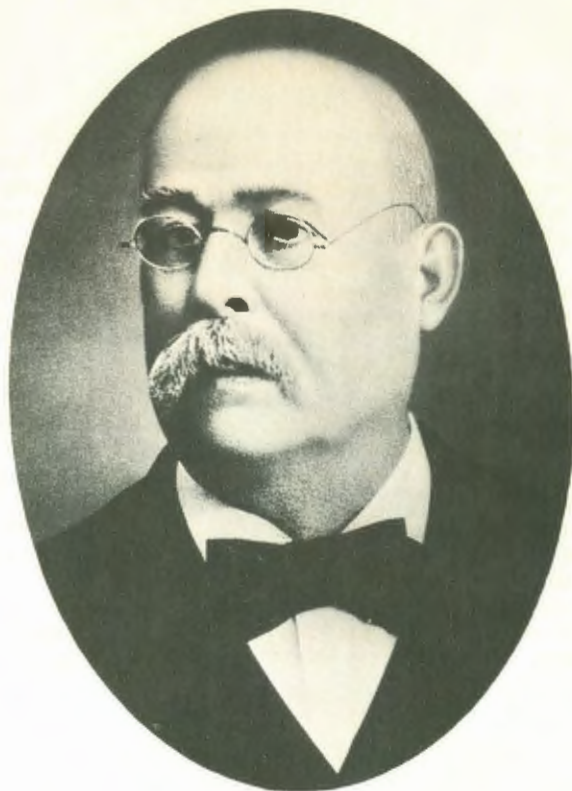


A Pictorial History of Ybor City

\$1.00



By Charles E. Harner



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Vicente Martinez Ybor

By Way of Prologue

Ybor City is unique in America. It was conceived by a Spanish promoter, born of men's craving for good cigars and spanked into robust, hectic life by the war that made the United States a world power.

It's a delightful section of Tampa now; time was when it was greater than Tampa with more inhabitants than all the rest of Hillsborough County.

It was settled by people who went there to make cigars. Mainly, they were Cubans. They were escaping from despotism in their homeland. Intermittently, for 90 years, Ybor City and Tampa have welcomed these exiles — and is welcoming them today.

They were joined in the early days by other exiles: Italians and Spaniards. The interplay of these three Latin cultures has emerged into a charming social order.

The Yborcitenos, as we call ourselves, are proud of our heritage and delighted to find it described in this pictured story by

Charles E. "Chilly" Harner, former foreign correspondent and American diplomat. With a third of his working career lived in Spanish blooded lands, his love for things Latin American shines through these pages.

Here you have it all; the struggles, the achievements, a way of life, a tobacco-culture most unusual in the annals of human relations. Through this Latin Quarter of ours passed famous revolutionists, industrialists of international renown, humble tobacco workers, military leaders, rascals of the *demimonde*, arms runners and soldiers of fortune. This is a synthesizing story that gives one a sense of history unfolding, and all the forces at play in a glorious epoch.

Anthony P. Pizzo
President
Hillsborough County Historical
Commission



The inhabitants of this community, in a delightful Anglo-Latin blend of languages, call themselves Yborcitenos. This is the main stem of their activities — Seventh Avenue, once called Broadway. Back in the '20s, the second story verandas — a tropical tradition — extended almost the length of the Avenue, but today only a few are left. Now it has a median of palm trees, and it still glows at night with the traditional and distinctive street lights.



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There are, of course, skeptics who claim it is not true that Ybor City made the United States into a world power.

They are of the same ilk who claimed that Havana cigars made in Havana were superior to Havana cigars made in Ybor City.

In Ybor City they will tell you that these skeptics know neither the facts of history nor of good smoking and they will discuss the facts with you in either English or Spanish, as you choose. For in Ybor City, which is part of Tampa, Florida, both

English and Spanish are regarded as one mother tongue and discussion of facts is a way of life.

They will tell you how the great Marti came in exile from Cuba to Ybor City and inflamed American public opinion until there was a war with Spain.

They repeat their grandfathers' stories of how the troopers of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders whooped it up in Ybor City and their joy when Teddy himself became President of the United States four years later.

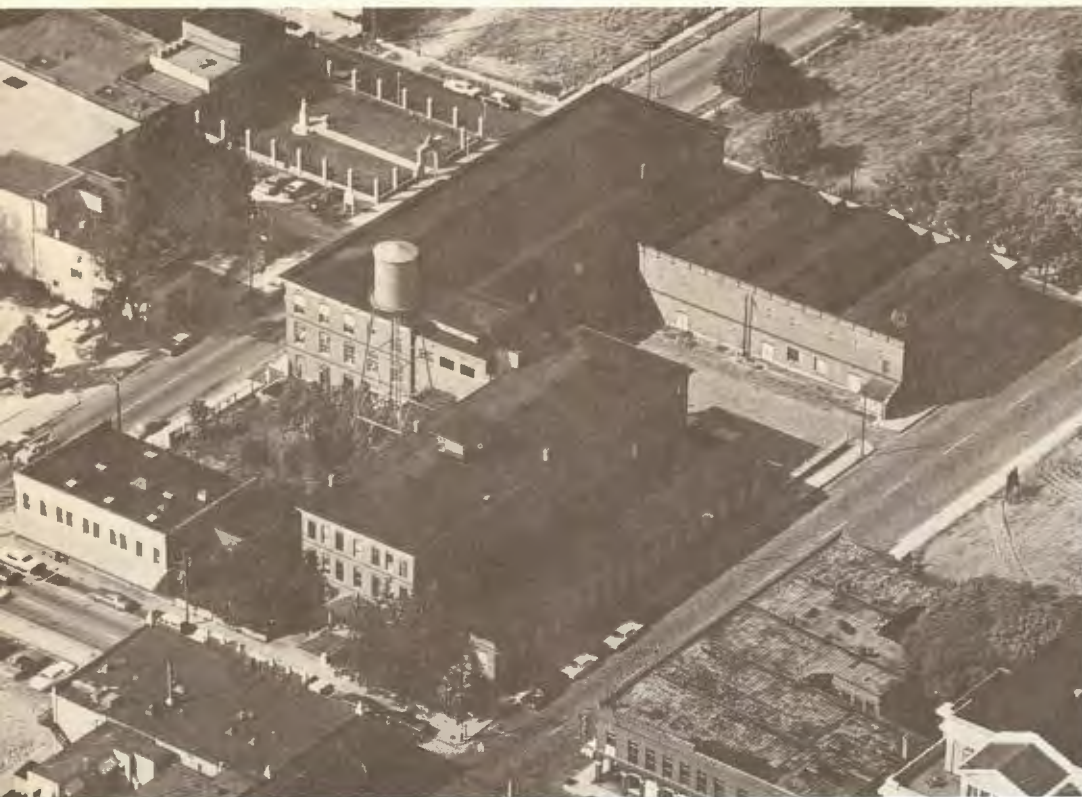
And they recount with pride how their grandparents and great grandparents, fleeing from oppression in their homeland, built a city of 30,000 in a friendly, alien land where they could earn their livings with their unique arts, free to maintain their own happy customs.

