors attempting to lure the same finite pool of tourists and investors, though it could have been attributed to simple coincidence. However, two years later, California experienced a surge in inquiries that amounted to a tripling of their tourism. In seeking to explain this reversal, Francisco once more cast his eyes east. “One of the factors which... multiplied our inquiries three-fold was the termination of the Florida speculative boom,” he reported. If California and Florida were indeed vying for the same pool of potential tourists and settlers, it certainly made sense for Floridians to examine the advertising methods of their western opponents. But statewide statistics, useful as they might be, lacked the tangible local results to truly excite investment in new publicity schemes. To that end, the report shifted to a direct examination of Los Angeles.⁹

Statewide advertising campaigns brought a larger number of tourists to California during most of the 1920s, and statistics from Los Angeles demonstrated just how useful they could be to a local economy. In 1926, the city received “1,500,000 tourists and... the newcomers spent in excess of $175,000,000 or an average of $116 apiece.” While the figure was impressive, the way

⁹ HSFCUIA
that money was distributed across the community was the real attraction for Florida readers. Over a two month stretch, from January to the end of February, thousands of pieces of real estate and nearly 5,000 automobiles were purchased by non-locals. More importantly, “for every $100 spent in hotels… $92.00 [was] distributed among employees, dealers in food and dealers in hotel supplies.” Those were dollars that could circulate among the other local businesses and enhance the general revenue of any locality fortunate enough to be in receipt of sought-after tourists. But securing new visitors, while certainly one of the primary goals of Florida businessmen and politicians, was only half of the issue; permanent settlers were even more desirable.\textsuperscript{10}

To demonstrate that advertising could secure permanent residents as well as tourists, the report shifted its attention to Californians, Inc. That organization’s sole purpose was “to secure settlers through tourists,” and they had compelling evidence to suggest that their efforts were successful. “San Francisco population growth was 159,452 during the five year advertising period; a 69 percent greater increase than during the preceding five year non-advertising period,” stated the 1929 annual report for Californians, Inc. Building permits also increased by well over one hundred percent during the same period. That was all well and good, but the question of whether San Francisco held any unique appeal had to be considered. The report shied away from that inquiry, instead reminding the reader that benefits to a local community would have ripple effects throughout the state. “What benefits one part of the state benefits all of the state,” continued the Californians, Inc. annual report. “A good tourist season or an increase in population in southern California means a better market there for products of northern and

\textsuperscript{10} HSFCUIA
central California, and vice versa.” So, while Florida might regard California as a rival, there was no need for Miami to cast envious eyes on Pensacola; they were on the same team.11

The report proceeded to list the advertising efforts, and the results of said efforts, for several other states, but of particular interest to Floridians would have been the sections related to Pennsylvania and Colorado. In Pennsylvania, the State Publicity Bureau estimated that advertising increased their tourism by approximately fifteen percent, those tourists leaving somewhere in the neighborhood of $5,000,000 in their wake. What was interesting to note was that the people of that state were to be taxed exactly that amount for the upkeep of Pennsylvania’s roads. The director of the Publicity Bureau observed that the increased numbers of tourists were “literally paying for the improved highways of the state.” The improvement of existing roads and the creation of new routes had been perpetual issues in Florida for a generation, and in some regions the debate over how to fund those projects remained heated.

While it was unlikely that Pennsylvania’s experience could serve as a road map for Florida, the prospect was intriguing. Colorado served to highlight one other aspect of tourism: scenery. Florida had long touted a balmy climate as well as leisure and recreational activities as the primary lure for any potential tourists. Colorado, however, was able to generate roughly $52,000,000 in 1925 with an “appeal based rather on scenic interest than recreational advantages.” And while the mountains were certainly breathtaking, it was impossible to argue against Florida as a location overflowing with natural beauty; so long as one avoided the swamps. However, its particularly unique identity notwithstanding, Florida was a southern state.

11 HSFCUIA
Notations on Pennsylvania roads and Colorado scenery were welcome, but the report would require more regional evidence to convincingly demonstrate the utility of advertising.\textsuperscript{12}

Both Asheville and Atlanta experimented with advertising in the 1920s, and it was to those two southern communities that the report’s unknown author turned to hammer his point home. Asheville “began advertising in 1920 and gained such profitable results it… continued advertising annually without interruption.” Their annual advertising expenditure was a rather modest $100,000, but with that sum they were able to more than double the city’s population over the course of six years. During the same span, the “volume of local business increased 212 percent; manufacturing more than doubled and the volume of wholesale distribution… increased 300 percent.” No figures were offered to demonstrate the amount of tourist dollars that arrived in the city, nor the percentage of increase in raw numbers of visitors, but the overall benefit to the community spoke eloquently on its own and suggested that advertising could improve communities independent of increased tourism. Atlanta followed in a similar vein.\textsuperscript{13}

Rather than following the example set by many southern communities in the early part of the twentieth century and courting tourism, Atlanta “concentrated practically its entire advertising force in exploiting [the city] as an industrial and distribution center.” Considering that Atlanta was the cradle for Henry Grady’s vision of a “New South,” it is not especially surprising that the people opted for a more industrial approach. Whether or not an approach devoid of tourism was the best option for Atlanta remained to be seen, but the initial results were promising enough to merit inclusion in the report delivered to Florida’s governor. The uncertainty with regards to the efficacy of an industrial strain of advertising sprang from the fact that “although numerically there were many new businesses established in Atlanta, a large

\textsuperscript{12} HSFCUIA
\textsuperscript{13} HSFCUIA
percentage could not be regarded as making a basic, economic contribution to the territory.” It was noted that only time could judge Atlanta’s particular approach, but the general implication from the report’s author was that advertising for tourists was an overall safer investment for the benefit of the state. After all, industry would follow tourists and settlers; skipping the initial step might undercut the entire process. And, more to the point, tourism could prove to be a remarkably lucrative industry all its own, even if it never managed to entice a single other enterprise to establish itself.14

In 1928, Roger Babson, the founder of Babson College and a well-regarded financial theorist, set about estimating the total annual value of the tourist trade nationally, arriving at a figure of “more than $3,500,000,000.” Included in his calculations, and reported to the governor of Florida, were a series of comparisons that demonstrated exactly how important that figure, and therefore tourism, was. Tourism’s value was “60 percent greater than the value of lumber products… 51 percent greater than the value of oil… 11 percent greater than the meat packing industry… [and] practically the same in value as the total iron and steel business of the country.” Those figures were staggering, particularly for a state which had dabbled in most of those industries at one time or another. But the arguments laid bare by Babson did not stop there. In addition to demonstrating that the value of the tourist industry was far greater than had previously been assumed, his work suggested that any expense required to attract visitors was, in fact, offset by the money they would inevitably wind up spending. “The tourist justifies his own expense, and our advertising, through his expenditure for supplies, maintenance and miscellanies during his travels. Bringing tourists to the state is a good business in itself.”15

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14 HSFCUIA  
15 HSFCUIA
The information provided to Governor Carlton regarding the practices of various regions of the country, from the distant northeast to Florida’s nemesis, California, suggested that statewide advertising would be of enormous benefit. But to truly sell the point, information from several of Florida’s own communities was necessary. It was to this issue that the report now shifted. The report observed that for most of its rather truncated history as a state Florida had been entranced by the notion of securing quick money during a brief winter season. Because the developing resort communities in the state were not overly concerned with anything beyond the present year, “circumstances led them to invite the transient visitor.” This, of course, ran counter to all the evidence, which suggested that the key to truly growing the state, both in terms of population and industry, was to entice tourists to return as permanent residents. But the more astute localities had already learned this lesson. There were “two outstanding objectives sought by all community advertisers – tourist business and business promotion.” There were essentially two types of states in the nation, those whose primary aim was to increase wealth production, and those seeking an increase in population, either transient or permanent. The more settled regions tended to fall into the first category, but Florida stood firmly in the second, alongside the southwest. Also noted was the fact that “the greater the number of objectives professed, the greater the difficulty of making any concrete showing of results.” In other words, to fully achieve the state’s goals, Floridians had to concentrate their efforts on one avenue rather than spreading their money and time between several options. Whether or not tourism was the proper avenue was the overriding question of the entire report.16

