CONTENTS

From the Editors 3

ARTICLES

The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Creation of the Myakka River State Park ............................... By John J. Sullivan 4

Army Life in Tampa during the Spanish-American War: A Photographic Essay ................................. By Paul Eugen Camp 17

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

From Strikes to Scourge: Tampa in 1887 ......................... From the Tampa Journal and Tampa Tribune 29

Documenting the Struggle for Civil Rights: The Papers of Robert and Helen Saunders .................... By David L. Chapman 47

BOOK REVIEWS

Favata and Fernández, eds., La Relación o Naufragios de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca .................. By Paul E. Hoffmann 55

Greenbaum, Afro-Cubans in Ybor City: A Centennial History ......................................................... By L. Glenn Westfall 56

Rogers, Outposts on the Gulf: Saint George Island & Apalachicola from Early Exploration to World War II .................. By Georg H. Kleine 57

Cabrera Infante, Holy Smoke ........................................ By Louis A. Pérez, Jr. 58

Announcements .......................................................... 61

Notes on Contributors .................................................. 62

Tampa Bay History Essay Contest ................................. 64

Copyright 1987 by the University of South Florida
Typography and composition by Meritype Studio, Bayonet Point, Florida
Printing by Consolidated Press, Tampa, Florida.
This public document was promulgated at an annual cost of $5,300 or $6.63 per copy, including preparation, printing, and distribution, to disseminate historical information related to the service area of the University of South Florida. [88-24]
FROM THE EDITORS

Anniversaries usually provide an occasion for much celebration and some reflection. This year the United States has observed the bicentennial of the Constitution with both festivities and debate over the meaning of the document. Several groups, notably blacks and women, have reminded us their predecessors were long excluded from the Constitution. Blacks, of course, only recently won the rights of full citizenship. Robert and Helen Saunders of Florida both participated in the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and they recently donated their personal papers to the University of South Florida Library. In this issue of Tampa Bay History, David L. Chapman describes the Saunders’ activities and provides a list of their papers, "Documenting the Struggle for Civil Rights," that are now available to researchers.

Another recent acquisition of the Special Collections Department of the University of South Florida Library provides a glimpse of "Army Life in Tampa during the Spanish-American War." This view is revealed in a collection of candid photographs taken by one of the soldiers stationed in Tampa. As explained by Paul Eugen Camp, these pictures had long been in private hands and are now published for the first time, beginning with the cover of this issue and continuing in the photographic essay.

Tampa is observing a centennial this year, as a result of the adoption of a new city charter in 1887. Although Tampa had been first incorporated as a municipality thirty years earlier, the 1880s marked Tampa’s arrival as a real city in name and fact. In an effort to recapture the spirit of the times, the editors have selected some excerpts from 1887 newspapers that describe events "From Strikes to Scourge."

The lead article in this issue relates the story of "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Creation of the Myakka River State Park." John L. Sullivan’s depiction of the successful effort to preserve this wilderness area in Sarasota and Manatee counties will interest readers who are unfamiliar with this park or are curious about its history.

As Tampa Bay History prepares to celebrate its tenth anniversary, we remind readers that they can help assure continuation of the journal by renewing subscriptions, encouraging others to subscribe and offering gift subscriptions. We depend on subscribers to sustain this nonprofit effort to preserve and illuminate the history of southwest Florida.
On March 4, 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the oath of office to begin his first term as President of the United States. As he addressed the chilled crowd below the Capitol, uncertainty and confusion gripped the nation. Despite the President’s memorable phrase, there was much to fear besides fear itself. The economic and social fabric of the nation was disintegrating. Looking to European precedents, some observers forecast violent upheavals leading to a Fascist or Communist seizure of power. Capitalism floundered as banks and factories padlocked their doors. Farm foreclosures brought deep suffering and unrest to the nation’s rural communities. One-quarter of the American labor force was unemployed. Private and public mechanisms to provide food and shelter were collapsing. Local government services, including schools, faced shutdowns as tax receipts dropped alarmingly.¹

During the next few months Roosevelt demonstrated the leadership necessary for coping with a national crisis. Assisted by widespread public agreement that the national emergency demanded extraordinary remedies, Roosevelt and Congress cooperated to establish a remarkable number of programs to combat the depression and provide relief for the unemployed.²

Roosevelt’s favorite emergency program came to be known as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). He wanted to recruit young, unemployed men and put them to work in the nation’s forests, thereby salvaging both the youths and the land. It was the dream of a dedicated, long-standing conservationist, who believed that every young person would benefit in mind and body from hard work in the wilderness.³