For more than half a century, Ybor City was Cigar Capital of the World. That was when the most skilled cigarmakers in the world went there to be paid American wages and to work with the most fragrant of Cuban tobacco, imported from Havana with American money. Connoisseurs of fine cigars throughout the world paid premiums for the "clear Havanas" hand rolled in Ybor City. ("Clear" meant pure Cuban leaf.)

The introduction of efficient machinery gradually reduced the numbers of cigarmakers. Now, although Tampa's cigar production still is huge, only a thousand or so families depend on the industry.

The block after block of dwellings in which their precursors lived were bulldozed away in a giant urban renewal project in the '60s. Modern housing, as efficient as the cigar machinery, is taking the place of the picturesque, high-balconied houses of the past. The sleek functional buildings of a new seat of learning, Hillsborough Community College, rise now on a campus which sprawls over ground where thousands once lived.

But still standing are many of the



The sturdy brick buildings of Ybor Square cover a full block at the center of Ybor City. After decades of cigar making going back to 1886, it has been converted into an office, retail, historical and restaurant complex by Trend Publications Inc. which maintains its offices there.

buildings which mark the days of Ybor City's greatness and which many believe serve as guideposts to a future even greater than the past.

Patriarch of the family of Ybor City buildings is Ybor Square, a complex of three brick structures which once constituted the biggest cigar factory in the world.

It was built by Vicente Martinez Ybor in 1886 and for the next half century employed more than 4,000 workers.

Most of the early history of Ybor City revolved around the Ybor factory, and its situation between the business area of 7th Avenue and the campus of Hillsborough Community College keeps it in the center of things.

The great buildings stood empty for many years after the mass production of hand-made cigars was abandoned and the buildings were found unsuitable for machine production. They were rescued from oblivion by Trend Publications, Inc., which moved its editorial and business offices into the complex. Other business firms and merchants were invited to join the publishing house in helping recreate many of the activities of old Ybor City.

Many of the huge beam-ceilinged workrooms of the old factory still are intact, still bearing the faint aroma of the clear Havana cigars which were made there by the millions. One of the storerooms is large



Approximately 1,150 cigar makers were at work in this room of the Ybor factory — now Ybor Square — in 1925. They worked almost silently, listening to the reader shown in the upper right

hand corner as he told them the news of the day and amused them with poetry and fiction — all in Spanish. There were two other rooms of this same dimension in the Ybor plant and a number of

smaller size. Only a few women were employed but these received the same pay and privileges as the men. The women voted in union affairs long before they received national suffrage rights.



Plaque at the northeast corner of Ybor Square.

enough for a basketball court. Underground are caverns which once were tobacco aging crypts. Just to walk through all the rooms of Ybor Square takes more than an hour.

The fabled days of inefficient production of the finest "clear Havana" cigars in the world—hand-rolled by some 20,000 artisans in Ybor City—are long past.

Now about 1,000 men and women produce Tampa's total output. Something over 900 of these cigarmakers are employed by seven companies; the remainder work for the "buckeyes"—small independents who still follow the ancient rituals of making cigars by hand. In Spanish they are called "chinchales."

The operations of the big company plants are marvels of sanitary ingenuity with machines turning out perfectly formed cigars in air-conditioned comfort. The great brick buildings in which they operate are landmarks. Their architecture is unique. Somehow, the turn-of-the-century ugliness has mellowed until hundreds of visitors find them interesting to inspect and photograph.

Many of these old buildings have been converted into warehouses, some even stand vacant. But those which continue the business of cigar making pour out a tremendous volume of products. Huge tractor trucks, each carrying 33,000 pounds of cigars, roll out of Ybor City weekly, and sometimes twice a week, to New York, Chicago and San Francisco.

These are shipments pooled by the big operating firms which are members of the Cigar Manufacturers Association of Tampa.

The major cigar companies operating in Ybor City today are Corral-Wodiska y Ca., 19th Street and Second Avenue; Perfecto Garcia & Bros., Inc., 2808 North 16th Street; Gradiatz Annis & Co. (Division of General Cigar Co.), 2311 North 18th Street; Standard Cigar Co., 2701 North 16th Street; Hav-A-Tampa Cigar Co., 500 South Faulkenberg Road and Arturo Fuente Cigar Factory, Inc., 1310 North 22nd Street.