“It may well be forecast,” the report’s anonymous author pressed on, “that among the ultimate requirements which Florida must set up for further industrial development is the sheer

16 HSFCUIA
possession of more people.” To that end, the focus shifted to the steps taken by individual Florida communities and their results. Overall, there was “a most gratifying history of resultfulness(sic) attending every program for which… an advertising appropriation was available.” St. Petersburg, adjacent to Tampa, was able to boast seasonal inquiries “equaling, or surpassing, all others in volume,” for the relatively meager expenditure of $40,000, and with advertising limited to a select number of publications in high-density population centers around the nation. Tampa experimented with several different approaches, one year flooding nearly every publication available with advertisements, then shifting to only a dozen or so major news outlets, and finally settling on a mixture somewhere in between the extremes. In all three instances, the city saw “a peculiar uniformity in satisfactory volume of inquiries.” Across the state, West Palm Beach was able to report a banner year in 1928. “Our… inquiries will approximate 10,000, practically all of which we have reason to believes were elicited by the advertising,” the city reported. Orlando, meanwhile, could honestly report that “their inquiries were 33 1/3 percent in advance of the year preceding.” Central Florida, a rather arbitrary grouping of counties that included the town of Kissimmee, was also able to demonstrate results. One of the small chambers of commerce happily reported that “this entire section is receiving considerable benefit from our campaign,” and that was in a region that truly had less to offer than many of the coastal portions of the state. Both Clearwater and Bradenton experienced significant returns on their advertising investments, and the small chain of cities across the central portion of the state referred to as the Scenic Highlands was awed by their own success. They observed what they called an “almost quadrupling of tourist traffic” directly following the inception of their campaign to attract new visitors.17

17 HSFCUIA
From Polk County to Hillsboro and then on to Orange, stories of rapid success were the order of the day. And the results were not always as expected. Fort Pierce, for example, received an inquiry in 1930 from an advertisement that was published in 1924. Evidently, the Iowa man who sent the clipping in had stumbled upon it in some pile of old newspapers. Lake County also received inquiries far after the last ads had been published, further indicating that their shelf life was far longer than anyone could anticipate. These scattered communities all offered “something distinctive in attractiveness,” from a scenic setting to springs which might be tapped for a supply of fresh water, or perhaps ready access to cattle or timber. They would, therefore, potentially entice different businesses to establish themselves in the state. But, despite the earlier suggestion that all efforts should be concentrated on one specific aim, this wide swatch of potential businesses was regarded as a blessing. “There is practically no form of business or suitable manufacturing or distribution which is not needed to contribute to the further economic stabilizing of the state,” opined the report’s author, keeping his eyes squarely on the goal of alleviating Florida’s economic woes.¹⁸

Well aware than anecdotal evidence, no matter how compelling, was not guaranteed to sway the governor’s opinion with regards to a state fund for advertising, the report’s author closed his piece with a list of “nine definite benefits which the advertiser receives.” First was the obvious benefit to hotels and business owners whose coffers would be filled by potential new visitors. Less obviously, ads could attract new farmers in the form of settlers who would ostensibly populate empty portions of the state. Linked to that was the notion that the number of permanent residents would logically climb, particularly in areas which demonstrated the next benefit, an increased number of small industries which could be attracted by favorable conditions

¹⁸ HSFCUIA; Mrs. Neal Wyatt Chapline, Florida The Fascinating, P. 69
specific to their endeavors. Following new industry would come new warehousing and service jobs to deal with the surge in demand, and as growth became more apparent there would follow additional capital investment and promotion of development, regarded as the sixth benefit. Business would benefit from the increased confidence in a particular region once it became clear that the advertisements were not exaggerations to bilk the unwary. And once the self-perpetuating cycle was well underway, localities could expect to see additional business-related activities on a regular basis, such as conventions and expositions. That same self-perpetuating cycle was, in fact, the last benefit to anticipate. Once a community had grown sufficiently large and established one or two potent business interests, the goal would shift away from initial development to the continuation of a successful endeavor. The trick was getting past the initial hurdle.19

There was much to commend the anonymous report that graced Governor Carlton’s desk, but it was not the only document with a prescription to aid Florida in its quest to escape financial ruin and national disdain. A second detailed plan was presented to Carlton’s successor, David Sholtz (1933-1937), rather bluntly titled “What kind of advertising will prompt a family in the north to pack their bags and start for Florida?” Despite the implication of the depressingly unimaginative title, this second report bore only tangential similarities to the first, as it was more interested in the crafting of the actual message to be conveyed through advertising, rather than demonstrating the efficacy of advertising itself.20

On the surface, the second examination of advertising and tourism looked more like a health report, and could easily have passed as an addendum to one of the yearly compilations of

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19 HSFCUIA
20 What Kind of Advertising Will Prompt A Family In The North To Pack Their Bags And Start For Florida? Series 204, Folder 7, SAF (hereafter What Kind of Advertising)
the State Board of Health. In late 1929, the Florida Public Health Association invited Basil G. Eaves, of the National Tuberculosis Association, to tour the state and experience its sanguine climate for himself, particularly during the winter months when disease ravaged much of the northern part of the nation. After visiting many of the prominent localities, Eaves inquired as to “whether any consistent effort had been made to compare the influenza and pneumonia statistics of Florida with those of cities of other states as a means of attracting visitors to the state.” He learned that no such effort had been made, and set about conducting a five year study to answer the question he had posed. The report that crossed the governor’s desk was the result of that study. The significance of the findings was difficult to overstate, as both influenza and pneumonia, while deadly scourges in places like New York and Boston (both included in the study) during the winter months, were “relatively unimportant causes of death in the State of Florida during the same period.” The data gathered by Eaves also pointed rather directly to Florida’s future, though it is unclear whether anyone at the time had even the slightest inkling of exactly how prescient one of his observations would turn out to be. “Pneumonia takes an exceptionally large toll among people past 50 years of age, large numbers of whom are financially able to visit Florida during the pneumonia season,” Eaves observed in the section dedicated to conditions in the north. He had, in essence, pinpointed the initial impetus behind the “Snow Bird” phenomenon, whereby financially-secure northerners of advancing age migrate to Florida for approximately four months during the winter and spring, then return to their homes once the weather turns. ²¹

Regardless of whether Eaves clearly saw the potential long-term benefits of his study, he went on to indicate several other startling points that had been alluded to years before, but had

²¹ What Kind of Advertising
never gained enough attention to pass beyond mere theories. He noticed that the bulk of Florida’s tourists arrived in December and January, with early February marking the peak of each season. But he also determined that March was the most lethal month with regards to pneumonia in the north. “This means,” Eaves noted, “that literally thousands of people return to their homes at a time when they face a mounting death rate from influenza and pneumonia.” This seemed something of a bombshell revelation, but it was only half of the story. While certainly concerned for the well-being of his fellow northerners, Eaves was quite certain that their early exodus in February also “deprives the State of Florida of an income running into several millions of dollars each year.” Numerous publications made note of the winter tourist phenomenon, from *Florida the Fascinating* to *Tampa: Today and Tomorrow*, with J.E. Ingraham going so far as to suggest that “more and more of the winter visitors are becoming all-year-around residents” in his essay in *The Truth About Florida* in 1914. But despite the observations made in the years preceding the Great War, Florida’s tourist season steadfastly refused to extend beyond the end of February. Eaves himself noticed this, and posited an answer. “The solution of this problem will never be found through the advertising efforts of individual hotels and transportation companies,” he asserted after presenting his findings. This was because anything put forth by hotels to potential northern customers was “invariably discounted… as commercial propaganda.” This led to one inescapable conclusion: the formation of a “disinterested organization” to spread facts was necessary if Florida was ever to seize those potential tourist dollars. Coincidentally, that was almost the exact same prescription delivered several years earlier in the anonymous report on the benefits of advertising which prominently compared Florida and California.  

