Independence, New Challenges, and New Opportunities [1912-1921]

James Anthony Schnur

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.usfsp.edu/fac_publications

Recommended Citation

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarly Works at Digital USFSP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital USFSP.
“Independence, New Challenges, and New Opportunities”

Remarks Delivered at the Second “Pinellas by the Decades” Program
Pinellas Room, Heritage Village
9 October 2011, 2:00 p.m.
by
James Anthony Schnur
Past President, Pinellas County Historical Society
Associate University Librarian, Poynter Library, USF St. Petersburg

Welcome to the second program of “Pinellas by the Decades,” a series of lectures and conversations sponsored by the Pinellas County Historical Society at Heritage Village to commemorate the centennial of our independence from Hillsborough County on January 1, 1912. From now through mid-2012, we will cover the historic landscape of the Pinellas Peninsula by remembering important events and discussing how these events shaped our history and present-day reality.

The focus of today’s lecture is to examine the period from 1912 through 1921. On September 11, we covered a seventy-year period from the Armed Occupation Act of 1842 through the battle for political autonomy. As we will discover during the next forty-five minutes, gaining home rule and sovereignty did not solve all problems. Indeed, before the sand had a chance to settle along the shoreline, the 15,000 or so residents of the peninsula that once viewed politicians on the other side of Tampa Bay as the antagonists began to channel their animosity at their neighbors across a narrow dirt path that later became Ulmerton Road. New battles between north and south county over the seat of government, the plans for infrastructure, and the distribution of resources punctuated the 1910s. Sound familiar? There were events that evoked solidarity, such as the way residents throughout Pinellas supported efforts during the Great War—now known as World War I—and after a devastating October 1921 shocked the settlements along the coast. So, let’s talk about some fireworks and storms before the population explosion and land boom of the 1920s had reached its potential.

First, a brief review of the movement to gain autonomy. Although discussion of legislation to separate Pinellas from Hillsborough happened as early as the 1880s, the movement took on greater urgency by 1907. On February 23 of that year, W.L. Straub, the editor of the St. Petersburg Times, printed an appeal known as the “Pinellas Declaration of Independence” in his paper. He argued that the cost of creating the new county was inconsequential and offered greater returns than we could ever expect from remaining under the authority of the Hillsborough County commission and Tampa-based politicians. That spring, Rep. W.W.K. Decker of Tarpon Springs brought a “division bill” to the Florida House of Representatives. It failed, as did similar measures in 1908 and 1909.

As was mentioned at the first lecture, a 1910 bridge project fueled the independence movement. Members of the Hillsborough Board of County Commissioners had awarded a contract for a bridge across Long Bayou/Cross Bayou. Known as the "Johns Pass" bridge at the time because it connected western St. Petersburg with the Seminole/Largo area at a point near the old Johns Pass settlement in present-day War Veteran’s Memorial Park, this is the site of the present-day bridge at Bay Pines. As plans for the bridge took shape, W.L. Straub and other local officials lobbied the 1911 legislature to pass a bill creating Pinellas County. The bill won approval in May 1911, with Governor A. W. Gilchrist
signing it. All that was needed was approval of those in the area that would be eligible for separation during a November 14 referendum. Here’s where that rickety bridge at Cross Bayou came into play ...

Finished during the summer of 1911, the bridge collapsed shortly after it opened when a man and his team of mules reached the midpoint and the structure toppled under the weight of the animals due to poor construction. Angry residents of the Pinellas Peninsula, then a part of western Hillsborough County, demanded answers from the distant county seat in Tampa. They viewed this poorly constructed bridge as the latest of many slaps in their face and punched their ballots in favor of the creation of a separate county. Pinellas County came into existence on January 1, 1912 as the forty-eighth county. We presently have sixty-seven counties.

On January 12, Straub’s St. Petersburg Times became a daily newspaper, and it was a good thing: With the creation of the new county, there was plenty of news for his reporters to cover. Much of it focused on political battles within the new county. With the majority of county commissioners representing the interests of upper Pinellas, a battle took shape over the location of the county seat. Citizens of St. Petersburg expected the largest municipality to serve as the seat of government, but the majority of the five commissioners had other plans. According to one story passed along by historian W. Lovett Douglas from his conversations with former Clearwater Mayor Pierce, when the two St. Petersburg-based commissioners filed a mandamus to demand that residents vote on the site of the county seat, the three north county commissioners chartered a boat and went fishing beyond the twelve-mile limit until the mandamus expired. Although the bill that created Pinellas County specified that Clearwater would serve as the county seat, something even Straub agreed with in his 1907 Pinellas declaration, some St. Petersburg leaders considered that to be only a temporary designation.

