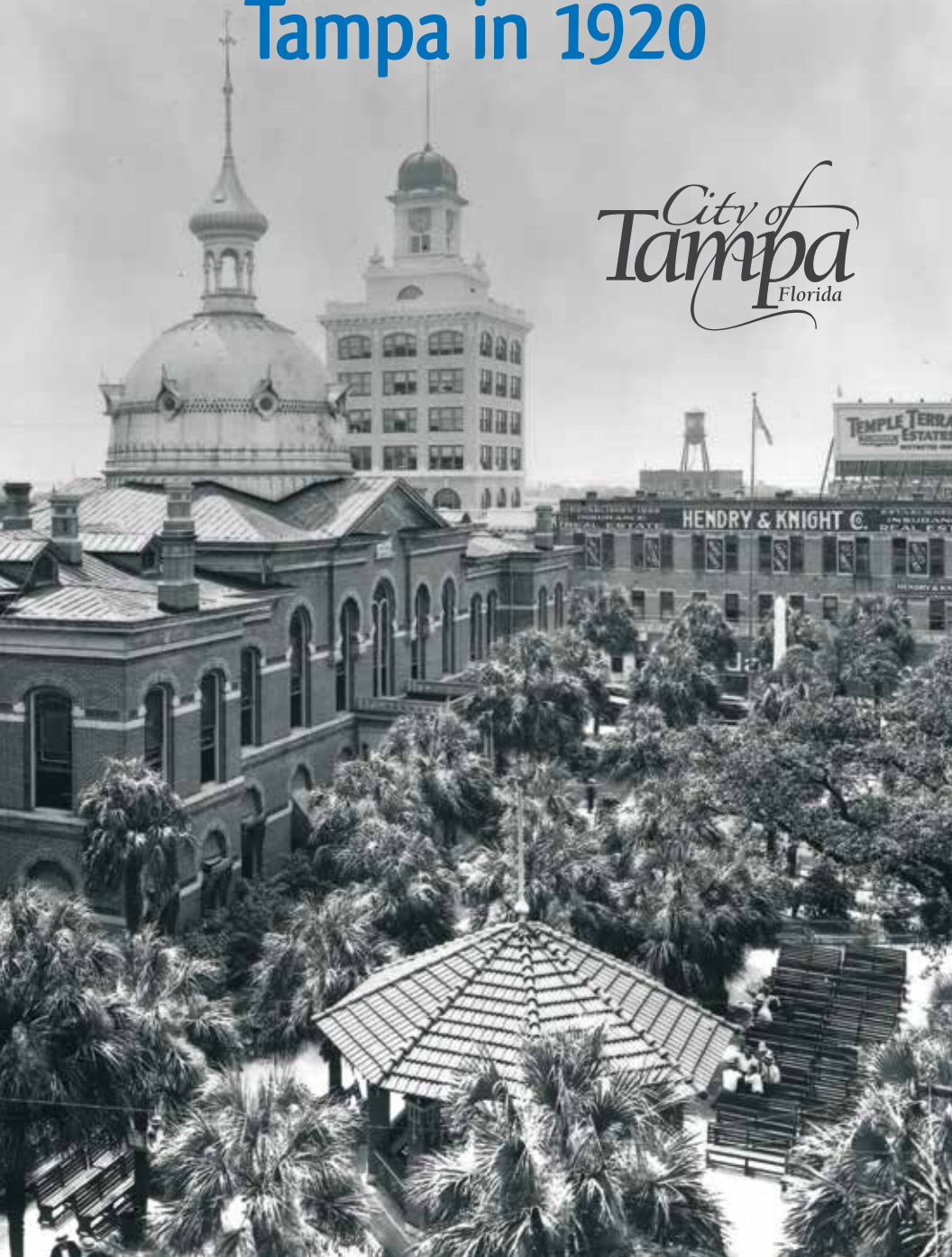


# One Hundred Years Ago Tampa in 1920

*City of*  
**Tampa**  
*Florida*





A project of the



Compiled by Jennifer Dietz and Alison Smith, City of Tampa Archives and Records Division. Archives and Records is a division of the City Clerk's Office.

Cover photo: View of Courthouse, City Hall, and Tampa Terrace Hotel, looking southeast on August 5, 1920. Photo courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library, Burgert Brothers Collection.