“Every effort should… be made to drive from the public mind the accepted belief that Florida is solely a playground for the wealthy,” Eaves continued, pinpointing one of the great obstacles to making the state a destination for Americans nationwide. For generations, the state had been an escape for the elite, who lounged on pristine beaches and patronized hotels that might have been more accurately described as palaces. But, as smaller places like Kissimmee demonstrated from the start, there was a steady supply of average Americans who also enjoyed what the state had to offer. Veterans of both the Spanish-American War and the Great War also made good on their pledges to return after their service was complete, though not in the numbers hoped for by the locals. In order to truly capitalize on the state’s potential, someone would have to “teach the pale-faced proletariat of the north that winter is their proper vacation time and Florida is the proper place.” But, as with the information regarding health statistics, any effort to effectively eliminate the image of Florida as a bastion for the elites alone would require some figurehead beyond the local concerns.\(^{23}\)

In order to further the twin agendas laid out in his report, Eaves proposed the creation of “a new agency, bearing a name suggestive of its purpose.” However, he and his colleagues were well aware that any organization which bore a name suggesting its sole purpose was to benefit Florida would be met with the same jaundiced eye as the local hotels when they attempted to attract visitors. Worse still, an official organization whose purpose was to benefit one state, seemingly at the expense of others, “might even cause resentment.” That was, of course, the exact concern that Peter Knight had raised to Governor Carlton several years prior. To avoid this hazard, the new body was dubbed the National Winter Health Association, and was incorporated in New York. Its board consisted of an esteemed group of physicians and attorneys, including

\(^{23}\) What Kind of Advertising
numerous members and former directors of various state health boards, as well as Basil Eaves himself. Within the organization was an Advisory Medical Board, whose purpose was to guarantee the “accuracy of all information issued by the Association regarding influenza, pneumonia and other diseases.” While it all appeared quite direct and above board, at least two of the physicians charged with maintaining the accuracy of the information were also seated on the board of directors, setting up the potential for a conflict of interests. And, since the purpose of the entire organization was to attract northern visitors to Florida during the late winter and early spring without overtly boosting for the state, it is quite probable that facts were at least slightly massaged to further that goal. In some cases, at least, it was not even necessary to adjust the facts; rather, a message tailored to the specific locality it was addressing might make more headway by emphasizing certain facts at the expense of others.24

“The effective use of public health information as a means of attracting people to Florida depends on the extent to which this information is localized,” Eaves noted as he outlined the direction of the campaign. As an example, he suggested that places like Boston would be more affected by information comparing their local death rate from pneumonia with Florida’s, rather than by a generalized nationwide comparison. This early form of targeted marketing made one thing crystal clear for anyone who might have harbored doubts: keeping people healthy was a wonderful goal, but keeping them healthy in Florida was the priority. With the objectives and content outlined, the report shifted to the methods of dispersing the required information to the public.25

To best get the message to as wide a base of people as possible, Eaves envisioned a series of campaigns. “The most important media will be used in the beginning, and other channels of

24 What Kind of Advertising
25 What Kind of Advertising
propaganda enlisted from time to time.” Newspapers were to be the first wave, their pages filled with advertisements and small articles designed to push the desired message. Official statements and interviews given by leading physicians, many of whom coincidentally served on the board of the National Winter Health Association, were to be carried by as broad a selection of papers as could be managed. And as the final volley in the newspaper arena, editorials would be encouraged with “text to be supplied by the Association for use or rewrite.” The newspapers, by virtue of their constant availability and relatively low cost, were to constitute the vanguard of the propaganda barrage, but Eaves’ plan pressed much further. He envisioned special pamphlets and maps for distribution by hotels and transportation companies, as well as material to be delivered to Chambers of Commerce and Auto Clubs across the nation. Next would come a letter-writing campaign “directed to carefully selected lists of physicians and others,” the content assiduously crafted to secure their interest and support.\(^{26}\)

While the various older methods were an excellent place to begin the campaign to publicize Florida as, apparently, an alternative to death by pneumonia, serious attention was also paid to the potential of the increasingly widespread avenue of radio broadcasts. The initial planning called for “regular radio talks by public health officials, physicians, and other recognized authorities on influenza and pneumonia,” with the talks tailored to specific regions to better entice the audience. Additionally, Eaves suggested ramping up coverage and holding nationwide broadcasts in the late fall and early winter months in order to maximize the effectiveness of the message and sell southern sunshine just as it vanished from the northern states. As a final flourish on the proposed radio campaign, Eaves suggested that arrangements be made with various Florida hotels and transportation companies “to utilize part of their radio time

\(^{26}\) What Kind of Advertising
to disseminate information regarding the dangers from pneumonia in certain areas and the relative freedom from these dangers to be found in Florida.”

With print media and radio broadcasts covered, Eaves shifted his attention to two final avenues for spreading the message of Florida’s beneficial climate: orators and motion pictures. “The Association should establish and maintain volunteer or paid speakers for all suitable occasions,” he urged. Such suitable occasions included everything from gatherings of civic organizations to religious revivals. What, precisely, Eaves intended the speakers to say is unclear, though it is reasonable to infer that he would have preferred a tailored message which varied slightly depending on the particular audience. In all cases, however, the underlying purpose would be to share information “relating to pneumonia in Florida as contrasted with other states.” Regarding the nascent film industry, Eaves recommended the creation of “one or more than one-reel medical motion pictures,” to be distributed to medical societies, the purpose of which would be to “remind and encourage physicians to advise patients and ex-patients to visit Florida in January, February, March and April.” When considered together, Eaves’ various strategies presented a compelling vision of how best to disseminate the mostly-factual propaganda which he believed would secure for Florida an ever-increasing pool of tourists and residents.

There was, of course, the prickly matter of paying for his scheme, a discussion which Eaves left for the closing pages of his proposal. He predicted that his prescribed approach would “involve an annual expenditure of $100,000 to $500,000.” That was hardly an inconsiderable amount, particularly at the height of the Great Depression. Eaves attempted to soften the blow by assuring his readers that those figures would be required to maintain the operation once it was

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27 What Kind of Advertising
28 What Kind of Advertising
underway, but profits might be obtained for an initial outlay of $100,000. No doubt aware that this figure would still appear ghastly to potential participants, he reminded those reading the proposal that the National Winter Health Association “could secure as much publicity for $100,000 as a commercial company could hope to derive by expending a much larger amount.” Additionally, “this would include a large volume of publicity in news columns not available for commercial publicity.” This tied in with the earlier sentiment regarding a more “unbiased” organization being necessary to convince people that any statements related to the health benefits of Florida were not simply propaganda. But, to alleviate any doubts regarding the true nature of the program, Eaves recommended the establishment of a “Founders Committee” to raise the bulk of the necessary funds:

> An influential group representing the important hotel interest in Florida will be enrolled as a Founders Committee and made responsible for presenting and sponsoring the National Winter Health Association at the next annual meeting of the Florida State Hotel Association.

To be sure that there was enough involvement across the state, and also guarantee that adequate funds were available, Eaves recommended the creation of small committees in every locality likely to see tourists. The purpose of those committees, beyond simply raising awareness and securing cooperation, was “to secure the financial support of every business concern which is directly or indirectly benefitted by tourist patronage.” The facade of impartiality had to remain intact, but it was made abundantly clear that this was a plan designed to benefit Florida; health benefits to northerners were a byproduct, nothing more.29

> Taken together, the reports presented to Governors Carlton and Sholtz offered an effective plan to rejuvenate Florida’s image. But neither report addressed the reality on the ground during the Great Depression, the first having been compiled before the depths of the

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29 What Kind of Advertising
economic chaos were understood, and the second largely shying away from financial matters. The dollars and cents could not be ignored, however. Florida’s foray into depression began with the bank failures of 1926, and though the surviving banks had been chastened, the state’s finances were not particularly robust. The state’s perpetual boosters tried to reassure the public, with Peter Knight giving another series of interviews to various newspapers. “The great thing is confidence,” he informed readers, as it was “the cornerstone of prosperity, the mainspring of good business.” And that was true. But it was also the problem that would vex the nation for the next decade, as everything was predicated upon confidence, and once it was lost it was no small matter to see it restored.30

The downward spiral of the stock market, which began on October 24, 1929 and continued for the remainder of the year, came as a devastating shock to the financial systems of Florida specifically and the nation generally. Warning signs had been visible for years, and Peter Knight had even outlined what would ultimately be the undoing of the market in the form of a collapse of confidence and credit. But Knight, and evidently most observers of financial trends, never imagined such a collapse could occur. The initial crash of the stock market, though remembered as the cause of the Great Depression, was in truth little more than a spark; the wildfire that incinerated the savings of a generation came in the following days and weeks. The crash shook public confidence in banks generally, and across the nation worried depositors rushed to their local institutions to pull their money out before it vanished in the vagaries of finance. But, as Knight had observed only months before, there was not enough money in existence for everyone to withdraw their savings at once; instead, credit was the fuel that had fired the growth of the United States, and much of the Western world, since the end of the Great

30 Palm Beach Independent, July 19, 1929
War. Banks found themselves inundated with irate, panicked depositors who demanded their savings, and a staggering number of institutions were forced to close their doors. That sparked further panic, and the situation grew ever more desperate as the days passed. But, even amidst the dark clouds, there were glimmers of hope.