The Board of County Commissioners, voting three to two, awarded Tampa’s E. W. Parker a $3,750 contract to construct a wood frame, two-story courthouse on a lot given by the City of Clearwater. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to guess how the two St. Petersburg commissioners voted! Constructed with volunteer labor, the structure was guarded by day and by torchlight at night by armed guards since some rumors circulated that a contingent from the Sunshine City planned to come to the site under cover of darkness and lighten the skyline by burning the structure to the ground before its completion. The structure helped to solidify Clearwater’s case as the county seat because of a Florida law that prohibited a public referendum on the location of a county seat for a period of twenty years after a courthouse was constructed.

Schools were early priorities. At the time of its creation, Pinellas had just over twenty schools with an enrollment of 3,263 pupils (2,741 white, 522 non-white). Eighty-nine teachers (77 white, 12 non-white) conducted classes, and the operating budget was $114,294.86. Dixie M. Hollins, who came to Florida in 1908 after graduating from the State Normal School at Bowling Green (Kentucky), was appointed by Gov. Gilchrist as the first School Superintendent of Pinellas County. From 1908 through the creation of Pinellas, he had served as principal of the schools in the Clearwater section. As an educator, he oversaw thirty-five successful bond issues to expand school facilities.
Notable events in the first year of Pinellas County’s sovereignty included the construction of the **Tarpon Inn** downtown Tarpon, near Spring Bayou. The structure claimed to have telephones in each of its 100 rooms, as well as steam heat, making it a signature destination near the Anclote. The hotel was totally destroyed in a 4 March 1927 fire. In September 1912, Clearwater residents approved a bond issue to improve roads. **Paul Poynter**, a publisher of newspapers in Indiana, visited St. Petersburg. Within forty-eight hours of his arrival, he acquired the **St. Petersburg Times** from **W. L. Straub** and created the **Times Publishing Company** with Poynter as president and Straub staying on as vice-president. **Richard Maurice Meares**, son of **Richard Turtle Meares**, established the **Indian Rocks Nurseries** on the mainland along Indian Rocks Road at Anona. Another waterfront development took shape south of downtown St. Petersburg when the **Bayboro subdivision**, an area of .28 square miles, was added to the original two-square mile plat of the city **as the first St. Petersburg subdivision added to the original plat**. In March 1913, St. Petersburg’s city council approved the Bayboro Harbor location as the **site for a deepwater port** to serve the city. By late May 1913, the Secretary of War approved plans to develop the Bayboro Harbor site, with a full-scale dredging project to deepen Salt Creek in the southern area of Bayboro Harbor beginning in the fall of 1913. The hope was for a deep water port to serve a growing city, and the city was growing: By 1915, the city had expanded to 8.60 square miles, and encompassed 53.22 square miles by 1929.

Development also took place south of St. Petersburg’s downtown. **Charles M. Roser** launched his Roser Park subdivision along **Booker Creek**, encouraging further residential and commercial development in the Bayboro area. Meanwhile, **Frank Roberts Kennedy** began an aggressive marketing campaign for lands he owned in the **Big Bayou** area. He sold these lands as part of the **Grand View Park subdivision** that existed between Big Bayou and Lake Maggiore. He encouraged the creation of a trolley line to the area. Known as the **St. Petersburg and Gulf Railway**, this system opened its **“Jungle Line”** along **Central Avenue** westward to **Disston Avenue (Forty-ninth Street)** on April 20, reaching **Sixtieth Street** by April 27. The line reached its terminus at the Jungle area near Boca Ciega Bay by December 1913.

Across Boca Ciega Bay, St. Petersburg developer **H. Walter Fuller purchased much of Treasure Island for $800** in 1913. He created a development company and issued shares to investors. Although World War I slowed progress, one of the investors, **Albert B. Archibald**, bought a controlling interest in the stock for lands along both sides of Johns Pass that became part of his Madeira Holding Company. Development continued to lag during the early part of the land boom due to limited transportation (no bridges between the islands of Johns Pass and the mainland), lack of potable water, and the omnipresent mosquitoes.

