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Review of: "St. Petersburg's Historic African American Neighborhoods," by Rosalie Peck and Jon Wilson

James Anthony Schnur

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refers to this work as well as to personal recollections, notes, and newspaper clippings. Nevertheless, readers interested in recent Florida history and the civil rights movement will be fascinated by Warren's account. His detailed assessment of legal tensions between local, state, and federal authorities extends well beyond mere recitation.

On a deeper level, this book instructs in subtle ways. Warren heaps praise upon King, but in 1964 Warren was "disappointed and puzzled" by his response to the grand jury's recommendations (119). Readers can sense that his assessment of King likely evolved over time. Although the author was certainly more progressive-minded than many other elected officials around St. Augustine, the self-proclaimed "most powerful political officeholder" in the judicial circuit presumably could have acted much earlier to prevent the crises of 1963-64 (62). Warren, like most white southerners, initially was more concerned with peacekeeping than civil equality, a significant perspective on the civil rights movement that warrants further exploration.

BARCLAY KEY

Western Illinois University

St. Petersburg's Historic African American Neighborhoods. By Rosalie Peck and Jon Wilson. (Charleston, S.C.: History Press, 2008. 126 pp. Acknowledgments, introduction, B/W photographs, epilogue, appendices, notes, about the authors. \$19.99, paper)

In July 2002, longtime *St. Petersburg Times* reporter Jon Wilson crafted an impressive journey along St. Petersburg's Twenty-second Street South. Known as "The Deuces," this road served as the historic heart of the African American business community during much of the twentieth century. Six years later, St. Petersburg native Rosalie Peck—a retired social worker and one of the first African American students to integrate St. Petersburg Junior College in 1961—joined Wilson in coauthoring this companion study that examines the "connectivity" within and between the original African American settlements of the Sunshine City.

Peck and Wilson did so much more than compile photographs and craft captions within a sepia-tone cover. Through excellent use of oral histories, photographic archives, newspaper sources, and city directories, they painstakingly reconstructed life in Pepper Town (named for its abundant crops), Methodist Town (later known as Jamestown), and the Gas Plant district (now largely occupied by Tropicana Field) during the years when laws and customs compelled racial segregation. This concise but informative volume offers an important contribution to Tampa Bay regional history that should serve as a springboard for other studies that examine the connectivity between African Americans in St. Petersburg and those who lived elsewhere.

The authors composed a rich narrative in eight thematic chapters. The only missing element is an index. Chapters focus on topics such as educational institutions (primarily Gibbs High School), the role of the church, and how old neighborhoods changed in the years following Jim Crow. Readers unfamiliar with St. Petersburg's history will learn about notable community leaders, including Enoch Davis, Chester James, Rosa Jackson, and James Sanderlin. Younger readers will discover that simplistic geographic labels such as "South St. Pete" fail to offer an accurate portrait of Bartlett Park, Childs Park, Lakeview, and other "Midtown" communities where laws and traditions once prohibited African Americans from settling. Although patterns of residential racial segregation persist, this book reminds readers that integrated neighborhoods in St. Petersburg, Lealman, High Point, and other areas of lower Pinellas are recent phenomena.

Peck and Wilson provided an important foundation for a broader (and long overdue) study of the "connectivity" that once existed between St. Petersburg's African American communities and other segregated settlements in the Tampa Bay region. Hopefully, future scholars will build upon their work to examine interrelationships with places such as the Baskins-Dansville-Ridgecrest area south of Largo, Clearwater's "Greenwood" community, the "Brooklyn" settlement near Safety Harbor, and neighborhoods in Tarpon Springs and Dunedin. For example, no scholarship exists that compares St. Petersburg's "Little Egypt" neighborhood, in the shadow of the Gas Plant, with Brooklyn, a hardscrabble settlement on the proverbial "other side of the tracks" from Safety Harbor. Here residents in dilapidated shacks lacked access to indoor plumbing, postal service, garbage collection, and fire service into the 1970s. One must remember that, even during the throes of Jim Crow, these communities did not exist in absolute isolation.

In her epilogue, Rosalie Peck ponders what has happened to all of the fruits and vegetables in open fields so readily available to satisfy African American residents' hunger during those earlier years when sitting on a green bench along Central Avenue might lead to one's arrest. Old neighborhoods have largely disappeared, old community bonds have suffered disruption, and the "connectivity" once cherished seems entombed under the asphalt parking lots that surround Tropicana Field. The crop she misses the most are mangoes, whose disappearance is reminiscent of the vanishing of the orange groves from much of the Pinellas landscape. The quest by Peck and Wilson to remember and preserve the sweet memories of the mangoes and the lives of those who used to enjoy them will nourish present and future readers with a richer understanding of Pinellas County history. Ms. Peck passed away on 31 July 2009, before she could complete a narrative intended to honor her grandmother. Although she never finished that story, her powerful words in this book will inform future generations of the rich history she witnessed.

JAMES A. SCHNUR
University of South Florida - St. Petersburg