The President asked Congress for speedy approval of legislation authorizing the CCC. He wanted the young men working in the forests before the end of summer. With haste rarely seen in democratic government, Congress approved a program which put 250,000 men to work in over 1,300 camps before the end of July 1933. The youths were selected by the Department of Labor from the ranks of needy, unemployed men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. They were transported to camps organized by the War Department and put to work on projects planned and supervised by the Departments of Interior or Agriculture.⁴

The Army deserves a major share of the credit for the rapid, smooth start of the CCC program. It provided medical and dental care, transportation, physical conditioning, housing, orientation, clothing, food and discipline. Each camp housed approximately 200 enrollees, commanded by an Army officer, assisted by three commissioned officers from the Army reserve, a noncommissioned officer, a mess sergeant, a supply sergeant and an enlisted cook. The actual conservation work was supervised by a project superintendent assisted by ten civilian foremen.⁵
The foremen gave an essential professional competence to the conservation work. They were selected on the basis of proven ability in woodcraft and other skills needed by the CCC. Their recruitment from communities near the camps helped insure local support. The young, inexperienced enrollees also needed the guidance of such skilled craftsmen.6

CCC men tackled an enormous number of jobs—tough jobs, often in situations of hardship and privation. Danger was a part of many tasks. The young men of the CCC planted trees, made reservoirs and fish ponds, built check dams, dug diversion ditches, raised bridges and fire towers, fought forest blights, restored historical battlefields and cleared beaches and campgrounds. In a multitude of ways they protected and improved parks, forest, watersheds and recreational areas. The CCC was popular, almost immune from criticism.7

Community leaders pleaded for CCC camps, and Sarasota was no exception. Arthur B. Edwards, a native of Sarasota and a local developer, led the campaign for a park and CCC company in the Myakka River valley. He had held many political offices in Sarasota, including two terms as mayor during the 1910s. His experience proved invaluable in the effort to establish a state park.8

Edwards loved the Myakka valley where he had often worked, hunted and fished. It was natural for him to favor this region for a national forest, wildlife preserve or state park. He employed his exceptional political skills, energy, knowledge and patience to the task of finding a way to preserve the precious natural resources of the Myakka valley, preferably with the help of a CCC company. Many times in the hectic months of 1934, he must have felt like one of the jugglers at the nearby Sarasota circus grounds as he mobilized the many people and agencies whose support was needed to accomplish his goal. His contacts in government and knowledge of bureaucratic procedures eased the task, but the obstacles were formidable.

First, either the state or federal government had to acquire the land for a park. Support for a national park came from Florida Congressman J. Hardin Peterson. In April 1934 he wrote Edwards:

In connection with your plan for establishing a national park and wildlife reservation in the Myakka River valleys, we have this matter up both with the biological survey

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur B. Edwards.
Photography courtesy of the author.
and the park service. I would like to suggest that if the property could be acquired, it
would be possible to use workers of the Civilian Conservation Corps to put it in order.9

Edwards was in complete agreement about using the CCC, but he worried about the most
desirable Myakka valley land falling into the hands of exploitative commercial interests. Writing
to Peterson, he warned: “Time is a very important element in this proposition, for it is likely that
unless the State or Federal Government takes this area over for a public park. . .it will be taken
over by some private interest or sportsmen for hunting and fishing.”10

The prospect of a national park in the region dimmed as the federal government cut
expenditures, and Edwards explored other alternatives. Without any firm commitments of land
but with unbounded optimism, Edwards contacted Florida’s state forester about the possibility of
a state park and CCC camp in the Myakka River valley. Federal authorities always consulted
state governments about placement of CCC camps, and this made State Forester Harry Lee
Baker a key figure in the process. Baker, a man with much of Edwards’ forceful spirit, made a
startling offer to Edwards in 1934.

My final recommendations for park camps will be prepared in this office Monday, June
4. If by that time you have made sufficient progress to be able to state that the land will
be deeded to the State if acceptable to the Trustees of the Internal Improvement Fund, I
might feel justified in recommending a Civilian Conservation Corps camp.11

Edwards responded promptly that the “State has already foreclosed the tax liens against
approximately six thousand acres of what is locally known as the Curry lands and the title is now
vested in the I.I. Board. . .[and] you are justified in recommending that this area be dedicated for
a State Park and Game Refuge and the establishment thereon of a C.C.C. Camp.”12

The land breezily cited by Edwards as foreclosed land available for a state park was in fact
tangled in legalities. State officials were leery of expropriating foreclosed land in those
depression days, and it was a difficult and lengthy process.13