In February 1914, St. Petersburg developer **Noel A. Mitchell and his associates acquired lands north of Johns Pass from George Roberts**. Mitchell, often known as the "Sand Man," developed plans for a community named "**Mitchell Beach."** Mitchell sent crews by boat to develop infrastructure (such as sidewalks), built a hotel on the shore of what was then called **Olive Island**, and hired a "fine chef" with expertise in cooking seafood to serve meals to prospective residents and investors. Cottages soon followed. In what may have been a publicity stunt, a wealthy sponge diver from Tarpon Springs, Nicholas
Corfias, “discovered” sponges along Mitchell Beach in mid-March 1914 and proclaimed that there may be excellent sponge beds a short distance into the Gulf. While sponges did occasionally wash up along many Pinellas beaches, the timing of this announcement shortly after Mitchell began development is suspect. By April, he talked about the possibility of connecting the north end of Johns Pass directly to St. Petersburg by constructing a bridge from the Jungle area to Mitchell Beach. A year later, in 1915, Mitchell began to run provocative ads to encourage settlers to his empty and sandy shores. One began with the statement: "UNDRESS in your own cottage right on the finest beach in the world and avoid the discomfort and publicity of a public bath house...." Lots on Mitchell Beach ranged from $150 to $750 in 1915, with terms of $10/down and $5/month.

Business enterprises and support organizations appeared throughout the county. At a November 1913 meeting in Clearwater, the Pinellas County Board of Trade officially organized. W.L. Straub served as the first president, with wide representation. This group met throughout the county and soon had 1,000 members who lobbied for the creation of a county road network. Clearwater’s Board of Trade also came into existence in 1913, with Walter Fuller serving as the first president.

The growing population required improved medical facilities. On May 2, 1913, Augusta Memorial Hospital, the first public hospital in Pinellas County, opened in the Mound Park area. City leaders and various state tourist societies furnished rooms in the hospital, with E. H. Tomlinson providing items for the operating room. The city council selected the name "Augusta Memorial" on 13 February 1913 in honor of E. H. Tomlinson’s mother, Augusta. Before the end of the year, Charles M. Roser and his wife raised funds to build a new nurses’ home on the site of the former cottage that had previously served as the Samaritan Hospital in 1910. The former Samaritan was moved from the site and used as a hospital facility for African Americans until something more permanent could be built. The nurses’ home opened in February 1914. In 1916, Tomlinson requested a change in the name of the hospital from Augusta Memorial to City Hospital. Later known as Mound Park Hospital, this facility is presently known as Bayfront Medical Center. In March 1914, Morton F. Plant, son of Henry Bradley Plant, set aside an endowment of $100,000 to establish a hospital for Clearwater when the community contributed at least $20,000 to this endeavor. The Morton Plant Hospital opened in 1915 with twenty-one beds.

Political entities changed structure, changed names, appeared, and disappeared. On July 1, 1913, Largo and St. Petersburg both began to operate with a city commission form of government. In 1914, residents of the Ozona area approved the incorporation of their settlement as a town. Three years later, in 1917, they had a change of heart and voted to abolish the town. Another town changed its name. Green Springs, a settlement formerly known as Espiritu Santo, had been renamed earlier after a Dr. Green that had suffered from paralysis imbibed the spring water at this site and was seemingly cured. To avoid confusion with Green Cove Springs in Clay County, local officials changed the municipality’s name from Green Springs to Safety Harbor in 1917. As evidence of regionalism between northern and southern Pinellas County and eastern and western Pasco County, in January 1917, business interests in and around Tarpon Springs proposed the creation of a new county named in honor of President Woodrow Wilson. The bill submitted to the 1919 legislature did not gain approval, but demonstrated growing
tensions within both Pinellas and Pasco that remain to this day. The outline of "Wilson County" would have included lands north of Dunedin and lands in western Pasco, including the communities of Sutherland, Wall Springs, Crystal Beach, Ozona, Odessa, Tarpon Springs (the proposed county seat), New Port Richey, Elfers, Hudson, Seven Springs, and Anclote.

If there was something that had the potential of bringing people together, it was baseball. Despite the current ongoing discussions about the Tampa Bay Rays and the location of the stadium, excitement gripped both sides of Tampa Bay in the spring of 1914. On March 26, an exhibition game marking the beginning of the Grapefruit League took place at Plant Field in Tampa (next to the Tampa Bay Hotel—now the University of Tampa), that pitted the Chicago Cubs (a team that trained in Tampa beginning in 1913) against the St. Louis Browns (now the Baltimore Orioles, a team that trained in St. Petersburg in 1914). The Cubs’ 3-2 victory over the Browns represented the first baseball contest between two major league franchises that took place in the Tampa Bay region.