The Burgert family enjoying a day at the beach in 1920. Pictured from left to right are Hazel, Jean Evelyn, Addie, and Al Burgert. All of the photographs used in this booklet are courtesy of the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library's Burgert Brothers photographic collection. This collection features nearly 19,000 historical photographs captured by local photographers in the Burgert family from the late 1800s until 1960. Images from the collection are available online: [hcplc.org/research/burgert](http://hcplc.org/research/burgert)

# The City of Tampa in 1920



**D.B. McKay**

At the beginning of 1920, the Mayor of Tampa was D.B. McKay, and Fred W. Ball was the President of Tampa's City Council. Both had served at length in these positions. Mayor McKay was completing his third term, and Fred W. Ball had served for four terms as City Council President. Ball went on to serve as a Hillsborough County Commissioner for twenty-two years. Fred W. Ball Park in South Tampa is named in his honor. McKay, who served for a total of fourteen years as Mayor of Tampa, was reelected in 1928. The only mayor who served longer was Dick Greco, who served for a total of fourteen years and six months. D.B. McKay went on to publish a popular newspaper column called Pioneer Florida in the Tampa Tribune from 1946 until 1960.



**Fred W. Ball**

An election was held in June of 1920, and Horace Caldwell Gordon was elected as the 39th Mayor of Tampa. Having previously served as a municipal judge, Caldwell had a distinguished legal career, and resigned from his position of State Attorney in order to run for mayor. However, he only completed seven months in office before a mayor-commissioner system was adopted in January of 1921. Similarly, G.T. Henderson, also only completed seven months as City Council President. His full name was Greenville Thomas Henderson, and he often went by his initials or the nickname "Green." Henderson served for two terms on the City Council totaling six years. Originally from Tennessee, he had established a successful career in Tampa as a realtor. Following his time on the City Council, Henderson focused his time on developing a citrus grove.



**Horace C. Gordon**



**G.T. Henderson**

# Does History Repeat Itself?

## Comparing the 1918 Pandemic to 2020's COVID-19

*By E.J. Salcines*  
*Retired Appellate Judge*  
*Former State Attorney, Hillsborough County*



One hundred years ago, penicillin did not exist, and there were few vaccines or inoculations. The medicinal chemistry and pharmaceutical research laboratories were not anywhere like they are today. But an invisible enemy had captured the world. It was a global infection. When that happens, scientists stop calling the deadly invasion “an epidemic” and call it “a pandemic” because it is more serious and devastating. But it’s 2020 now, and in the greater Tampa Bay area, employees and students were sent to work “online” from home. Colleges and universities are administering classes and exams online, and graduations have been postponed or done virtually. All major events, performances, sporting competitions, concerts and galas have been canceled. Cultural institutions like the Tampa Bay History Center, the Dali Museum, Henry B. Plant Museum, Florida Aquarium, Ybor City State Museum and many others had to temporarily close. Travel has been limited. Cruises have been canceled or have been delayed for future rescheduling. Even Las Vegas had to shut down, and elective surgeries were postponed to a later date. Our daily lives and established routines have been disrupted from Hawaii to Nevada, from California to New York. The stock market and Wall Street are feeling the impact of this 2020 Pandemic.

We must slow the spread and transmission of this silent invader. “Stay Home - Save Lives.” Stop shaking hands, no more hugging, no kissing, cover up with a mask, and stay away from public gatherings, so says the Center for Disease Control. They are working around the clock, and Congress is appropriating

emergency budgets for the worst to come. We must avoid contaminating each other and getting sick. Physicians, nurses and hospital personnel are already overworked and they are running out of beds and there won't be enough mechanical ventilators. We must avoid so many people dying because the police and medical examiners will be overwhelmed and then the funeral homes will run out of coffins and be unable to satisfy and fulfill the demands of the grieving families. Perhaps, there will be solitary funerals and/or delayed cremations and hopefully no mass graves. Hopefully they won't have to stack the bodies like cord wood as they did in 1919, or store them in cold storage. Hopefully, they won't have to resort to families burying their own loved ones. So many people died one hundred years ago that even our mortality table (of life expectancy) changed. In 1917, life expectancy in the U. S. was 51 years. But in 1918, it dropped to 39 years. As I finish this essay in June of 2020, COVID-19 has claimed no less than 470,000 lives with more than 9,000,000 cases globally. In the U. S., more than 2,300,000 total cases have been reported with over 100,000 deaths. In Florida, we've had over 100,000 cases reported and over 3,000 deaths. By the time you are reading this, those figures will have increased. In June of 2020, the U.S. had the most reported cases internationally.

This 2020 Pandemic is very serious. So, we cannot ignore the alerts and warnings. We must all cooperate and participate together in aggressive containment in order to reduce the spread of this 21st century plague. We must also be aware that a return surge of this monster may hit us again in a second wave rebound.