The basis of Ybor City's fame as cigar makers to the world was, of course, Cuban tobacco. The clear Havana, that is, pure Cuban leaf, was noted for its flavor, smooth burning and blending characteristics. When Fidel Castro took over Cuba, he "nationalized" the tobacco industry, much of which was financed by American capital. Cuba's skilled tobacco planters and merchants left the island in droves and one of the republic's main sources of income was ended. Experts doubt that the Cuban tobacco industry ever will be revived, even after Castro's passing.

Today the factories of Ybor City get their tobaccos from six major foreign sources as well as from the United States. Even before Castro ruined Cuba, excellent cigar wrapper tobacco was grown in Connecticut, Wisconsin and the Florida panhandle.



Although Ybor City took its name from its premier cigar manufacturer, the first cigars in Ybor City were turned out by Vicente Ybor's close friend and competitor, Don Ignacio Haya, who helped in the founding of the city.

Ybor built the first factory — now Ybor Square — but he made the mistake of employing a Spaniard as one of his cigarmakers and the Cuban workers went on strike on the day production was to begin.

Haya carefully hired only Cubans with the result that the Haya factory on 7th Avenue and 15th Street was the first in production, starting work April 13, 1886. At the end of the first year, this factory was producing 500,000 cigars a month. Ignacio Haya Gold Label cigars still are being produced in factory No. 1, but the operation now is conducted by Gradiatz, Annis & Co., a division of General Cigar Co., and is located at 13th Avenue and 18th Street.

When this picture was made in 1922, the factory was owned by Berriman Bros. Inc.



Microscopically accurate machinery today turns out 4,000 cigars a day per worker compared with 125 cigars a day per man in the old days — and in Ybor City “buckeye” shops where “puros” still are made by hand. But it still takes the eyes and hands of experts to guarantee that the ultimate customer will get his hour of enjoyment.

Production in these areas has increased vastly.

Now new tobaccos—both filler and wrapper—are flowing in from Honduras, Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Brazil and Java. There are those who claim the best of these tobaccos will match anything that used to come from Havana. Fine cigars, like fine wines, are a matter of taste.

Virtually all the cigar makers in the buckeye shops learned their skills working with clear Havana. Most of them are more than 60 years old and some of them are past 80. There are only about 12 of these buckeye shops. They employ from four workers at the smallest to 29 at the largest. And they work at the same pace and with the same attention to detail they did when they were young and as their fathers did before them.

The buckeyes, like the big plants, are worth visiting. The cigarmakers are delighted to show what goes into their product and how it is constructed. They show how the filler and wrapper leaves are aged under controlled climate conditions and prepared for blending into the proportion of tobaccos which control the flavor.

Experts strip and select the leaves which will go to the cigarmaker at his bench. He or she—there are a number

of women in the craft— is worth watching. He has just two pieces of equipment, the “blade,” a thin wedge-shaped steel knife, and a work board, a slab of apple wood.

From the pile of leaves beside him, the cigarmaker gathers up the filler leaves, laying them one by one in the palm of his hand until he can know by the feel that he has enough tobacco assembled for the cigar. These filler leaves must be pointed in a certain way so that the cigar will burn evenly and hold its ash properly.

Then the wrapper leaf is laid on the board, the filler is placed above it, and the cigar is rolled in one smooth, flowing motion. The wrapper is sealed with a touch of gum tragacanth, the sap of a tree grown in Iran. With a quick flick of the blade, the cigar is trimmed and ready for the seasoning which must transpire before it is sold. Fine cigars, incidentally, may be seasoned as much as three years before they give that one hour of contentment which a connoisseur of smoking enjoys after dinner. Of course, he can enjoy it many other times too, but that is the hour a good hand-made cigar deserves.

If a cigarmaker is a man, chances are you will find him smoking as he works—and he smokes only the finest of his own product.

The fact that he is smoking is an entertaining commentary on the accommodation of law and tradition in Ybor City. Back in the old days, cigarmakers



Left—Standard Cigar Co., 2701 North 16th Street. Below—Perfecto Garcia & Bros. Inc., 2808 North 16th Street, as it appeared in 1924. Both remain in active production.





La Florida cigar factory, above, now occupies the building originally constructed by Emilio Pons, an Ybor City pioneer. It was the first cigar making establishment owned and operated by a purely Tampa group. Below is the plant built in 1895 where the once renowned *Charles the Great* brand of cigars was made.



were permitted to smoke as many free cigars as they liked while they were at work. They could buy all they liked, too, at discount prices for their enjoyment at home, although it was a rare cigarmaker who found it necessary to buy his smokes.

This was the old Cuban-Spanish-Italian way of doing things, and it came as a great shock to northern businessmen when they moved into the cigar business. This was no way to run a factory, they asserted, and several of them were foolish enough to call a halt to such inefficiency. A couple of the more hard-nosed northerners were ruined by the strikes which ensued; the rest learned in a hurry that you could change bankers and shipping schedules and stock issues, but you couldn't change an Ybor City cigarmaker from his customs.

But the cigar manufacturers were faced with a problem in the matter of the duties they paid on the tobaccos they imported from foreign countries.

They had to account to Uncle Sam for the use of every ounce of this tobacco and there was no provision for them to give it away.

This time, it was Uncle Sam who gave in to the customs of Ybor City cigarmakers. By law now, the cigar manufacturers do not have to pay duty on the tobacco used for the five cigars each of their employees is permitted to have free every day.

Uncle Sam also casts a benign eye on the cigarmakers in the matter of those oldsters

who are drawing social security—and they all do, without exception. The five free cigars are not regarded by Uncle Sam as remuneration, and therefore are not charged against the amount of wages paid a social security recipient before he is regarded as having earned extra income above the amount permitted by law.