Besides the Curry lands, Edwards fixed his attention on another large parcel in the Myakka
valley that might be acquired by the state for a park. It was part of the vast holdings formerly
owned by the late Sarasota rancher, Bertha Honoré Palmer, and left by her in trust to her brother,
Adrian C. Honoré, who was also deceased. The land, in receivership by 1934, consisted of
17,000 acres, including the entire Upper Myakka Lake, and much land to the south and east of it.
On June 4, 1934 Edwards reported that the state forester had recommended a state park and
game refuge for the Myakka River valley. “The State has already foreclosed the tax liens against
approximately 6,500 acres in the Lower Lake region and tentative agreements have been
reached for acquiring the A.C. Honoré Estate lands on 17,000 acres at .35¢ [sic] per acre subject
to the accrued taxes.”14 The purchase by the state of the A.C. Honoré land marked a major step
in the path to a Myakka River State Park. This momentous acquisition was completed in June
1934.

By that time Edwards was pursuing another important tract. He had learned that the sons of
Bertha Honoré Palmer would consider giving land for a state park as a memorial to their mother.
With his unrivaled knowledge of the region, Edwards knew they could give a parcel known as the “Old Picnic Grounds,” an especially desirable property. In July he informed State Forester Baker:

For your confidential information, I am informed by a representative of the Palmer interests that Messrs. Honoré and Potter Palmer, Trustees of the Potter Palmer Estate, have agreed to convey to the State for park purposes, 1,920 acres of very beautiful forest land, which tract is very important in connecting up the A.C. Honoré Estate lands and the lands now held by the I.I. Board. This tract is very beautiful property and you might say, the key to the whole layout. . . . [I]t is only because the Palmers are in sympathy with the State Park and Game Refuge proposition that this property is available for that purpose.\textsuperscript{15}

As the end of the summer of 1934 approached, a remarkable number of people and agencies were rushing headlong to establish a state park in the Myakka River valley with a CCC company to develop it. Army officers arrived to look for a suitable location for the camp. They expressed concern about the danger of malaria. With a smoothness acquired from decades of boosting
Sarasota real estate, Edwards assured them that during ten months of the year the Myakka River valley was practically free from mosquitoes. The state engineer started a survey of park land, and a landscape engineer from the Department of the Interior began to study the layout. The Army was ready to bring a CCC company to the park.

Edwards urged the Palmers to persevere through the tedious negotiations leading to the grant of land the CCC preferred for the camp site. Finally, on October 3, 1934, Honoré and Potter Palmer deeded 1,920 acres of land to the state for a park, “upon the express condition as a covenant running with the land that the premises conveyed shall be used only as a state park and/or game preserve and for no other purpose and upon ceasing to be so used in whole or in part this conveyance becomes and remains void.” An advance party of the CCC company arrived on October 17, 1934, and set up tents.

Edwards continued to involve himself in the project. He advised the Florida Forest Department about proper park development in words that betrayed the soul of a naturalist: “The location you have in mind in Section 6 is very beautiful and lends itself well to park purposes, but it is my idea that all that area bordering on and lying south of the lower lake should be held in its primitive state as much as possible, as it is the natural habitat for wild life, especially high land game, as well as for the propagation of fresh water fish.”

The main party of the CCC company arrived on November 2, 1934. They saw a land of stunning beauty with hammocks, pine woods, palmetto undergrowth and open prairie. Cattle had grazed in the region for many decades. Sportsmen loved the area which was a favorite site for picnics.

The CCC superintendent, Earl Porter, soon reported “conditions in tents are very unsatisfactory with outdoor kitchen, no tent floors, and rattlesnakes being found on camp site and even in tents.” Some of the men fell victim to malaria, and some deserted, perhaps shocked by the primitive conditions.

With resilience of the young, the work got underway. Portable barracks arrived, and soon the men were comfortable, sprucing up the campsites, as was a universal practice in the CCC. A normal day began at 6 a.m. with fifteen minutes of calisthenics before breakfast. At 8 a.m. teams headed out to work sites. Lunch was brought to the men at noon. They returned to their barracks at about 4 p.m. with supper starting at five o’clock, Enrollees used the evening hours for a variety of activities including educational classes. Recreation emphasized athletics, although dances were often held on Saturday evenings.