In late 1918, the flu epidemic had become a pandemic and it ravished Tampa. People were dying in record numbers. More people died worldwide as a result of this flu epidemic than from bombs, grenades, bayonets, and torpedoes in World War I. By the end of 1918, 1,332 people were reported dead in Florida from the influenza epidemic compared to 1,134 Floridians killed in the European battlefields during World War I. It was referred to as "the mother of all pandemics." In Tampa, during October, November, and December, our citizens were dying about three per day. That's an average of ninety per month. They ran out of coffins. The funeral directors could not keep up with the demands. Some were considering mass graves. In Tampa, there were warnings posted all over. If you have a cold and are coughing and sneezing, you must cover your face. Do not go to the office, factory, or school if you are sick. Do not enter the theater if you are sick. Go home and go to bed until you are well. Spitting is prohibited. All the spittoons were picked up. In Tampa, in the last three months of 1918, people wore gauze face masks for protection. Schools were closed, theaters were closed, social club halls were closed. Hand shaking and spitting were prohibited by city ordinances. The City of Tampa organized teams of local and state health officers who conducted house to house surveys of the city. Every home had at least one flu-stricken person. Most

homes reported as many as fourteen people infected. Some sick people were sequestered in one room of the house. In our cigar factories, it was reported that as many as 75% of the workforce was out as a result of the influenza pneumonia epidemic. Nunzio DiMaggio, a member of Tampa's City Council, passed away as a result of this on December 19, 1918. Eventually, the flu vaccine was developed so that epidemics like this could be prevented.

2020 is a very different world compared to 1918-1919. Today, our scientific geniuses are desperately researching, not just how to isolate a virus, but to find its genetic sequence and test antiviral drugs and develop a protective vaccine. So, here we are, in this unfolding crisis, desperately looking to our laboratories to come up with a cure, but also a lasting inoculation in order to quickly build our immunities to defeat this invisible Pandemic Monster.

May God bless our homeland forever.

### **About the Author**

E.J. Salcines is a native of Tampa, and a career state and federal prosecuting attorney with a legal career spanning more than 55 years, including 16 years as the elected State (prosecuting) Attorney and serving more than 14 years on Florida's Second District Court of Appeal. He has 2 academic degrees including his law degree, as well as 2 honorary doctorate degrees. He is a recognized local historian and has produced documentary programs on Tampa history seen on City of Tampa Television and YouTube titled *Tampa: Untold Stories*.



# Public Health in Tampa in 1920

In the late 19th to early 20th century with rising awareness about the causes of communicable diseases, health advocates across the United States actively worked towards developing a public health system that would combat infectious disease. Individuals, health organizations, and the government were developing standards and creating programs to promote preventative measures against the spread of illness. One of those individuals was Dr. John Perry Wall, the 16th Mayor of Tampa from 1878 until 1880.

Dr. Wall earned his M.D. from the Medical College of South Carolina in 1858. After the Civil War, he moved with his wife and daughter to Tampa, where they contracted yellow fever. He survived the disease, but his wife and daughter died from it. This motivated Dr. Wall to study the disease and he eventually discovered mosquitos were the cause of yellow fever.

After his discovery, Dr. Wall became active in politics and led the way to the creation of the Florida State Board of Health. He was elected to Tampa's Town Council in 1876, and was elected Mayor of Tampa in 1878. While in office, Dr. Wall focused on public health issues. He drafted ordinances that set standards for port inspections, sanitation issues, and mosquito control.

In the years following Dr. Wall's term, the city continued to pass ordinances that protected the health of the citizens of Tampa. These included the upkeep



*Group portrait of staff in front of Bayside Hospital on Bayshore Boulevard in 1920. Built by Tampa City Council member Silas Leland Bigelow in 1908, the house was sold to Dr. John Sullivan Helms in 1917, and became Bayside Hospital, the first private hospital on the west coast of Florida. It closed in 1927, when Tampa General Hospital opened on Davis Islands. The house still stands today on Bayshore Boulevard.*

of private property, food safety measures, and vaccinations for diseases like smallpox and cholera. While city officials were able to pass these, and other public health legislation, the Florida State Board of Health still controlled the welfare and health of communities.

The Florida State Board of Health would assign health officers to communities who had to follow the guidelines and authority of the State Health officer. For a time this approach worked, but with the

growing population, it was getting increasingly difficult for states to fund and staff health facilities within local communities. The State Board also focused more on the research of contagions on a global scale than on the local level. By shifting its concentration to the study of disease, The Florida State Board of Health was able to establish guidelines and standards to keep communities healthy and epidemics at bay. This was especially crucial with the outbreak of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic.