Ybor City bears the name of its premier cigar manufacturer, but if the deserving always received their just rewards, the area should have been called Gutierrez City, for it was a Spanish civil engineer named Gavino Gutierrez who began the whole development.

Gutierrez had left Spain to become a resident of New York City. He believed the American public would eat guavas, guava jelly, guava paste and pickled guavas if it had the opportunity of learning about guavas. Someone told him that guavas grew on trees in orchards to the east of Tampa, and he traveled down to Florida in 1883 to determine whether he might make a fortune by erecting a guava processing plant in the midst of the orchard. It was a good thing he surveyed the situation personally before he spent money on the plant. What guava trees there were didn't bear enough fruit to supply a housewife with her Fall canning let alone supply an industrial plant.

But Gutierrez, who was a very far-sighted



Factory No. 9, above, built by F. Lozano Son & Co. at 4th Avenue and 21st Street, is an outstanding example of fine brick work. Below is the still highly productive plant of Corral-Wodiska y Ca. at 2nd Avenue and 19th Street.





The Gutierrez Building, above, remains a monument to Gavino Gutierrez, the promoter of Ybor City. Its second story veranda bears testimony to the Cuban heritage of its architecture. It stands across the street from the pleasant meeting place pictured below which is called both Ybor Mall and Ybor Plaza, depending on whether you speak Spanish, and extends from 7th to 8th Avenues at 16th Street.



man, knew a good thing when he saw it, and he saw opportunities the native Floridians had never envisioned.

Tampa at that time was a village of 700 persons, wracked repeatedly with yellow fever, malaria and typhus epidemics, with no rail connections and a magnificent harbor. The climate, Gutierrez realized, was very close to that of Havana, Cuba, where the world's finest cigars had been manufactured for more than two centuries. He made a quick survey of the area about two miles east of Tampa village and drew up maps on which he actually platted streets where only a few wagon tracks wandered through palmettos and scrub pines grew out of the sandy soil.

Then he took his map and his imagination back to New York and proceeded to sell two other Spaniards, both old friends, on the idea that Tampa was the place to prosper. The two friends were Vicente Martinez Ybor and Ignacio Haya. Both were prosperous cigar manufacturers, the former in Key West and the latter in New York City. Each of these men previously had operated in Havana but had left the troubled island when increasingly severe regulations under the Spanish crown had made operating conditions virtually impossible. Hundreds of Cubans who had escaped from Cuba to Key West were immediately employed by them in the little island city.

But Ybor and Haya were unhappy with

conditions in Key West, and transportation facilities to the mainland of the United States, the major market for cigars, were limited to ocean going vessels.

Gutierrez told them of how Henry B. Plant, railroad magnate, was about to open up Tampa and the surrounding country with both rail and steamship services. It was obvious, he said, that Tampa was about to become a big city.

Included in Plant's announced projects was the construction of the largest tourist hotel in the world, the Tampa Bay Hotel — now the main building of the University of Tampa. It was to cost more than \$2 million before it was finished and to give employment to thousands of workmen. That was all in the future, but Plant's mere promise was enough to set off an economic boom for the little village at the mouth of the Hillsboro River.

Such businessmen as there were in Tampa were definitely in a wildly optimistic mood when Ybor and Haya arrived to look over the prospects so glowingly described by Gutierrez. They took the Gutierrez map seriously and put together a tract of 40 acres of land which they offered to Ybor and his friend for \$9,000.

The canny Ybor, a typically shrewd Spanish businessman, informed the Tampa Board of Trade that he would purchase the land if the members would put up \$4,000



When Tampa Bay was secured against marauding Indians by a U.S. Army garrison at Fort Brooke — now Tampa — the best water for miles around came to the surface at what is now 6th Avenue and 13th Street. Because it was the Army's source of water supply, the early inhabitants called it Government Spring, and it is still called that even though water has long since failed to flow there. Because of the typically American horror of any waste of a natural resource, Government Spring water was converted into beer starting in 1895 when a brewery was built at the site. In its early days it was the only commercial brewery south of Jacksonville. Much of its product was shipped out of Ybor City by sailing vessels.

What water the brewery didn't use constituted Ybor City's water supply for 60 years.

of the purchase price as an earnest of their good will. They agreed.

The amounts concerned seem small today, but, based on a comparison with the value of today's dollar, these Tampa businessmen were putting up the equivalent of about \$60,000 — an amazing feat for a group of villagers.

The cigarmakers moved fast to establish their new empire. On October 8, 1885, just two years after Gutierrez had first seen Tampa, they sent woodcutters and wagons into their land to start preparing it for buildings. They had to clear out underbrush, trees and rattlesnakes. They filled in small lagoons and alligator holes which dotted the property. They built streets. Close behind the clearing crews came carpenters and bricklayers building houses and factories. Within five months from the time the land clearing began, the first Cuban cigarmakers arrived. They were passengers on the S.S. Hutchinson, a side wheeler. They landed at the mouth of the Hillsboro River and walked the two miles to their promised land over a wagon road which cut through thick palmetto scrub.

The flow of emigres kept pace with the building of new cigar factories. Before the year 1886 was ended, cigar companies had come in from Key West, Havana and even New York City. All the original workers

were Cubans, escaping from their native land, but as years went on they were joined by Italians from New Orleans and from the St. Cloud, Florida, sugar producing area. These last stopped farming to become cigarmakers.

The emigres continued their own language and customs. Many never learned English although most of the Italians eventually became bilingual in both Spanish and their own tongue.