More matches took place in Pinellas County. Thanks to the efforts of Pennsylvania transplant Al Lang, baseball came to Coffee Pot Park at Coffee Pot Bayou, just north of St. Petersburg’s city limits at that time. This was the home to the St. Louis Browns during their 1914 season under Branch Rickey, who was a player, a manager, and the general manager of the Browns that year. The park also accommodated the Philadelphia Phillies from 1915 through 1918 and the Boston Braves (a team that later moved to Milwaukee and then Atlanta).

Another historic event linked communities of the greater Tampa Bay region. On January 1, 1914, the first regularly scheduled commercial airline service commenced when pilot Tony Jannus between St. Petersburg, near the approach to the Pier, and downtown Tampa. Although the contract was for three months, service continued into May, five weeks after the contract had ended. The first passenger to join Jannus on his flight across the bay was Abraham C. Pheil, a former mayor of St. Petersburg. By May 1914, Pheil focused his interests on water rather than land or air as his crews spent much of the rest of the year dredging a deep water channel at Bayboro Harbor for commercial shipping interests.

Travel by air and shipping by water brought mail and supplies to residents who clamored for better road, both rail and paved. Regular passenger service began between Clearwater and Tampa in mid-April 1914 on the second railroad to arrive on the Pinellas Peninsula, the Tampa and Gulf Coast Railway. Tracks were established south of Clearwater towards Largo, Seminole, the Bay Pines area, and ultimately St. Petersburg. Between the area near A Street in southern Clearwater and downtown St. Petersburg near Tropicana Field, the former site of this railroad is now the southern part of the Pinellas Trail. In June, 1914, service between Largo and Tampa on the Tampa and Gulf Coast Railway began. Workers had also started to lay the roadbed for the rails south towards Long Bayou and into St. Petersburg. By the end of 1914, a spur of the Tampa and Gulf Coast ran across citrus groves and the intracoastal waterway from Largo towards Anona and Indian Rocks Beach. This spur reached the site of present-day Kolb Park. Soon thereafter, residents of Tampa began to visit Indian Rocks in growing numbers and the community became a popular recreational destination. In December of that year, Max
Friedlander opened the first post office for Indian Rocks under an oak tree. Within a few years, some Tampa families had constructed impressive "summer homes" near 5th Avenue (Walsingham Road). This influx of Tampa residents increased interest in the area during the 1910s. Brandon's Pavilion, a popular gathering place on the beach side near where the first bridge to Indian Rocks would be built in 1916, took shape on the sparsely settled coastline. For many visitors, this structure offered a convenient place to change into their swimsuits.

Service between St. Petersburg and Tampa on the Tampa and Gulf Coast Railway began in September 1914 as workers finished the last stretch of the forty-four mile railroad. The first depot for this railroad sat near the intersection of Dr. Martin Luther King (Ninth) Street and Second Avenue South, near the old Webb’s City site. A new depot opened at 34th Street and Fairfield Avenue South in 1959.

On May 22, 1914, the second Seminole Bridge opened along Long Bayou. It replaced the original structure, built in 1910-1911, that collapsed shortly after it opened. Although waters along the bayou rarely exceeded five feet in depth, storms occasionally caused tides and high waves. On September 11, 1919, stormy conditions and tides led to the destruction of a 600-foot segment of the bridge. The damaged section then pressed along the railroad bridge just to the north (where the Pinellas Trail cuts across Long Bayou today), before workers removed it to prevent additional damage.

Vehicular bridges also connected the mainland to the beaches for the first time. On November 16, 1915, after voters approved a $715,000 bond issue, county workers paved the first county roadway, the street known to this day as County Road 1, in the Dunedin area. One year later, the opening of the first automobile bridge to Indian Rocks on Thanksgiving Day spurred development along Sand Key, Anona, and Largo. Erected and managed by members of the McMullen and Hardage families, the bridge required a toll of fifteen cents for cars and a quarter for trucks and connected with the beach at 113th Avenue North on the mainland side. A Largo school band played at the opening ceremonies. In between these events, the Clearwater Island Bridge Company built the first bridge between Clearwater and Clearwater Beach. A wooden structure with a toll booth on the east end, this early causeway connected the mainland to the beach at Seminole Street.