*PA 4961 – A 1920 photograph of Gordon Keller Hospital, which was located at 302 North Boulevard.*

From 1918 to 1920, the world experienced an influenza pandemic unlike anything they had seen before. More people died from the illness than during World War I. It is estimated that there were four waves of the illness in three years until it dissipated. Scientist, doctors, and researchers were constantly working to put an end to the pandemic. This taxed resources of funding and staff and was a factor in which the Florida State Board of Health encouraged autonomy in local health departments.

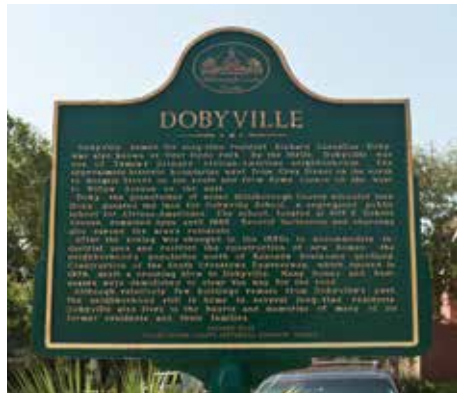
By 1920, the City of Tampa was clearly on the path of establishing a localized Department of Health that would not have to depend on state government for support. City Officials decided to have a special election to change the City Charter, which would include restructuring the duties of the City Physician.

Prior to 1920, the City Physician did not have defined duties. The individual in the position would have to oversee other departments that were not related to health, thus distracting them from the needs of citizens. The position also did not require the physician to have a medical degree. This changed with the amendment to the City Charter. The individual in the position would now have to be a medical doctor and focus on the health of the City. With these changes, the City Physician could now focus on controlling potential epidemics by putting public health measures in place to keep citizens safe. This led to the development of the public health code that was established in 1923, when Tampa formed its own City Health Department.

# A Look at Some of Tampa's Historic Black Neighborhoods in the 1920s

## Dobynville

Dobynville was named after long-time resident Richard C. Doby, and was also known as West Hyde Park. By the 1920s, Dobynville was one of Tampa's primary African-American neighborhoods. Although relatively few buildings remain from Dobynville's past, the neighborhood is still home to several long-time residents. Dobynville also lives in the hearts and memories of many of its former residents and their families.



## Central Avenue

Between 1900 and 1930, the black population of Tampa increased rapidly, going from approximately 4,400 residents to more than 21,000 residents. Central Avenue, located between Cass Street and Kay Street, was the business and entertainment hub of Tampa's African-American Community.



Shown here, the Harlem Branch of the Tampa Public Library was established in the 1920s, with the assistance of the Tampa Urban League. The library was initially located at 1310 Marion Street, before moving to 1404 Central Avenue.

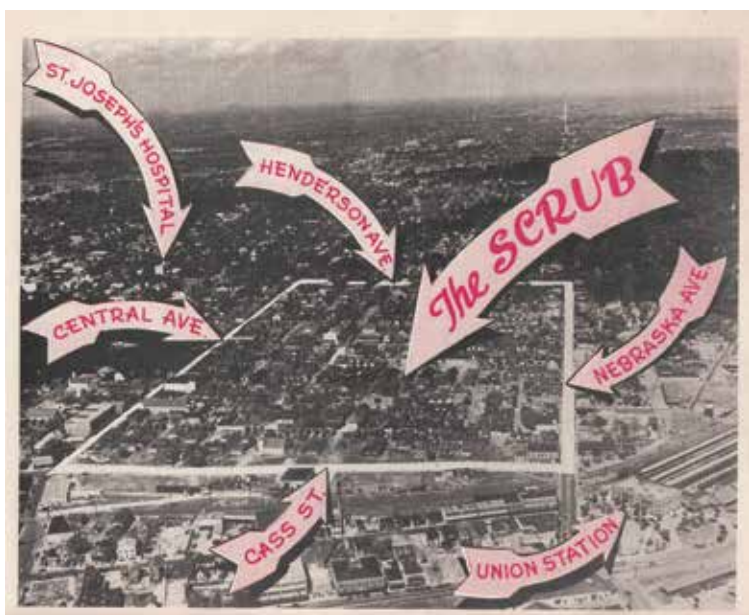


## Roberts City

Named after the J.W. Roberts and Son cigar factory, Roberts City was a vibrant community located adjacent to West Tampa. Local civil rights leader Robert W. Saunders was born there in 1921. His grandparents were among the first arrivals in the area, and his grandmother, Marion E. Rogers, was instrumental in establishing the first NAACP in West Tampa.