Although today nearly all residents of Ybor City speak English, they still prefer to speak Spanish in business and social contacts. Language experts are intrigued with the pure quality of the Spanish spoken there. It actually is regarded as a purer form than that commonly spoken in Cuba today. But there are notable variations in slang and colloquialisms. Spanish speaking visitors to Ybor City are delighted with the opportunity to practice their *castellano*.

Contributing to the purity of the language was the arrival of large numbers of Spanish cigarmakers who, like the Cubans, were escaping from the misgovernment of the Spanish crown.

There was friction, at first, between the Spaniards and the Cubans, but they learned to live with each other and with the Italians and with the Germans who soon started showing up in Ybor City, emigrating from

their *vaterland* for the same reasons which brought the other foreigners to the United States.

Ybor City was fortunate in its immigrants. While New York, Boston and the rest of the cities in the Eastern Seaboard were overwhelmed with illiterate masses pouring in from Europe in the last 30 years of the 19th Century and the first decade of the 20th, the people who came to Tampa were cheerful, hard-working folk who asked no favors and looked after each other.

They respected the laws of their new land, established themselves as taxpayers, saw to it that their compatriots were gainfully employed and established mutual aid societies—the first of their type in the United States—to take care of hospital, medical and funeral bills. (Chinese coolies brought to California to build railroads and mine gold earlier formed *tongs* to underwrite the shipping of dead members' bodies to China for burial.)

These are the famous clubs of Ybor City, centers of civic interest and highly regarded for their social and cultural activities with dances, art exhibits, theatrical and musical presentations. But they are also of fundamental economic and sociological importance, for they operate medical and hospital programs based on the needs of their own members.



The largest club in Ybor City is, oddly enough, named for a province of Spain, Asturias. The Centro Asturiano at Nebraska and 19th Avenues, has 4,000 members, of whom 600 live outside Tampa, many in foreign countries. Through the years since it was founded in 1902, it has been recognized as the center of some of the leading cultural affairs of Tampa. Its theatre, seating 1,100 persons, is used constantly by amateur groups playing in both Spanish and English. Professional singers and musicians give concerts there and it has been used by touring opera companies.



Most magnificent of the clubhouses is that of L'Unione Italiana fronting on 7th Avenue and 18th Street. Its white stone columns support a fifth floor cornice in classic style. Its marble lobby holds a bust of Garibaldi under whose banner many of the club's founders fought before their exile from Italy at the end of the 19th century.

L'Unione Italiana was founded by Italians in 1894 shortly after they were admitted to the cigar-making fraternity of Ybor City. Today the club has a membership of more than 1,500. It has a large auditorium and library.

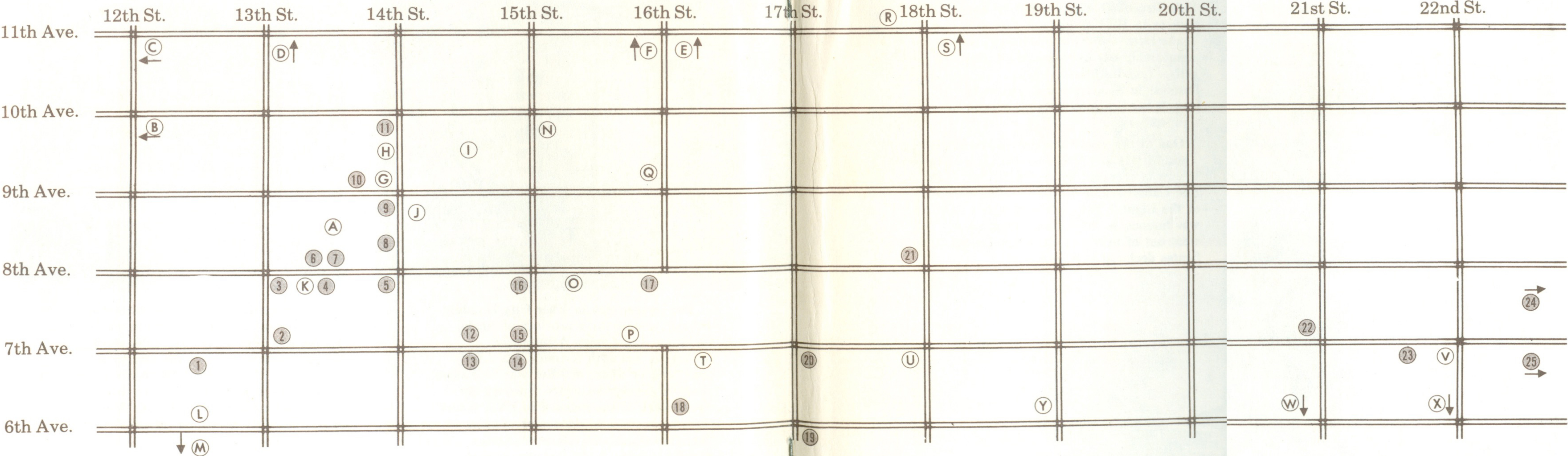


Most active of the clubhouses is that of El Centro Espanol on the Ybor Plaza at 7th Ave. and 16th Street. Founded in 1891, it has 2,000 members. It contains a restaurant, an always-active coffee shop and a theatre which presents movies most of the week and live entertainment on week ends. It has its own hospital.