In June of 1930, the small town of Tarpon Springs demonstrated that steady nerves and an eye towards the future could overcome the power of panic. The First National Bank of Commerce, which served the town and the surrounding areas, found itself in the same dire straits that had consumed many of its brethren. The director of the bank, Edgar Phillips, called a meeting of the largest depositors, accounting for nearly 80% of the total holdings, on a Wednesday evening, June the 11th, and informed them that “the bank would be unable to open for business on Thursday morning due to heavy withdrawals during the past four weeks.” Those withdrawals totaled over $150,000, and Phillips was certain that if he opened the bank as normal on Thursday it would be bled dry. There was some debate, but then something extraordinary happened. “Every person present signed an agreement assigning their deposits to the bank and promising not to withdraw their money, but to take real estate mortgages and Florida municipal bonds in exchange.” Phillips was both amazed and relieved, and was able to report to the meeting that their actions had put the bank on much sounder footing. The guarantee of such a significant percentage of the bank’s total deposits would “enable it to pay the other depositors, should they demand it, dollar for dollar.” But the tale of the First National Bank of Commerce was not yet complete.31

On the morning of Thursday the 12th, following the meeting that secured the bank’s continued existence, a select group of large depositors gathered in front of the First National

31 Tampa Tribune, June 16, 1930
Bank of Commerce to “challenge all who went to withdraw their accounts.” Posters were printed up declaring “We believe in our bank” and hung in shop windows, while others were affixed to cars. As the morning bustle began in earnest, excitement gripped much of the downtown area, and shopkeepers hung flags in solidarity with the bank, relishing the first good news they had seen for quite some time. The measures were a resounding success. “Only four withdrawals… were reported, while all day… deposits were poured onto the bank counters.” The mayor, J.N. Craig, declared a holiday, called “Confidence Day,” and despite a typical Florida midsummer drizzle a band began to play while people paraded in the streets. Very little other business was conducted on that Thursday, and the bank, which had been expected to keep its doors closed before its eleventh hour reprieve, was forced to remain open two hours past its normal closing time to accommodate all of the people who wished to pour money into its vault. Even Peter Knight made an appearance, travelling from Tampa to Tarpon Springs to address the celebratory crowd and congratulate them on their impressive display of solidarity and community.\footnote{Tampa Tribune, June 16, 1930}

The tale of the First National Bank of Commerce reads more like a scene from It’s a Wonderful Life, but the incident demonstrated in concrete terms how important confidence was to the entire structure of finance in the United States. The people of Tarpon Springs decided, consciously, to restrain themselves and save their bank, and that determination turned out to be all that was really necessary. There were mitigating factors, of course. By virtue of being such a small community, it was possible for all of the large depositors to come together and act with one will, and once they ensured that the bank absolutely would not collapse it became much easier for small depositors to breathe a sigh of relief and allow their savings to remain untouched. Also
essential was the nerve of the large depositors, who were willing to take a short-term loss on the gamble that they would reap greater benefits at some undisclosed point in the future. For example, “one man… gave the bank $1,300 for a $1,000… security which the bank had been unable to sell.” That was a risk, no matter how it was framed, but the large depositors intuited correctly that it would be a far greater risk to allow the bank to collapse. In the weeks that followed, newspapers across the state lauded the accomplishment of Tarpon Springs, and the tale even wound its way to Congress, with Representative Herbert Drane “having the facts placed in the Record.” The *Tallahassee Democrat* went so far as to suggest that following in the footsteps of Tarpon Springs would produce similar results “in nine out of ten cases where banks are threatened with runs.” And all of that might have been true if the financial turbulence afflicting the nation had been brief; it was not. As weeks stretched into months and then years, the confidence of the community was no longer enough, and the First National Bank of Commerce finally met its fate on October 26th, 1933.33

The duration and severity of the Great Depression was just as threatening to municipalities who had been loose with their accumulation of debts as it was to banks which faced nervous depositors. This was especially true across South Florida, where ludicrous debts were incurred during the boom years of the early 1920s. In Miami, Mayor C.H. Reeder launched a movement to amend the Florida constitution to allow the “State of Florida to assume the indebtedness of the various overburdened municipalities and to issue $600,000,000 bonds for that purpose.” This, unsurprisingly, was a contentious issue. While it was true that the southern part of the state was in dire straits due to excessive debt, much of the middle and western portions were debt free, and the state government itself was entirely in the black. Peter Knight

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33 *Tampa Tribune*, June 16, 1930; *Tampa Tribune*, June 19, 1930; *Tallahassee Democrat*, June 18, 1930
chimed in on the issue shortly after Reeder issued his call, writing a letter to the editor of the *Pensacola Journal* in which he urged the state to “let those municipalities and counties work out their own salvation as best they can, which it is their duty to do.” Knight, in his own words, had “not voted for a bond issue in twelve years,” and he regarded the potential difficulties in the southern counties as their deserved reward for “running wild.” This may have suited Knight’s economic conservatism, but it posed serious dangers to the entire state, not just the afflicted regions.34

The *Wall Street Journal* examined the issue shortly after Knight’s letter expressing opposition to the constitutional amendment was published. Of primary interest was the position taken by the Florida Bondholders’ Adjustment Committee, a group assembled to evaluate the situation and determine what action was both possible and prudent with regards to repaying those who were owed money by municipalities across the state. The committee observed that “payment in full is not possible, repudiation is odious; therefore adjustment according to the ability to pay is the logical solution.” Creditors would have to reach some sort of accommodation or receive nothing at all. By and large, the committee agreed with Knight’s position, though it stopped short of reinforcing his notion that the people of South Florida had been reckless and were simply receiving their just desserts. Instead, it echoed a position espoused by the *Chicago Tribune* on September 9th. The *Tribune* observed that in much of south Florida there was “a feeling of resentment against northerners who flocked in during the boom days…inflated land values, helped vote the bonds and then left the state. The *Chicago Tribune* did not pass judgement on that argument, but the *Wall Street Journal* was essentially unmoved, noting that the previous decade’s extravagance was not comparable to a balloon which burst, but

34 *Wall Street Journal*, September 18, 1930; *Gadsden County Times*, September 11, 1930

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rather “a rocket which soared too dizzily and then fell swiftly once it had spent itself.”

Floridians had not been innocent victims, but active accomplices in their fate, a fact demonstrated by both Mattie Jackson and R.W. Wishart in their WPA interviews. However, the *Journal* was not prepared to advocate for inaction in the face of a mounting crisis of debt on the Peninsula’s southern tip, observing that “Florida faces ruin for half a century unless… a compromise is reached between debtor and creditor.”35

Nobody could be completely satisfied by the ultimate compromise between debtor and creditor, but as the 1930s limped along and there was no end to the depression in sight, even those who attempted to remain upbeat were sorely tested. In a confidential letter, written in early September of 1932, Peter Knight finally gave voice to his simmering concerns. The recipient of the missive was blacked out by Knight’s own hand, so his identity remains shrouded, but the Tampa attorney’s opening comment of “I love to hear from you because you are so full of such magnificent common sense” suggests a longstanding association, and the fact that the identity of the other party was concealed from posterity hints at a person of either political or legal significance. Regardless, this was an individual with whom Knight was willing to be candid, and who had written another letter riddled with questions on September 1st, apparently in relation to the causes of the present economic turmoil. Knight wasted few words before pinpointing what he regarded as the catalyst: gross economic malfeasance during the Great War. After appropriating astronomical sums of money to pay for the war, the United States found itself with “a national debt of twenty billions, payable in gold, with only ten billions of gold in the entire world to pay it.” That would have been problematic enough, but the nation had also “extended [its] credit balances in the banks… deposits… amounted to as much as sixty billions of dollars,

with only nine billions of currency in the United States to pay off the deposits.” This was not a new line of discussion for Peter Knight, as in 1929 he had used the same figures to explain how important confidence was to the foundation of international finance. This time, however, he used those numbers to explain the lack of confidence. “I am amazed that anybody has confidence in anything or anybody, or that there is a bank left in the United States,” bemoaned Tampa’s elder statesman.36