## The Scrub

Located between Ybor City and downtown Tampa, The Scrub was one of Tampa's oldest and largest African-American neighborhoods. The Scrub bordered the Central Avenue business district to the east, and this map shows its borders.



# From the Headlines in 1920



## Juan Nales

On July 18, 1920, West Tampa police officer Juan Nales was shot and killed by a suspect he was apprehending. He was the first and only police officer from the City of West Tampa, which existed from 1895 until 1925, to die in the line of duty.

**MORE THAN 26,000,000  
WOMEN GAIN THE BALLOT**  
EVEN AS LATE AS 1913 EQUAL SUFFRAGE THROUGH-  
OUT THE UNION SEEMED A VERY REMOTE  
POSSIBILITY

## **Women's Right to Vote Made Part of U. S. Constitution**

*Nineteenth Amendment Formally Pro-  
claimed by Secretary Colby--Anti-  
Suffragists Turned Down by Court*

## Women's Suffrage

On August 26, 1920, women gained the right to vote in the United States.

**Moving Pictures**  
Alcazar Theatre, 606 Franklin  
Bonita Theatre, 710 Franklin  
Grand Theatre, 510 Franklin  
\*Maceo Theatre, 1310 Central av  
National Theatre, 1614 7th av  
\*Palace Theatre, 1330 Central av  
Princee Theatre, 1118 Franklin  
Rivoli Theatre, 1501 7th av  
San Souci Theatre, 1315 7th av  
Strand Theatre, 204 Twiggs  
Victory Theatre, Tampa cor  
Zack

## Motion Pictures in 1920

Going to see movies was a favorite pastime in 1920, as seen by the number of theaters listed in the 1920 Tampa City Directory. Movies were silent at the time, and some of the popular titles that year included *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Pollyanna*, and *The Mark of Zorro*.



## Victory Theatre

Exterior view of Victory Theatre in 1920. This theatre was located on the corner of Franklin and Zack Streets.



## Alcazar Theatre

Alcazar Theatre at 606 Franklin Street, photographed in December of 1920.



## New Prince Theatre

Movie advertisements at entrance to the New Prince Theatre at 1118 Franklin Street, photographed in December of 1920.



# Gasparilla in 1920

There were no Gasparilla celebrations held in 1918 or 1919, due to World War I. Gasparilla resumed on February 16, 1920, despite high winds.



The Gasparilla XII pirate ship on Hillsborough River in front of Atlantic Coast Line freight depot in 1920.



1920 Gasparilla Parade, horse drawn flats and spectators on Franklin Street.

# Tampa Bay Hotel



The Tampa Bay Hotel was a popular destination in 1920, and its grounds were also used to host the annual Florida State Fair.





Crowds inside main gate at the fairgrounds in 1920.



Interior of auto exhibit at Florida State Fair in 1920.

# 1920 Postcards from the Collection of the Henry B. Plant Museum



**Postmarked April 3, 1920**

Mr. Harvard Gang, Cambridge, OH:

“I am visiting here in Tampa and having a grand time. My cousin here has a Ford and takes me everywhere, and Tampa is some place...Bess”



**Circa 1920**

Miss Opal Mae Conley, Parkersburg, WV:

“Just a note to show you the scenery in Florida. Wish you were here. I know you would never want to go back to West Virginia.”



**Postmarked**

**December 22, 1920**

Mrs. G.W. Lawley,  
Florence, MA:

Got the box last night. Thanks very much. Got letter pattern and application for license today too.



**No postmark or address:**

The walk thru the park along the river is a favorite one.



# Tampa Fire Department



Light-duty fire truck with loaders and hoses in front of department headquarters at 720 E. Zack Street. 2020 is the 125th anniversary of Tampa's Fire Department. It was established on May 10, 1895, when Tampa's City Council passed a resolution authorizing Tampa's first paid Fire Department.

# Images of Tampa in 1920



Franklin Street (700-800 blocks) in 1920, looking south towards business establishments and the trolley.



View of delivery trucks in front of Tampa Coca-Cola Bottling Company at 612 Cass Street in 1920.

# Images of Tampa in 1920



The Lafayette Street Bridge looking east toward downtown in 1920.



Hillsborough River waterfront in 1920, looking north toward the Lafayette Street Bridge.







*City of*  
**Tampa**  
*Florida*

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Tampa, Florida 33602  
[tampagov.net](http://tampagov.net)