Historical Markers

- 1 Old Government Spring
- 2 Cradle of Cuban Liberty
- 3 Pauline Pedroso House
- 4 "Cuba" Revolutionary Newspaper
- 5 El Chino Pajarito Restaurant
- 6 First Fire House
- 7 La Liga Patriotica de Instruccion
- 8 Jose Marti Stone Marker
- 9 Founding of the Cigar Industry
- 10 Cherokee Club (El Pasaje)
- 11 Marti Assassination Attempt
- 12 Oldest Restaurant (Las Novedades)
- 13 First Duel in Ybor City
- 14 Sanchez & Haya Factory
- 15 Hotel Habana
- 16 Birth of Ybor City
- 17 First Mutual Aid Societies
- 18 Ybor City Railroad Station
- 19 Emelio Pons Factory
- 20 Orestes Ferrara
- 21 The Ft. King Trail
- 22 Coming of the Italians
- 23 The Rough Riders
- 24 The Tobacco War
- 25 First Citizen "G. Gutierrez"

Historical Markers and Buildings of Ybor City



Buildings

- A Ybor Square
- B Centro Asturiano
- C Logia Caballeros de La Luz
- D Centro Asturiano Hospital
- E Standard Cigar Company
- F Perfecto Garcia Cigar Co.
- G El Pasaje Hotel (Cherokee Club)
- H Cuban Club
- I Hillsboro Community College
- J A. A. Gonzalez Clinic (El Bien Publico)
- K Jose Marti Shrine
- L Union Marti-Maceo
- M Florida Brewing Co.
- N United Lodges Bldg. (La Gaceta)
- O Frank Weaner Latin Quarter Gallery
- P Centro Espanol Club
- Q Labor Temple
- R La Hacienda de Ybor (apartments)
- S Gradiatz Annis & Co. (Sanchez & Haya Factory)
- T Gutierrez Building
- U Italian Club
- V Columbia Restaurant
- W F. Lozano & Co. Factory
- X Charles the Great Factory
- Y Corral-Wodiska Factory



El Circulo Cubano is dramatically situated at 10th Avenue and 14th Street. It was on this site that two Spanish agents tried to kill Jose Marti with poison after they had lured him to a cottage that stood here in 1892.

Friends of Marti caught the agents before their idol drank the poisoned wine — then Marti saved the Spaniards from lynching and forgave them. In gratitude, the two men joined the revolutionary movement. They died with Marti in the Dos Rios skirmish in 1895.

El Circulo Cubano, founded in 1902, has 1,500 members and supports its own medical and hospital services.



There are two other Cuban clubs, each unique in its own way. One of them is La Union Marti-Maceo, left, with its clubhouse the white cement building with iron grillwork on 7th Avenue between 12th and 13th Streets. It was founded by black Cubans in 1904 and at one time was one of the largest clubs in Ybor City. Today its membership has dwindled to 80, but it is active, remains black, conducts its business in Spanish and continues to provide medical and hospital benefits to its members.

One of the most beautiful clubhouses in Ybor City is at 6220 Nebraska Avenue below. It now is occupied by an Oddfellows Lodge, Los Caballeros de La Luz — “Gentlemen of the Light.” Before World War I it was famous as the German Club. It went out of existence when the United States declared war on Germany.





The basement lounge of El Centro Asturiano has been a famous entertainment spot since the early days of Ybor City. Its outstanding feature is the longest onyx marble — sometimes called Mexican marble — bar in the world extending more than 50 feet along one side of the room. This is how it looked in 1927 at the climax of a tango contest. Businessmen members use other basement facilities of the club every day. It is equipped with a model gymnasium which includes sauna baths and other equipment required as antidotes to good Spanish cooking.

Below, El Centro Asturiano Hospital at 21st Avenue and 13th Street.





One of the largest galleries for contemporary art in Florida is the Latin Quarter Art Gallery established by the Ybor City Chamber of Commerce and housed in its own building on 8th Avenue.

Seventh Avenue is blocked off once a year, below, while the community pitches in to entertain all comers with free servings of the famous Ybor City Spanish bean soup and hot bread. The occasion is Tampa's Gasparilla Fiesta in February.



Two important events took place in 1887: the city of Tampa incorporated "Cuba Town" into the municipality and tried to name it "the Fourth Ward." No one ever called it that, however, and even the name "Cuba Town" eventually disappeared while everyone referred to the area as Ybor City.

The second important item was the establishment of a streetcar line between Ybor City and downtown Tampa. It was built and paid for by Ybor himself. It was a narrow gauge line with its little cars pulled by a wood burning locomotive. The Cuban residents called it *el tren urbano*—the city train—and it operated whenever there were people and freight to be moved. There was no schedule.

Within five years of the day when Gutierrez first saw Tampa, Ybor City had a population of 15,000. It was a thriving community with jobs for everyone. Many of the Italians who had come to work in the cigar factories called in friends who were expert farmers to supply the community with meat and vegetables. The Italians opened groceries and butcher shops.

The Cubans opened restaurants. And what restaurants! By the turn of the century Ybor City restaurants had become known throughout the world, and their reputation remains to this day.

The first of the great restaurants was founded in 1890 by Manuel "Canuto"

Menendez. Its name, Las Novedadas, was to puzzle its clientele for generations. Las Novedadas means "the novelties." The reason was that the first Menendez venture was a little notions store which sold a good cup of coffee on the side. It was located across the street from the big Sanchez Haya cigar factory and became a favorite meeting place for the cigarmakers who took their coffee breaks whenever they felt like it—which usually was several times a day. Senor Menendez and his wife branched out with cakes and bread and finally to their greatest achievement, *arroz con pollo*. The *pollo* was a wonderfully flavored chicken. The *arroz* was a rice made yellow with saffron and garnished with olives, green peas and other delectables.

Las Novedadas was the scene of a memorable event in 1898 when a squad of Roosevelt's Rough Riders rode their horses into the restaurant. The good natured Menendez thought it was funny, poured a free drink all around and let the MP's take care of the errant troopers. The episode still is referred to in Ybor City as "The Charge of the Yellow Rice Brigade."