William D. "Bill" McAdoo opened the first bridge linking western St. Petersburg at Pasadena with the Gulf Beaches in February 1919. The wooden toll bridge ran from 87th Avenue on the beachside northeast to meet Villa Grande Avenue on the mainland. Known as the McAdoo Bridge, this structure with a swinging draw for boat traffic required a twenty-five cent tool to cross from the mainland to the beach. On the beach side, the area of northern St. Pete Beach was under development by McAdoo. Bridge operators levied a one-quarter toll on vehicles as they headed to the beach. The return trip was toll-free, but the bridge tender usually closed the span to vehicular traffic by swinging it open for boats by 9 p.m., leaving those on the beach after that time stranded for the night. Former St. Petersburg Mayor Frank Fortune Pulver purchased the structure in May 1920 and had it renamed Pulver Bridge.
Road projects connected communities across the county. On March 15, 1915, the **West Central area** opened to vehicular traffic as pavers completed a missing link of **Central Avenue** from **Booker Creek to Sixteenth Street**, just north of Tropicana Field. With this link finished, Central Avenue offered a continuous, paved roadway from Tampa Bay to **Disston Avenue (49th Street)**. By late 1916, the opening of a new brick road between Seminole and Largo **extended plans for an uninterrupted improved brick roadway between St. Petersburg and Largo**. A project to grade the roadway from Davista in western St. Petersburg (along present-day Park Street) towards the Seminole Bridge across Long Bayou began in August, about the same time that workers finished a four-mile segment between Largo and Seminole along Missouri Avenue, now Seminole Boulevard. These enhancements promoted agricultural and truck farming in Seminole and Largo, and would fuel the real estate boom of the 1920s.

Speaking of vehicular traffic, **Ransom E. Olds**, an automobile manufacturer famous for the “Oldsmobile” line of General Motors who lived in Lansing, Michigan, at the time, took possession of approximately 37,500 acres in both Pinellas and Hillsborough counties along Old Tampa Bay. He started the settlement at Oldsmar and established the **Olds Farm Tractor Factory**, attracting more than 1,000 other residents from Lansing to the new development at the eastern boundary of Pinellas County. **Harry E. Prettyman** became the public face of the development during the 1920s, a time when some boosters promoted Oldsmar as “The Wonder Town of Pinellas.” The settlement fell upon hard times, the factory closed, and other investors took possession of the site by 1925 when it became **Tampa Shores**. More about failed real estate developments as the boom went bust in the 1920s during our lecture; we will save that news for later.

Communities in central and northern Pinellas had access to hometown newspapers. The **Largo Sentinel** began publishing in 1912. **Willis B. Powell** founded the **Clearwater Sun** on May 1, 1914. Powell had previously founded the **St. Petersburg Independent** in 1906. In 1915, **A.G. Waldron** launched **Tropical Breeze**, the **first newspaper in Safety Harbor**. After printing issues for about a year, Waldron stopped running the paper. Soon, the local chamber of commerce and members of the small town with a population of about 200 encouraged **A.E. Shower** to publish the **Safety Harbor Herald**. The **Herald** appeared in June 1916. Another newspaper appeared in lower Pinellas in December 1920 when the **first issue of The Tourist News**, a magazine created for those visiting the Sunshine City, was launched. During the early 1920s, the **Tourist News** became a weekly during the high tourist season of the winter months and a monthly during the slower summer months.

With few structures on the beach—and no timeshare or condos anywhere—where did these tourists stay? In 1914, the **Hotel Frances** opened for business in Safety Harbor’s Main Street. In January 1915, **Whiteford Smith “W.S. ” Harrell** built and opened the **first hotel along what is now Treasure Island**. Harrell named his three-story, twenty-two room hotel, “Coney Island.” It sat along the bay at 100th Avenue, just a couple of blocks north of where Gulf Boulevard, a path he had named Surf Avenue, curves into Blind Pass Road. By this time, **George Roberts** had already erected a small hotel on the north side of Johns Pass at Mitchell Beach that became the **first hotel between Johns Pass and Indian Pass**, a gulf inlet that once existed near the present-day boundary of Redington Shores and Indian Shores.
Rates at Harrell's hotel in April 1915 were $1.50/day, $8.00/week, with meals, his famous "shore dinners" of seafood, for 35 cents each. By the fall of 1915, Harrell had secured dredges from A. C. Phell of St. Petersburg to expand his holdings at Coney Island. On July 8, 1915, J.C. Garner, a transplant from Tampa, remodeled and improved the Mitchell Beach hotel on the north end of Johns Pass. With no bridges connecting the settlement to the Pinellas mainland, hourly boat line service between Johns Pass and the Jungle area was available most days for twenty cents per roundtrip. During its early years, Mitchell Beach—now the southern tip of Madeira Beach—was heavily marketed as a recreation destination for residents of Tampa. In 1917, the Clearwater Beach Hotel was constructed on what was a largely uninhabited island.