“It is a wonder that there has not been some sort of attempt at revolution,” continued Knight in his lengthy response to his unknown correspondent. “Certainly those pirates in New York,” he pressed on, referring to the financiers who crafted the debt structure from the Great War, “deserve to be hung, much more so than the pirates of old.” Such a statement, coming from a man whose career had been spent promoting businesses and securing profits, as well as assisting management against labor in numerous disputes, underscores just how desperate the situation had become by the autumn of 1932. Moreover, Knight’s economic principles had always favored a conservative approach to both investment and growth, and it appears he was offended by what he regarded as reckless greed. “This situation is not going to be cured by the stock market, nor by morphine, nor by patent medicine legislation,” cautioned the old attorney, adding “we are not going to get out of debt by going into debt deeper.” Knight’s prescription for aiding the nation, however, was at odds with most of the figures casting about for a solution. Rather than seeking a governmental fix, he turned back to his core principles and declared “it is an individual matter absolutely.” More bluntly, “we shall not have normal conditions in this

36 Peter O. Knight to unknown recipient, September 6, 1932, Knight Scrapbooks, UF
country until public expenditures are drastically reduced, and public and private debts reduced to a point where they can be taken care of; and then confidence will be restored.”

Confidence was the key to any recovery, of course, but Knight was not willing to guess at how long it would take for it to return. In truth, his own confidence was not holding up well under the endless parade of calamities that assaulted his beloved Florida. “We have all been very foolish” he admitted, a philosophical tone entering his more commonly grounded prose. “All of us have had wonderful opportunities the past three years to learn something.” For the eternal optimist to be so somber was quite revealing, and his concerns were not allayed by the actions he saw being taken in Tallahassee and Washington. In 1934, he wrote to his personal friend, fellow attorney James Hodges, expressing his concerns with some of the ideas being bandied about. “I have been endeavoring for some time to withdraw from public affairs,” Knight began, noting that he had said nothing for publication in over three years. However, his desire to exit the arena of public discourse aside, he supposed that “any man who has anything must participate in public matters.” Knight regarded Hodges as a keen judge of character and ideas, and so he decided to offer his small contribution to the discussion through his more active colleague. He wanted to reign in what he saw as an unnecessary flood of new programs and taxes, what he referred to as an “orgy” of expenditures when he addressed his concerns to the governor a year later. There should be “no new sources of revenue, no increase in the present sources of revenue, opposition to the creation of any new bureaus… abolition of useless offices… consolidation of bureaus… and the cessation of highway construction.” In short, Knight already viewed the state government as being too large and overreaching, with a

37 Peter O. Knight to unknown recipient, September 6, 1932, Knight Scrapbooks, UF
seemingly endless appetite for debt, and it was his opinion that there could be no lasting recovery until that state of affairs was addressed.38

Hodges responded to Knight’s concerns, and while the text of that reply is lost to the dustbin of history, Knight continued the conversation the following month with some clarification of his concerns. “The trouble with this country today,” Knight theorized, “is that the business man has lost all confidence in everything; and he is not going to invest his money in business again until he is let alone and knows that he will be protected by the government, instead of kicked around.” Many of Knight’s positions were common among more affluent Americans during the depression, and if stripped to the core they ultimately amounted to disdain for federal meddling and outright opposition to the New Deal. This second letter to James Hodges also revealed an eternal optimist forced to confront facts that made looking on the bright side incredibly difficult. “All I am trying to do now is protect what little I have left,” Knight confessed as his letter drew to a close. “I have not time to think of anything constructive; it is simply protective. And that is a sad state of affairs.”39

Peter Knight’s newfound pessimism hinted at a far deeper malaise at work in Florida, but amidst chaos there are opportunities to be found. Knight was an aging man by the time the 1930s upended his world, and for the first time in nearly fifty years he was relegated to the role of spectator. Fortunately, there were others who could step in and push Florida forward. In April of 1934, Tampa attorney W.J. Bivens followed in Knight’s footsteps and wrote to Governor David Sholtz on behalf of his city. He desired that the governor write to the president in support of the establishment of “a fleet and aviation reserve for Tampa and other seacoast cities of

38 Peter O. Knight to unknown recipient, September 6, 1932, Knight Scrapbooks, UF; Peter O. Knight to James Hodges, February 13, 1934, Hodges Papers, UF
39 Peter O. Knight to James Hodges, March 23, 1934, Hodges Papers, UF
Florida.” At the time of his writing, both Jacksonville and Miami possessed fleet reserve units as well as communications posts, but the other localities across the state had, at best, small communications units. Those naval reserve units received “weekly drills and summer cruises with pay,” the latter of those two points clearly being the more significant. According to Bivens, Tampa had been lobbying to receive a naval reserve unit for years, with the Board of County Commissioners going so far as to appropriate funds to help maintain the equipment of any such unit. But no action had yet been taken. 40

“The President is proposing the expenditure of one and one-half billions of dollars to build the fleet to full treaty strength,” Bivens continued, clearly sensing opportunity in the then-staggering sum. But that money was meant to prepare the fleet itself, not to finance reserve units that might not be ready should the need arise for them to fight. This was a point Bivens had foreseen. “From a preparedness and economical standpoint I think that we can have more preparedness at less expense through the development and training of a strong naval reserve,” he argued. That might have seemed like self-serving fantasy, but Bivens was prepared to back up his assertion with statistics that he considered to be valid. “The cost of one man in the regular navy, considering his salary, uniforms and subsistence, would easily provide for the equipping and training of from ten to twelve reservists.” He closed his message to the governor more directly than he might have intended: “I cannot see why the Federal Government will spend billions on the regular navy and will not spend a few hundred thousands in establishing fleet reserve units throughout the United States.” 41

Despite his narrow focus on a fleet reserve unit, W.J. Bivens inadvertently touched on another concept that was to occupy the attention of Florida’s power brokers over the coming

40 W.J. Bivens to David Sholtz, April 27, 1934, Series 278, Folder 13, SAF
41 W.J. Bivens to David Sholtz, April 27, 1934, Series 278, Folder 13, SAF
years: the expansion of aviation across the state. In Tampa, this was achieved, ironically, due to a project begun during the height of the previous decade’s boom. The Davis Islands project involved the transformation of two tiny islands at the mouth of the Hillsborough River into larger landmasses by reclaiming territory from the sea via dredging and filling, the ultimate goal being the construction of a lavish resort for the affluent. The grand vision may have fallen short, but the island proved a perfect spot for a new municipal airport. Negotiations between the City of Tampa and Davis Islands, Inc. began in earnest in early 1934, and came to fruition in March. On March 2nd, the corporation agreed to “deed to the city 140 acres comprising the southeastern tip of the islands to be developed into a land and sea airport.” Tampa already possessed two functional landing fields, but neither of them was centrally located and both presented few opportunities for additional development. The new location, “not more than ten minutes’ drive from the center of Tampa,” provided options the others could not, and offered the promise of a “real modern airport.” The resulting facility was christened Peter O. Knight Field.42

In early February of 1935, Colonel John S. Wynne and Paul D. Meyers, both of the U.S. Bureau of Air Commerce, toured the proposed site of Knight Field to determine whether it was worth the investment of federal funds. “The site is ideal from every standpoint and the project is in line for the first allotment available for aviation development in Florida,” concluded Wynne. Colonel Wynne went on to explain that the location, close to downtown Tampa and centrally located on the west coast of the state, made it ideal for the establishment of a significant air base. “Money spent on Knight Field should be well invested,” Wynne continued, adding that “we are interested in… the development of an outstanding air base on the West Coast.” Wynne’s final thoughts centered on the fact that the location was quite sheltered, and could serve as a safe