In February 1935 Acting Superintendent A.D. Lawson carefully summed up the company’s achievements. “We have had ideal working weather; very little rain; and at present time dry weather is doing quite a bit of damage to the one hundred thousand Pine seedlings recently planted.” Lawson also listed some of the accomplishments of the men:

- 9.5 miles of telephone line
- 212 lineal feet of 2.5’ x 4’ culverts
- 32 feet of truck trail bridges
18 feet of combination bridge and cattle gap
30 feet of cattle gap and bridge crossings
5.94 miles of all-weather truck trail
38.43 miles of 16’ plowed boundary line fire break
50 miles of 8’ plowed, random fire break
108 miles of 8’ plowed lines for tree planting
3/4 miles of truck trail.21

Forest fires worried the CCC administrators. Cattlemen in the region customarily burned their pastures to promote better grazing conditions. “From the beginning of the camp, we have only had four fires,” Lawson reported. “The total amount burned over was approximately one hundred sixty acres. Practically all the surrounding lands have been burned over.”22

Lawson’s reports dealt extensively with buildings erected by the CCC. The craft work gave the men and supervisors great satisfaction. A construction foreman, J. Fred Chapman, described some of the projects.

The buildings now under construction are designed to blend perfectly with the general landscape and especially with the trees and shrubs surrounding them. . .at least 80% of all materials used in their construction has been secured directly from the park or adjacent properties. . .[except] stone used in the foundation walls and piers which was purchased outside the park area and the walls laid up from this stone to-day reminds one of the type of construction used 50 and 75 years ago.

All the wood, with the exception of the floor joints and roof rafters, used in the buildings came from the property and is what is known as “lighter.” This is the native pine trees that has been killed by destructive fires. . . The fire burns off the outside. . . of the tree leaving the center or heart of it in perfect condition. . .hand-hewn timbers were made for the inside frame work of all buildings here. . .necessarily a heavy frame due to the fact that the outside or walls of the buildings are logs cut from the native cabbage palm tree. These logs are put in place by hand and held firmly to the inside frame by heavy wire, thus eliminating the old-fashioned method of saddle notching the ends of the logs. The space between the logs instead of being filled with clay or cement, will be chunked with an asphalt sawdust mixture. . .which will be more permanent as it will not crack and fall out as would the old-fashioned materials. Shingles for the roof and gable ends of the buildings are hand-riven from cypress and. . .it should not be necessary to replace roofing materials for some years to come.

In completing the general type of old-fashioned log cabin, a beautiful stone chimney and fire place is of course a part of these buildings. . .When these cabins are completed, it is hoped that they will be much in use by the camping public.23

In June 1935 Lawson reported steady progress. A building for communal activities, called the Pavilion, was the company’s glory. “Service wings on each of two sides. . .give grace and distinction to its appearance.” Stone was carefully sawed to fit into a lovely floor.24
In light of today’s knowledge and ecological priorities, some of the CCC activities damaged the natural balance of the environment. The present park manager, Robert Dye, explained some of the problems:

Fire suppression was a primary goal of the CCC at Myakka River. Their hundreds of miles of firebreaks are still much in evidence. . . . It was not known, in the 1930s, that pinelands, marsh, and the unique dry prairie are dependent upon fire for their existence. Many animals that inhabit these areas are also dependent on fires shaping the plant communities to maintain specific types of habitats. . . . By suppressing fire the CCC and others which followed them, permitted changes in plant constituents which led to the reduction in numbers of some animal species as well as loss of both plant and animal diversity. . . .

Fire ecology is very complex and I am simplifying greatly but the crux of this issue is that fire suppression means the demise of those natural communities which have evolved with dependency on frequent burns. . . . Other CCC actions were also
counterproductive. They constructed dams, seined the river and lake to destroy “rough” fish and turtles, and actively killed all the venomous snakes encountered.  

During the 1930s, a major source of controversy involved the use of black recruits in the CCC. In August 1935 rumors spread rapidly through Sarasota County that the CCC intended to replace the company of white youths with a company of Negro enrollees. A party of fifty blacks arrived to prepare the site for the rest of their company. Sarasota's representative in the state legislature warned that “either the negroes would be placed in the park or the camp would be abandoned.” Superintendent Lawson spoke out forcefully in favor of accepting the black enrollees, but opposition to the proposed Negro company increased in the community. A public meeting was called for August 23 to permit expressions of opinion, and A.B. Edwards called on state officials to come to Sarasota to explain the need for the change.