Agriculture remained a vital part of the Pinellas economic engine. Charles S. Fugazzi and John F. Fugazzi, natives of Cincinnati, started the Fugazzi Packing House in 1914 to box and ship fruit from the 200 acres they owned in the area, as well as fruit grown by others in the Clearwater area. They had worked together with John S. Taylor and other nearby growers to establish the Peninsula Packing Company. South of their holdings, residents near Lake Largo decided that this 500-acre freshwater lake that once existed between the site of Largo Central Park, Starkey Road, and south towards Ulmerton Road should be drained and repurposed as a site for truck farming. In late 1915, local authorities began to sell bonds to fund the Lake Largo-Cross Bayou Drainage Project. Through a network of drainage basins, canals, and other land modifications, engineers planned to drain much of the lake and convert the rich soil and muck into cropland. Many canals also offered flood control for residential areas. In June 1917, Jesse Ancil Walsingham became president of the newly formed Largo Truck Growers' Organization, an important agricultural partnership in central Pinellas.

Agricultural endeavors flourished north of the St. Petersburg city limits. F. A. Davis and other Pinellas developers who came from Philadelphia to St. Petersburg had acquired approximately 10,000 acres of land in central Pinellas, near the railroad, as part of a partnership known as the Florida Association at Pinellas Park Farms in late 1909. Before the new year, they had sold nearly 1,500 acres and finalized plans to build a model house and farm in an area known as the "Pinellas Farms" colony. They hoped to develop a small town, railroad depot, and post office for a settlement that they planned to call Pinellas Park on "some of the finest muck land in this section." Many of the prospective buyers came from cities in Pennsylvania, including Pittsburgh and Altoona. The small settlement took shape during the 1910s near where Park Boulevard meets the railroad tracks.

The success of farmers in central Pinellas, as well as St. Petersburg, Lealman, Pinellas Park, and north county, encouraged women to nudge their husbands to promote these successful endeavors on a larger stage. In late January 1917, about the same time of the month that our Historical Society holds its annual Folk Fest at Heritage Village, the Woman's Club of Largo presented the first Pinellas County Fair. Held at Largo's town hall and the adjacent Ulmer Park, the fair grew out of plans started a year earlier at the home of Mary Edget and under the leadership of Marcia Tritt, the club president. Although the fair lacked initial support from many men in the community, the success of the initial fair encouraged some
Largo-area leaders to offer their support. These men included Dr. Bob McMullen, Jesse Ancil Walsingham, John S. Taylor, and Marion Wheeler Ulmer, W.A. Allen. They organized the Pinellas County Fair Association and Walsingham served as president until 1925, when the board of county commissioners assumed control of the fair.

Although denied the right to vote in elections before the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified in 1920, women shaped the cultural and civic landscape. In St. Petersburg, the Carreno Club was established on 6 February 1913 promote the "musical, literary, and social culture of its members." This became the city's first notable fine arts organization. A day later, Mrs. Benjamin A. Greene, a recent St. Petersburg transplant, organized the fourteen charter members of what became the St. Petersburg Woman's Club. She served as the first president. They held their early meetings in churches downtown. By 1920, the organization had 250 members. Membership continued to grow during the 1920s. By the end of the decade, in February 1929, clubwomen agreed to C. Perry Snell's offer to provide a site on Snell Isle as the location of their new club building, a structure still adorning the entry to Snell Isle. The Woman's Club of Clearwater officially organized in June 1914. In October 1916, even before the Nineteenth Amendment took force, Clearwater became one of the first places to permit women to vote in elections when residents approved a $10,000 bond issue for the construction of a bridge across Clearwater Bay. Sue Barco became the first woman to submit her ballot in this election.

The first official meeting of the Pinellas County Federation of Women's Clubs occurred at a November 1917 gathering in St. Petersburg. By February 1918, the Federation included thirteen clubs and town improvement associations in the county. Agendas during the first years of the Federation focused on suffrage and prohibition. Women also lobbied successfully to get a compulsory education law approved locally long before such a provision became part of the Florida statutes. After meeting with county commissioners in June 1918, members of the Pinellas County Federation of Women's Clubs celebrated the beginning of a county nursing system financed by the Federation to serve both white and non-white residents.