In 1905 Casimiro Hernandez founded the Columbia Restaurant which extends from 21st to 22nd Streets along Seventh Avenue and which became one of Tampa's principal tourist attractions. Its decor of Spanish tiles, its Spanish entertainment and its



El Pasaje, in its glamor days as host to celebrities below, and still today, is a gem of brick architecture. It stands on Avenida Republica de Cuba, across from Ybor Square.





Spanish is spoken here in these comfortable apartment houses for senior citizens. They are called the Haciendas de Ybor City and were built as a non profit enterprise under the sponsorship of the Ybor City Chamber of Commerce. Below is a view of one of the gracious residential neighborhoods.



food made it internationally famous.

Another attraction for tourists who enjoy foreign food is Spanish Park Restaurant, established at 7th Avenue and 36th Street on the site of the home of Gavino Gutierrez, the man who dreamed up Ybor City. He named his estate in English, "Spanish Park."

Aside from the big restaurants, there are eating places dear to the appetites of food lovers.

There is, for example, breakfast at Cuervo's at 7th Avenue and 18th Street. Wonderful fresh Cuban bread, sliced lengthwise, toasted and buttered. You must dunk it in your *cafe con leche* — coffee and milk—and forget about the calories.

Also there's Mercedes at 2600 North 16th Street where you stand in line to be served at a food bar by smiling attendants who complain cheerfully if you don't let them overfill your plate. And you can't call Mercedes a *cafeteria* which is a Spanish word which means "coffee shop."

Then there's the Alvarez Cafe which is crowded at noon by patrons ordering from one of the most widely ranging menus in Tampa. And the food is superb.

At the southwest corner of Ybor Square stands El Buen Gusto, another popular restaurant, where you can pass down a line or be served at your table.

At the J.D.'s Sandwich Shop on 7th

Avenue at 21st Street or the Silver Ring, just a block or two westward may be encountered the modern descendant of the original Poor Boy or Submarine or whatever name you wish to call the gigantic, delicious sandwiches made with ham and cheese and all kinds of other things worth eating. In Tampa it's called a Cuban sandwich and it's made not only in these places but also at Cuervo's and in numerous other places worth exploring.

Old timers say there'll never again be Cuban sandwiches as good as they were in Ybor City's early days. In those days the slices of ham were heated by a tailor's flatiron before joining the sandwich's other ingredients. An electric steam iron, they say, doesn't give the same flavor.

But it was neither food nor cigars that gave Ybor City its claim to enduring fame. What made Ybor City great was a great man, Dr. Jose Marti.

This was a little man whom people loved. In the 43 years of his life he set in motion forces that changed world politics and which made the United States a world power.

Marti was born in 1853 in Cuba. A school teacher and a writer, he advocated overthrow of the Spanish domination of his native land. Two of his ideals were Simon Bolivar, the liberator from Spanish government of most of South America, and George Washington. He is referred to today



Ybor City restaurant waiters and cigar makers got together more than half a century ago in a number of unions. Then they joined to build Labor Temple at 9th Avenue and 16th Street.

as the Bolivar of Cuba and the Washington of Cuba.

As was the case with both Washington and Bolivar, much of the agitation for freedom from foreign rule was carried on by the Masonic Lodges. Like his two heroes, Marti was a Mason. So were many of the Cuban emigres in Ybor City where a number of Masonic Lodges operated. The present Ybor City Masonic Temple is at 7th Avenue and 22nd Street.

The Gonzalez Clinic at 9th Avenue and Avenida Republica de Cuba (14th Street) is one of Ybor City's best known medical facilities.

Dr. Marti came to Ybor City in 1891 to be guarded by his loyal fraternal brothers and followers. It was by far the most exciting event in the lives of all the people concerned.

A memorial plaque reading "Cradle of Cuban Liberty" now stands at 7th Avenue and 13th Street at the site which once was occupied by a former tobacco stripping house converted in 1886 into a Cuban Social Center called El Liceo Cubano. There Dr. Marti delivered two speeches on November 26 and

27, 1891, to be heard by everyone who could pack into the little meeting room and to be reproduced in newspapers and pamphlets. The talks were titled *Con Todos y Para Todos* "with all and for all"—and *Los Pinos Nuevos*—"the new growth"—which outlined objectives of the United Cuban Revolutionary Party.

Until Marti came to Florida, the Cuban Revolutionary movement had been entirely a guerilla affair, with a few hundred Spanish soldiers being hacked to death with machetes every now and then and a few thousand Cubans being shot down by a highly efficient Spanish army quartered in this most productive part of its dwindling but still far-flung empire. The same process was going on in the Philippine Islands, in Puerto Rico and in Guam, but these tinder spots had not yet attracted the attention of the American public. Spain had already lost Mexico, Central America and all of South America except Brazil—which last the Portuguese had managed to lose. Spain had no intention of letting the last vestiges of its empire go down the drain.

It was Marti and Ybor City which ignited the ultimate fuse under the Spanish Empire.

While Marti stayed in Ybor City, he lived at the home of Ruperto Pedrosó and his wife, Paulina. Their little house at 8th Avenue and 13th Street was regarded as a shrine by the cigarmakers. At night groups of the





In the heart of Ybor City there is a plot of land that is forever Cuba. It is the Park of the Friends of Jose Marti at 8th Avenue and 13th Street. In it stands a statue of the great liberator and there annually are held ceremonies in his memory.

What makes the park hallowed ground is that it once was the site of the little wooden house of Ruperto and Paulina Pedroso who, although poor themselves, gave refuge, food and shelter to Jose Marti in 1893 when his life was threatened by assassins sent from Spain.

The Pedroso house had fallen down by the weight of years and termites when the Ybor City Rotary Club decided that it should be memorialized. It raised money from a number of contributors but found itself \$25,000 short of its total goal. A Spanish speaking delegation of the club went to Havana and called on Fugencio Batista, then dictator of Cuba. "It is an honor to contribute to the memory of the Apostle of Liberty," said Batista. "The \$25,000 is yours."