42 *Tampa Tribune*, March 3, 1934; *Tampa Times*, March 5, 1934
landing site for both air and sea planes, regardless of weather conditions. Of course, the recommendation of the inspection team was only the first step. In order to get Knight Field up and running, money would have to be appropriated for the task. 43

It did not take long for the government in Washington to act on the recommendation that Knight Field be funded. In July, the Daily Times was able to happily report an “allotment of $105,000 by the Works Progress Administration for the development of the Peter O. Knight Airport.” Once it was determined that federal funds would be flowing into the project, “Pan American Airways… accepted an agreement… to establish service as soon as the new air base is usable.” That was no small thing, and when combined with the city’s energetic seaborne trade it promised to turn Tampa into a vibrant commercial hub. Work at the field was commenced on August 7th, when “152 workmen tackled the job of clearing, grading, and constructing a runway.” The district WPA director, J.R. McLeod, predicted that the project would be completed within six months, and would “give steady employment to more than 200 men” for the duration. All of that was welcome news, and Knight Field was not the only project undertaken as the summer of 1935 drifted towards autumn. 44

While Knight Field was potentially the most significant improvement to Tampa during the New Deal, at least three other major projects geared up in August. One of the first public works projects to be authorized was the renewed dredging of the city’s harbor, estimated to employ 300 men for the better part of a year, at a cost of $1,316,101. Further maritime improvements were quick in coming. The Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering Company had been working on a new dry dock facility, but work came to a halt in December of 1934 when

43 Tampa Daily Times, February 13, 1935
funds ran dry. In August, the company’s president, Ernest Kreher, was happy to report that work would resume and “furnish jobs for approximately 400 workers.” The federal allotment for the dry dock totaled $750,000. Lastly, the quarantine station at Tampa saw its allotment raised by $75,000 to a total of $250,000. In addition to the work being financed by federal funding, the American Can Company unveiled plans to construct a new plant, expected to “cost close to $300,000” and “furnish work for several hundred men, besides calling for large expenditures for materials.” All told, the new operations in Tampa were expected to employ roughly 1,000 workers; a small percentage of the total unemployed, to be sure, but significant progress in the face of years of depression.45

A significant portion of the development across Florida during the 1930s was aided by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It was involved in most of the aforementioned projects in Tampa, but also took up the perpetual task of road construction, as well as erecting numerous public buildings. All told, “the WPA constructed more than six thousand miles of highways in the state,” with an estimated 32,000 men across Florida employed on one of the myriad projects. The WPA also employed writers to conduct interviews with common citizens, a project with inestimable historical value. It was through these interviews that recollections of the boom era were saved for posterity, but they also shed light on Florida’s unusual situation with regard to the destitute.46

Across the nation, many of the dispossessed souls whose lives were upended by the Great Depression settled into makeshift shanty towns, called “Hoovervilles”, near large metropolitan areas. In Florida, they had other options. The state’s climate had attracted vagrants for decades,

45 *Tampa Daily Times*, July 27, 1935; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, August 18, 1935
46 Elna Green, *Looking For The New Deal: Florida Women’s Letters During the Great Depression* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007) P. 96
and it is little surprise; why spend a winter outdoors in the north when Florida’s balmy weather beckoned? There was also a significant amount of land which, while owned, was not occupied. Those facts combined to produce a large contingent of squatters, who took up residence in some of the more remote sections of the state and lived a rough existence far from the amenities of the modern world. “None of the squatters seem to know to whom the land belongs,” observed a WPA worker who was tasked with compiling a report on Florida’s peculiar brand of vagrant. There was little sense of community, as most of them “live as remote from each other and other settlements as if they were separated by great distances.” But, while the report was content to suggest a degree uniformity amongst the squatters – all of the men were excellent shots, the houses were in disrepair, cleanliness was not a primary concern - there were actually very distinctive people living in the wild swamplands on southern Florida.47

“We was lucky to find this here place without no rent,” remarked Alice Fairweather to her interviewer. Fairweather was typical of the squatters the report described; poorly educated and lacking any financial resources, she had not objected when her husband moved the family to a rickety old house in the Florida backwoods. “It's quiet out here and we don't have to worry what folks is a thinkin' of us,” she continued. That was a point, possibly the only one, on which there was actually a hint of uniformity amongst the squatter population. They all had a stubborn, independent streak, and none of them seemed particularly enamored with the idea of being looked down on by more well-to-do neighbors. “We like the isolation and the quiet here,” stated Henry Maddox, echoing Alice Fairweather’s sentiment in a slightly more sophisticated tone. Maddox and his wife, Rosa, had both been educated in the north, and only moved to the state because “someone had told them that the Florida sunshine would cure Rosa’s trouble without

47 Report On Squatters, December 1938, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers’ Project Collection
medicine or diet.” While Rosa’s condition was never explicitly defined, the subtle hints in Henry’s comments point to a form of anemia. They had heard rumors of rich farmland (the same sort that lured the doomed souls near Moore Haven a decade earlier) and moved south to make a go of it. That plan fell flat, and they soon found themselves living in a lean-to by a lagoon. But Henry remained upbeat. “We both enjoy this life and the natural surroundings so much we feel that it more than makes up for any little luxuries we might have in town,” he remarked, quickly adding “even if we had plenty of money I think we would continue to live out here.” And that was one final, closing note in Florida’s frontier melody: even in the late 1930s, people in the mold of the old pioneers could still be found, provided one knew where to look.48

It was in the midst of the new press of advertising and the arrival of the WPA that Frank Stockbridge and John Perry decided to revisit their earlier work. In 1937, Stockbridge once more toured the state, and the following year So This Is Florida was published. While Stockbridge (still the principal author) devoted his opening chapter to explaining what, exactly, had gone wrong with the land boom of the previous decade, it was evident that he was more interested in new business. Time was spent updating readers on nearly every community across the peninsula, but the facts were stale, and audiences were less receptive to private publicity works in the wake of the state’s direct involvement with advertising. There was one issue, however, which Stockbridge examined in detail: “a sea-level canal, deep enough and wide enough to permit the passage between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean, of ocean-going ships.”49

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48 Interview with Alice Fairweather, December 21, 1940, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers’ Project Collection; Interview with Henry and Rosa Maddox, November 22, 1938, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, WPA Federal Writers’ Project Collection
49 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, So This Is Florida, P. 190
The proposed cross-state canal was frontier Florida’s last hurrah, envisioned as akin to both the Transcontinental Railroad and the Panama Canal. Discussions of such a project dated back to the 16th century, when Spain desired protection for its commerce in the face of relentless English privateers. Andrew Jackson brought the idea to the attention of the United States, convinced by his time in Florida that such a waterway would provide excellent military benefits. The Army Corps of Engineers finally began surveys in the 1920s, and in 1935 “the canal project was financed with $5,400,000 allocated to it by President Roosevelt from his… emergency relief fund.” However, despite the enthusiastic support of both the Army and Navy, when the initial funding ran dry in early 1936 Congress refused to provide the additional $12,000,000 the expanding project would require. Some were wary of potential environmental damage, fearing that the canal would “permit the infiltration of salt water into the present sources of fresh water.” Others cast a jaundiced eye at the supposed economic benefits such a canal would provide, suggesting they would be so localized that nobody outside of Florida would see any return on the investment; the Eerie Canal this was not. If Floridians wanted their cross-state canal, they would have to pay for it themselves. But while federal spending for a canal was off the table, as war began to spread around the globe a new series of expenditures were in the offing.50

Florida’s return foray into military spending began long before the United States was officially drawn into the war at the close of 1941. Over the course of 1940, the Office of Government Reports compiled a series of expenditure reports that detailed the military preparations being made in Florida by the army, navy, and in some cases the WPA. During the month of July, for example, the Army poured in a significant sum of money to improve nearly every aspect of the MacDill and Eglin Air Fields, for a total expenditure of $1,195,280. But

50 Frank Stockbridge and John Perry, *So This Is Florida*, P. 198
while that was an impressive sum, the reason it bears repeating is that most of the work was contracted out, pouring the money into the various local economies rather than simply having the airmen and their support personnel carry out the tasks. In Miami, the Kiser Drilling Company received a contract to dig a new well at the Miami Airport, and New York-based Aqua Systems had their Florida affiliates install a new fueling system at MacDill Field. During the same time period, the Navy injected a staggering $16,475,519 into the state to improve Naval Air Stations in Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Miami. And while the Army only turned about half of their projects over to civilian contractors, the Navy poured every cent of their expenditures into the pockets of local businesses, the largest allotment going to the Duval Engineering and Contracting Company in Jacksonville. Rounding out the monthly expenses for July 1940 were the commissions for eight new cargo vessels to be constructed at the shipyards in Tampa for another 15 million, all to be constructed by the Tampa Shipbuilding and Engineering Company. All told, nearly 33 million dollars were injected into Florida during a single month in the summer of 1940; wartime largesse was back with a vengeance.  