As Pinellas reached its fifth birthday, any last ditch effort to challenge the location of the county seat faded into the history books. In March 1917, a decision by the Florida Supreme Court reaffirmed Clearwater as the rightful place for the county seat, bringing to an end nearly five years of personal animosity and legal sparring between “up-county” and St. Petersburg interests. With this matter settled, men could answer another call to arms: America had entered World War I in April 1917. On June 5, many men signed up during the first draft registration that took place in Pinellas as America's involvement in World War I intensified. In August, acting on a request by President Woodrow Wilson, local residents developed the Pinellas County Home Guard for homeland security as Americans mobilized for battles of World War I overseas. St. Petersburg became the first community to organize a unit, Company A. Company B came soon thereafter. Captain J.J. Loomis organized Company C in Tarpon Springs. Clearwater’s unit, Company D, was commanded by Taver Bayly. Each of the four companies had 100 men, with Evening Independent editor Lew B. Brown selected as major-in-command of the
companies by Florida’s governor, *Sidney J. Catts*. The Pinellas County Home Guard assisted in the arrest of twenty-two spies during the war. In 1917 and 1918, Pinellas communities exceeded their targets during each of the four *Liberty Loan drives*. The *War Savings Stamp campaign*, led by *W.L Straub*, also surpassed expectations.

Meanwhile, Pinellas farmers went to war with another invader: Texas fever ticks. In November 1917, one year before Armistice Day, Pinellas became the first Florida county to try to make cattle dipping mandatory as a way of combating the ticks. County commissioners received a report on a vote to close the open range in the county three decades before such a measure became a statewide concern. According to the results presented to them from the October 29 referendum, 501 voted against the new law to close the range, while 983 supported it. Before the Pinellas measure was passed, branded cattle sometimes roamed upwards of eighty miles, often beyond county boundaries, in search of grasses they sought; with the range closed in some parts of Pinellas—it remained open in much of Florida until the fence law passed in the 1949 legislature—farmers had to bring food and water to the cattle pens rather than letting their cattle freely roam.

Other members of the animal kingdom found a new home near Coquina Key. Opened by Andrew Baker along Big Bayou in 1920, the *Alligator Farm* along Sixth Street South later became the *St. Petersburg Alligator Farm and Ostrich Zoo*. For awhile, the Bakers even provided shuttle transportation from downtown to their attraction near 36th Avenue, along the shores of Big Bayou. By the time the attraction opened, the stretch of Fourth Street South of downtown was known as Pinellas Drive, a convenient route to the new subdivisions in southern St. Petersburg, such as Ohio Park, between Lakeview Avenue and Lake Maggiore, just northwest of the Alligator Farm. Local children gained free admission if they brought the Bakers a snake or turtle, according to those who remember the attraction. By the early 1940s, the attraction even shipped baby alligators to distant destinations as presents—think of those movies where a small alligator flushed into a toilet terrorizes some northern city! The attraction closed before the end of the Second World War.

Enough about war! Let’s go back to the beach. In what may be the possible earliest use of the name "Treasure Island" for a Pinellas beach development, Noel A. Mitchell referred to his Mitchell Beach settlement as "Treasure Island" in a paid advertisement that appeared in the January 13, 1917 issue of the *Evening Independent*. Of course, Treasure Island developed on the south end of Johns Pass, and Mitchell’s development took place along the north end, in present-day Madeira Beach, but that’s a minor detail. To confuse matters more, in May 1920, *A.B. Archibald announced boat service between the Jungle* in western St. Petersburg and *his Coney Island settlement* along present-day Treasure Island at Sunshine Beach. He planned to build a dance hall and add other amusements to attract visitors. Of course, Archibald later left Treasure Island to develop Madeira Beach. I guess sailboats weren’t the only things crossing Johns Pass!

In 1921, Archibald unveiled plans to construct a series of bridges and dredged islands as part of a *Central Avenue Causeway* that would have connected the western end of St. Petersburg's Central Avenue to
Treasure Island. At the time, Archibald had already developed "Coney Island" (the same name used by W. S. Harrell for his hotel a couple of miles to the south). Advertisements for Treasure Island as early as February 1921 mentioned the lands "on line of proposed Central Avenue Free Causeway." By March 1921, Archibald's Gulf Beach Resort Company posted notices that "Coney Island" would now be known as "Treasure Island." County commissioners had actually granted Archibald a causeway permit in early June 1921, but plans for what would later become the Treasure Island Causeway stalled after a battle took place between Archibald and St. Petersburg’s North Shore developer C. Perry Snell. Both sides launched verbal and legal battles, including frequent advertisements in the newspapers. Ultimately, Snell prevailed and Archibald mothballed the Central Avenue Causeway Association.