This controversy over Myakka River State Park’s CCC company was not unusual. Throughout the country blacks were kept in segregated CCC companies which could not be established outside the state of origin. Many communities in all parts of the United States, especially in New
York, objected to Negro CCC companies.28 At the time of the local protest against a Negro company at Myakka River State Park, national CCC policy dictated that twenty-five additional Negro companies had to be established in the Fourth Corps area which included Sarasota. Nine such units were backed up, waiting on military reservations due to local hostility to their assignment.29

In the Fourth Corps area a policy had developed for the placement of black companies. If opposition led to official protest, the governor would be asked to designate a camp site currently occupied by a white company which would be replaced by a black company. If the governor refused, or the designated community protested, the Army would close the camp. It was believed that the prospect of losing an existing camp would spur the state to solve the problem.30

Despite such pressures, whites in the Sarasota area, or at least a vocal portion of them, protested the change. A vote at the public meeting on August 23 favored rejection of the Negro company.31 Moving swiftly, the CCC closed the camp at Myakka River State Park. Buildings were locked, equipment moved, and the black company sent to an Army base.32
Realization of the loss suffered by the region caused widespread soulsearching. A local newspaper soon reported “considerable reversal of sentiments among the merchants.” Less than a month after the closing of the camp, negotiations started which led to its reopening. The Negro company, which had been marking time at Fort Moultrie, South Carolina, returned to Myakka River State Park.

In a report made in January 1936, Superintendent Lawson summed up the situation:

This project was reorganized in October after a series of set-backs which included transfer of the original Junior White Company, with change to a (newly organized) Junior Colored; discontinuance for a time because of local objection to a colored camp; floods over the camp site in late summer; loss of some experienced technical personnel . . .the colored boys make honest efforts; they try hard to please and do their work; they expend more physical force, over longer periods, than a similar group of white youths. . . . The prejudice existent in the town of Sarasota against the colored company in this location has been entirely overcome.
The CCC company remained at Myakka River State Park until World War II. Its personnel changed frequently since the normal tour of duty for the CCC enrollees was six months. The young men and their leaders helped develop a permanent public resource of priceless value, one which is enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year. Most of the buildings the CCC built are still in use at Myakka River State Park. Although repaired and altered over the years, they remain a lasting tribute to the high quality of work performed by the CCC.\textsuperscript{36}

Myakka River State Park was officially dedicated on February 28, 1941. A.B. Edwards was an honored guest at the dedication ceremonies. A prominent historical monument at the park includes his name in a list of people who worked to establish the park. Edwards’ hopes for the Myakka River valley were realized. Today a 7,500-acre wilderness preserve is maintained in the land around Lower Myakka Lake. The Myakka River flows through this area, widening to form the lake. The river is bordered by marshes, and the marshes are bordered by hammocks. Pine flatwoods with scattered grass ponds make up most of the preserve. Deer, turkeys and waterfowl are abundant during the winter. Sandhill cranes, wood storks, roseate spoonbills, otters and
bobcats live there. Bald eagles and osprey are seen occasionally. The area largely resembles Florida as it looked before the arrival of Europeans.37

1 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 1-3; Bradenton Herald, September 25, 1934.

2 Schlesinger, Coming of the New Deal, 20.


5 Salmond, Civilian Conservation Corps, 45.

6 Ibid., 34.

7 Schlesinger, Coming of the New Deal, 338.


9 Peterson to Edwards, April 12, 1934, Arthur Britton Edwards Papers, Sarasota County Historical Archives, Sarasota, Florida.

10 Edwards to Peterson, May 28, 1934, ibid.

11 Baker to Edwards, June 1, 1934, ibid.

12 Edwards to Baker, June 4, 1934, ibid.

13 Edwards to C.H. Schaeffer, October 18, 1934, ibid.

14 Edwards to J.A. McLeod, June 4, 1934, ibid.

15 Edwards to Baker, July 12, 1934, ibid.

16 Edwards to J.W.B. Shaw, August 14, 1934, ibid.

17 Trustees Deed 129, pp. 156-58, numbered 71480, Sarasota County Courthouse, Sarasota, Florida.

18 Edwards to C.H. Schaeffer, November 1, 1934, Edwards Papers.

19 Porter to the State Park Division of the National Park Service, November 26, 1934, Records of the U.S. Department of the Interior, Record Group 35, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Lawson to the State Park Division of the National Park Service, June 1935, ibid.


27 Ibid., August 22, 1935.


33 *Sarasota Herald*, August 26, 1935.


35 Lawson Report, January 1936.

36 Robert Dye to John P. Sommers, May 23, 1985, Dye Files, Myakka River State Park. (This memorandum gives detailed descriptions of the structures still existing that were constructed by the CCC.)