It was certainly not unusual that Florida received a significant military investment on the eve of the entry of the United States into the global hostilities; in truth, the only surprising part was that there were numerous projects that were denied funding. It had already been discovered during the Great War that Florida possessed a climate that made it ideal for training air crews, and it is understandable that many of the early expenditures went into the various flight training facilities of both the Army and Navy. During 1940, no fewer than thirteen major contracts were undertaken for the improvement of the flight facilities at Jacksonville, with the various projects

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51 National Defense Program report for the State of Florida (undated, late 1940), Series 368, Box 97, SAF (hereafter NDP report); Of the more than 16 million spent by the Navy during this period, the Duval Engineering & Contracting Co. received roughly 12.8 million; NDP report
ranging from something as simple as painting the enlisted men’s quarters to the far more complex task of reworking the gasoline distribution lines to help with the facility’s refueling tasks. During the same timeframe, MacDill Field outside Tampa combined with the city itself to account for another fifteen major contracts, above and beyond the cargo vessel commissions undertaken by the shipyards. Key West was able to secure ten contracts of its own, which no doubt came as a great relief to the locals who had been so melancholy when the Naval Air Station on their island was shuttered after the Great War. But far and away the leader in expenditures was Pensacola and its surrounding posts, who between them managed at least twenty projects. The facilities in and around Tampa, Jacksonville, Pensacola, and Key West were also the ones to thrive after the war’s end; after the amount of money poured in, it was unlikely that the bases would simply be decommissioned.52

It is important to realize that the money the federal government poured into the state was indeed spread around, and to places that many outside of Florida had never heard of. The hamlet of Winter Haven received more than $30,000 for the expansion and improvement of the local National Guard armory; Daytona Beach was granted over $26,000 for a similar task, and Starke accepted nearly $152,000 to construct one from scratch. All told, more than two dozen cities and counties spread across the length and breadth of the state received significant cash infusions over the course of 1940. For many, the funds were rather meagre; Tallahassee’s single allotment of $134,000 from the WPA for improvements to the regional airport, for example, paled in comparison with the tens of millions lavished on the more strategically significant airfields and training facilities on the coasts. But even small injections of funds helped put Florida’s unemployed back to work, and this was still when the United States was at peace, simply

52 Palm Beach Post, June 1, 1940
preparing for what might come. Once the nation was entirely committed to war and serving as the arsenal of democracy, the funds pouring into the state would only increase, as would the numbers of soldiers and trainee airmen with leisure time to kill and pay to “invest” in any number of local diversions.  

The amenities that servicemen found when they arrived in Florida after 1940 were the direct result of almost fifty years of continual development and planning. Residents of the peninsula learned the hard way that there was money to be had during a crisis, but only if they were ready to capitalize on it; they had not been in previous decades. This time, they were ready. No longer were the harbors too shallow to accommodate the Navy; years of agitating for improvements in the annual Rivers & Harbors bills paid off. Infrastructure was finally in place to handle the influx of men and material, leaving the nightmarish rail delays in 1898 and the impossible congestion of the boom era as true relics of the past. Sickness could never be fully conquered, but there were no concerns about servicemen being struck down by malaria any longer. And the banking system, after enduring the crucible of the boom and the depression, was on sound footing; any gains made would not be wiped out by a banking failure. That was the true tale of the closing of the Florida frontier. Floridians had witnessed opportunity after opportunity slip through their fingers because their state was not improved enough to capitalize on their grand visions, and so they set about rectifying that problem. By 1940, they succeeded. Florida was no longer a rough frontier where the ambitions of men could be thwarted by the vagaries of geography and nature, but rather a developed region capable of supporting whatever enterprise man saw fit to establish. The people might be “quaint,” in the terminology of Patricia Limerick, but they were no longer a breed apart. And they had finally obtained the national

53 Miami News, June 2, 1940
recognition they so long desired. “There is more talk about Florida than there is about all other states combined,” remarked Peter O. Knight in an interview he gave in 1935. And for possibly the first time, he was not exaggerating.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{54} Knight Scrapbooks, UF
CONCLUSION:
A LONG ROAD

On Tuesday, November 26th, 1946, Peter O. Knight finally parted company with the state of Florida, succumbing to an illness that plagued him for months. At 80, the eternal optimist and power broker had spent more than sixty years on the peninsula and had witnessed the twilight of its frontier stage firsthand. When war loomed with Spain, Knight took up the concerns of his Spanish neighbors. When productivity followed the war’s end, he made sure Tampa shared in the spoils. Ever the shrewd operator, Knight took a brief sojourn to the land of his fathers during the Great War to secure a significant financial windfall for himself, but he quickly returned to his adopted home in the aftermath, just in time to offer his legal services during Tampa’s brief dalliance with the Red Scare. He watched as land prices soared, and was just as startled as his contemporaries when, like Icarus, they climbed too high and fell to earth with a deafening thud. And, in the wake of financial ruin, he offered words of caution to overwrought statesmen while attempting to stabilize his own fortunes. It must have seemed strange, on November 27th, for Florida to move on without the man who had “been a behind-the-scenes power in Tampa, Hillsborough County, and state politics for decades.” But while Peter O. Knight’s story was done, Florida’s was only just beginning; he would have liked that.1

By 1946, America was ascendant. The misery of the Depression and the horrors of the Second World War had both been overcome, and for the first time in nearly twenty years the

1 St. Petersburg Times, November 27, 1946
people of Florida faced the future with the unbridled optimism that had, for a time, existed only in the dreams of men like Knight. Here, at the midpoint of the twentieth century, was a new beginning that would see Florida advance at a staggering pace into a place of prominence rivalling even California and New York. And, consequently, it was here that most historical inquiries opened. But the events that transformed Florida from a distant frontier to a state on the rise, though largely unheralded, merit attention.

It took a hardy breed to settle the wild peninsula, and even into the 20th century there were spots on the map that were simply branded as “the Everglades.” That may not quite have reached the realm of “here there be dragons,” but it was as close as any location in the continental United States was ever likely to get. Frederick Jackson Turner may have considered the frontier closed in 1890, but what he failed to see was that it had simply relocated. If the frontier was more than a geographic spot, if there was an intellectual component involved, then surely it lived on in the hopes, dreams, and schemes of the men and women who dared tame the land to the south of the South. “Most of them wanted to be rich,” recalled Marjory Stoneman Douglas decades later, and they often “refused to believe that there was anything for them to learn, a belief common to the American frontier.” They were self-assured, and certain that they could make a fortune in the strange, distant land called Florida, a place still possessed of Indians, cattlemen, and desperados. The removal of that mystery and the delusional hope that it instilled was what truly signaled the end of the frontier.¹

In 1900, Florida could claim barely more than 500,000 people across the entirety of the peninsula; in 1940, the figure reached just under two million. This, too, suggested a frontier region slowly coming into its own. The first wave of settlement to any region is naturally

¹ Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Florida: The Long Frontier, P. 11
smaller than what follows, and those settlers prepare the land they have occupied so that those
who follow have an easier time of it. This was even mirrored in the way Florida’s land was
ultimately divided, with large tracts initially purchased, then improved with roads and amenities
to entice those who wanted a change of venue, but not necessarily a loss of all the comforts they
might have grown accustomed to at home. The endless obsession with improved infrastructure
follows this pattern as well, and the better the roads and railways got, the more settlers arrived.
It was not always exciting work, and seldom glamorous, but it was essential to prepare the way
for the future. And it was work that required a steady hand and a deep reserve of will.