Before Snell transformed marshland along Coffee Pot Bayou, a notable structure took shape north of the ballpark. In April 1919, the Masonic Home of Florida opened on the north end of Coffee Pot Bayou. The site, considered remote before the land boom exploded, had once served as a girl's school built by a Captain McIrvin. After the school closed, the dormitories became hotel rooms for a couple of years. In 1917 the Masonic Grand Lodge of Florida began its search for a home for children and elderly members. They selected this structure, dedicating it in January 1919. That same year, B.A. Lawrence Jr., a resident of St. Petersburg since 1912, oversaw construction of the "Spa" as the city's "first modern bath house" along the approach to the pier. He also became president of the city's Chamber of Commerce in 1919. At that time, the chamber had two employees; by 1924, the chamber had twenty-three employees.

The first decennial census in Pinellas counted 28,265 residents in 1920. As more residents arrived, real estate flourished after World War I. Local real estate developer Walter P. Fuller considered August 26, 1920, to be the beginning of St. Petersburg's land boom. Although others may select an earlier or later date, Fuller based his assumption on this day because two families arriving in the crowded city failed to find a place to stay. After they made an appeal to the mayor, they received permission to occupy a tent. Within two weeks, approximately 125 families had arrived seeking accommodations, and St. Petersburg's "Tent City" took shape. One important transplant who arrived in St. Petersburg before this date, in December 1919, was Aymer Vinoy Laughner. After engaging in the oil business in his native state of Pennsylvania, he acquired acreage in lower Pinellas and for the construction of the Vinoy Hotel as a signature building along the waterfront that opened in 1926.

But, we’re getting ahead of ourselves. Before we talk about the land boom of the 1920s during our next program, we have to mention two tragic events along the Pinellas Peninsula that occurred in January and October 1921. One changed the face of higher education, the other transformed the landscape.

On January 29, 1921, a fire at the Florida Seminary in Sutherland, now Palm Harbor, destroyed buildings at the school. The fire, one that probably began in a kitchen area of the women’s dormitory, rapidly spread from building to building. Although fire brigades from Clearwater and Tarpon Springs rushed to the area, they could do little to save the structures because of a lack of running water due to the absence of piped water service in the area. With the campus in ruins, school leaders received a pledge from E. T. Roux that the seminary could use his hotel along Clearwater Beach, the Clearwater Beach Hotel.
_Hotel_, as a meeting place for awhile. Classrooms and barracks for the students sat alongside the hotel. Classes resumed at that site in February 1922. Later, the campus moved to Lakeland and became _Florida Southern College_. The school had started in Orlando in 1883 as the Wesleyan Institute of the Florida Methodist Conference, moving in 1886 to Leesburg as the Florida Conference College, before arriving in Sutherland in 1902 as the _Florida Seminary_. The first institution of higher education in Pinellas left the county, and Roux's efforts to keep the school in service led the college to name the library in his honor.

On October 24 and 25, 1921, a _notable hurricane_ hit the Pinellas Peninsula. It _devastated the first Gulfport Casino_, along with many other waterfront structures. The hurricane also _destroyed the bridges across Long Bayou near Bay Pines and at Safety Harbor_. _Agricultural damage was extensive_, especially at Largo, where John S. Taylor estimated that he lost 90% of his citrus crop, more than 150,000 boxes of fruit. The hurricane also _damaged the pier at Safety Harbor_, ripping the dance hall at the end of the pier away and floating it into the town where it damaged some buildings as it was destroyed, too. For awhile, it was thought that all of Pass-a-Grille had washed away. "Hurricane Pass," a channel carved during this hurricane, divided Hog Island into two separate islands, Caladesi and Honeymoon.

Well, on that not-so-positive note, we have made it through the first decade of Pinellas County's existence, a busy period that set the stage for the land boom of the 1920s, a time when the area was occasionally referred to as "Peerless Pinellas," not because of the piers washed away during the storm, but instead because local promoters believed that the potential for development in this area was without peers. We will evaluate the land boom in our next program as we cover the years 1922 through 1931, another busy decade!

We do have time for some questions, if there are any. Thank you for sharing this afternoon with me as we talked about an exciting chapter of our past.