Part of the reason the vanguard of Florida’s future were able to tame the peninsula was
the tireless work of Joseph Porter. Though largely unknown, Dr. Porter’s work over the course
of nearly twenty years helped break the deadly grip of malaria, finally making it feasible for
large numbers of tourists to visit the state without fear of an untimely death. And that beneficial
change also opened a new, unexpected avenue for advertisers and boosters. Suddenly, the health
benefits of Florida’s climate could be discussed and touted without the scourge of disease
undermining the effort. That made possible the future efforts of men like Basil Eaves, and the
realization that Florida could be visited year-round, not simply during the winter months, made
advertising a viable enterprise. The end of Florida’s association with malaria and yellow fever
also marked another step towards the end of its frontier period, removing a deadly mystery that
made the peninsula seem a place apart.

There were occasional unexpected windfalls, notably the Great War during the century’s
second decade, which accelerated the pace of change. And while Peter Knight was busy filling
his coffers in a Pennsylvania shipyard, many of his compatriots set their sights on Florida itself,
attracting new tourists cut off by wartime travel restrictions. This could be called the birth of
Florida’s advertising efforts, and, with the help of boards of trade all across the state, a torrent of pamphlets and private travel accounts inundated the public with new “facts” about the region. As had been the case during the Spanish-American War, there was an influx of defense dollars which temporarily rejuvenated stagnant locales like Key West and Pensacola while also contributing to the continued development of the more stable cities like Tampa and Miami. Flight training centers sprang up, allowing men like Harold Jobes to patrol the coastal waters off the Keys, while simultaneously laying the groundwork for further growth by exposing young men to a tropical paradise they had heretofore only heard of tangentially. There was a darker side, of course, exemplified by the energetic suspicion of anyone who might have had the slightest sympathies for the enemy, though that was hardly a phenomenon unique to Florida. This led to arrests which provide humorous anecdotes a century removed, but were deadly serious in their proper context. Matters only grew worse with the arrival of the Red Scare in 1919, and Peter Knight naturally found himself embroiled in the struggle; Knight’s proclivities saw him acting as attorney for management during several strikes. But while the decade closed in turmoil, it paved the way for the next phase of the state’s journey, this time into a frenzy of investment that was to mark the crescendo of frontier Florida.

Florida’s land boom can be regarded as a reaction on the part of canny New York real estate speculators to the realization that the peninsula was no longer a distant wilderness, but a garden awaiting development. And in the first two years of the boom, from 1923-25, investments were arguably sound. But the band played on even as the situation on the ground was transformed, and what had begun as a wise investment turned into a nightmarish pyramid scheme that could only ever end in disaster. People sank ridiculous amounts of money into land on the assumption that they could turn around and sell it again mere days, or even hours, later.
That attitude is the same, though distant in time and place, as that which motivated men to drop whatever they were doing and head for California in 1849; Florida finally had its Gold Rush. Men like Addison Mizner made matters worse by pressing forward with grand schemes when it should already have been evident that the opportune time to invest was long past, and figures like D.P. Davis, of the Davis Islands project in Tampa, lost everything when the long con that was Florida real estate finally came to a close. When the music stopped and it was time to settle debts, vast paper fortunes evaporated overnight. But it was not until two devastating hurricanes, in 1926 and 1928, laid waste to much of south Florida that the boom came to an end. And with it, any claim Florida might have had to being a frontier. The people of the day compared their tragedy to those suffered by Chicago and San Francisco, and reassured each other that better times lay ahead. But the image of Florida as a land full of adventure and easy money was dead, never to be resurrected.

In the wake of calamity the state doubled down on tourism as a balm for its ailments, finally enlisting modern techniques to lure in dollars and residents. It was here that the new, healthful image of Florida took hold, with state-funded advertising campaigns eager to inform Americans that they were far less likely to die of pneumonia if only they would spend the month of March on a sunny white beach. With the mystery of Florida gone, it was time to massage the facts and place the best foot forward. As the state government looked for outside dollars, small towns like Tarpon Springs turned inward, rallying around their local banking institutions in an effort to stave off failures. But nobody expected the depth of the Great Depression, and Florida, no longer distinct from her sister states, was forced to endure the pain. Even those banks that were able to cheat the hangman for a few precious years eventually succumbed to their inevitable fates. Worse still, even perpetually upbeat men like Peter Knight were unable to maintain a
cheerful disposition in the face of national turmoil. They still hoped for the best, but with each passing month that task grew harder.

Prosperity was slow in coming. The advent of the New Deal and the arrival of the WPA gave the state its first glimmer of hope in years. In Tampa, Knight Field instilled a new purpose in the Davis Islands project, and dozens of failed real estate ventures across the length of the peninsula were reborn as civil aviation landing strips. Harbors in Tampa, Miami, Pensacola, and elsewhere along the coast were dredged, either as a simple process of maintenance or an endeavor to deepen them for future use by larger vessels. Pan American established the largest seaplane hub in the western world, and Miami began to take on a hint of Latin seasoning which never truly departed. And all the while, the roads continued to expand and improve, clawing useful territory from fetid swamps and opening up arteries that would one day provide significant transportation benefits. The WPA also recorded the experiences of numerous men and women whose voices would otherwise have been lost in the echoes of history, ensuring that the stories of average Floridians endured. But the state still languished in economic purgatory, its old methods for gaining revenue undone by the recklessness of the 1920s, and its future not yet visible.

The true windfall for Florida did not begin until the eve of the Second World War, when defense spending nationwide was ramped up to a fever pitch. Florida, already known for its excellent aviation conditions, saw the birth of numerous new training stations for airmen, as well as the standard coastal defensive preparations that might be employed on any strategically important seashore. Hundreds of millions of dollars poured in, month after month, along with tens of thousands of laborers and servicemen, all of whom left cash in their wake. There was scarcely a corner of the state that did not receive some measure of defense investment, with more than 150 installations being built before the conflict ceased in 1945. It was a shocking
turnaround for a state that, only a decade earlier, had desperately cast about for something, anything, to restore its flagging fortunes. And when the dust settled and peace once more held sway across the western world, Florida stood firm, holding onto the gains made over the preceding five years.

Florida’s story is complex, from its earliest days as a bastion of the Spanish Empire to a 19th century enclave for unbowed natives, and eventually the land conquered by Walt Disney. There is no doubt that a new era began when the Second World War transformed the state, and that cast a long shadow over the preceding chapter. That tale was one of hope, greed, foolishness, deceit, violence, and occasionally humor; but whatever else that prologue to prosperity might have been, it was not irrelevant. Peter Knight saw the truth almost from the very first moment he set foot in the state that was to dominate his life for the next sixty years: there was nearly limitless potential in the vast landscape, unburdened as it was by the complications of a long, industrial history. Scars that plagued much of the South left very faint marks on the peninsula, allowing it to move forward with less entrenched opposition to progress, though such elements certainly did exist. And a climate nearly unique in the continental United States afforded options that were simply unavailable in a place like Alabama or Mississippi, close though they might be.

None of that would have mattered if the people of Florida had not consciously, and continually, dragged their state towards modernity. When troops arrived in 1898, they found cramped accommodations, rampant disease, substandard (or non-existent) infrastructure, and a wilderness that offered few diversions if one dared to leave the relative comfort of one of the miniscule cities that lay scattered around the endless primordial swamps. When their grandchildren arrived forty years later, they encountered a new state. Decades of building
provided a much more comfortable atmosphere. Disease had been tamed, even if eradication was not ultimately possible given the methods of the day. Roads and rail lines offered quick, safe, transportation anywhere in the state. And all the amenities they had grown accustomed to elsewhere in the nation had arrived in Florida ahead of them, supplementing a carefully crafted landscape of palm trees and pristine, white sand. The soldiers of 1898 had been asked to build on a foundation of mud; the engineers of 1940 were offered a solid, graded concrete slab for their projects. “Florida, so old in romance and chronicle, and yet so young in the swirl of trade and industry,” had finally arrived in the light of a new day. That was the legacy of men like Peter O. Knight, who never allowed their neighbors to give up, and ultimately paved the way to paradise.²

² John Lansley, *Jacksonville: City With A Skyline*, P. 6
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