And so the Park of the Friends of Marti was built.

emigres stood outside in the street trying to catch a glimpse of their Apostle of Freedom. Candles often burned in his room all night while he wrote letters to friends in the United States and Europe seeking aid in the fight for independence.

In 1893 Marti made the speech which crowned his career as an orator. He made it from the steps leading to the front door of Ybor Square, and a small monument marks the place today. The English translation of the words on the monument's bronze plaque reads: "From these steps in

A weekly newspaper, *La Gaceta*, is published here in English, Spanish and Italian. It is circulated not only in Ybor City but throughout Tampa. Its building, at 10th Avenue and 15th Street, still is known as *Las Logias Unidas* — the United Lodges — for five different fraternal orders met there many years ago.

the year 1893 Jose Marti, Apostle of Cuban Liberty, asked with eloquent words the Cuban tobacco worker emigres to aid him to win his country's independence by furnishing men, arms and money. Many of the workers exchanged their cigar-making knives for machetes, others gave hundreds of thousands of dollars to the fight against the oppression of the people and to create a Republic of Cuba."

The whole street in front of the factory was packed with cheering men when Marti spoke. Newspapermen on the scene

estimated that more than 10,000 Cubans were jammed into the area. Time after time they roared: "*Cuba Libre!* Free Cuba!"

(*Cuba Libre* was immortalized during the Spanish American War by young Army officers relaxing in Tampa. They combined that old drink from Cuba, rum, with that new drink from Georgia, Coca-Cola, and named the resulting mixture in honor of Marti. And that's the origin of the *Cuba Libre* you may drink today.)

In a great wave of patriotism, the workers in all the factories of the community pledged themselves to give one day's pay every week to the revolutionary fund. Hundreds of the men formed themselves into infantry companies to practice marching and learn some of the rudiments of soldiering. The money they raised bought them large stores of rifles and ammunition, but the favorite weapon for the kind of battle they had to do was the machete, that long, wicked blade which is a cross between the sword and the axe and deadlier than either.

Marti went back to Cuba with a little army of cigar workers and other patriots to lead what came to be called the Insurrection of 1895. He was killed by Spanish soldiers in a skirmish at Dos Rios on May 19. Some of the cigar workers were killed there, too.

Such war correspondents as Richard Harding Davis made much of the Dos Rios fight. It was the Bay of Pigs of its day



and Cubans have never forgotten either battle. Marti became a hero throughout the world to every lover of liberty.

The Captain General of Cuba, Valeriano "Butcher" Weyler, was enraged by the activities of the Ybor City emigres. He decided to put them and the American cigar industry out of business by cutting off their basic necessity: Cuban tobacco. He quietly prepared an edict imposing an embargo on the exportation of tobacco as of May 16, 1896. If it had succeeded, it would have meant the end of all those contributions of money and men which were fueling the independence movement.

But the revolutionaries had an amazing network of espionage and Weyler's plan was known in Tampa even before Weyler's subordinates heard of it.

A delegation of Ybor City cigar manufacturers called on Henry Plant at his now completed Tampa Bay Hotel and told him of the impending crisis. Within hours, Plant had dispatched his two fastest ships, the S.S. Mascotte and the S.S. Olivette on forced draft runs to Havana. There, with the willing connivance of the tobacco growers, both ships were loaded with the greatest cargoes of tobacco ever exported. Not only were the holds of both ships filled with the fragrant weed, but the staterooms were packed to their ceilings and even the dining salon and bars were filled.

When the ships steamed out of Havana

harbor they carried enough leaf tobacco to keep the Ybor City factories running for another year.

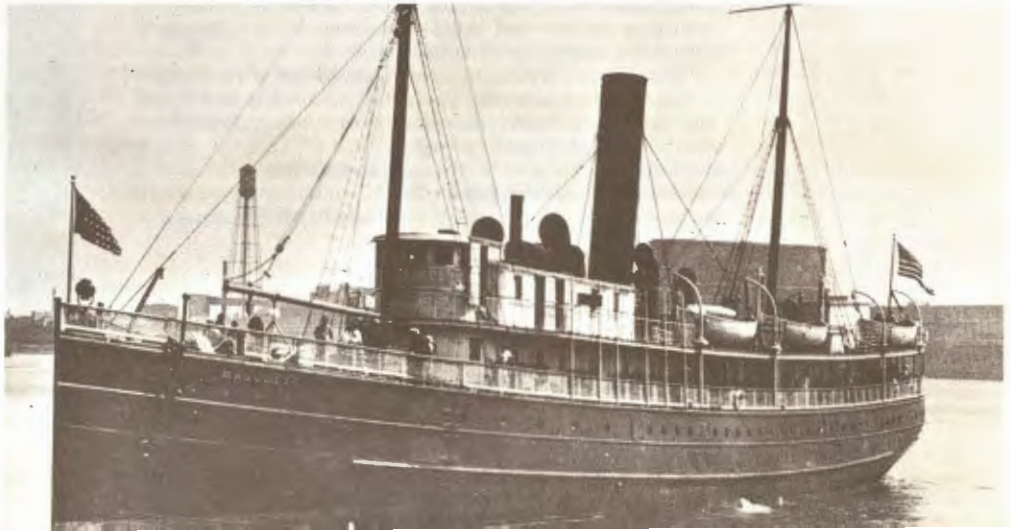
During that period, a Cuban tobacco plantation was established on what is now 7th Avenue just beyond 27th Street along the banks of the Two Mile Branch, a small brook. Tobacco was grown there for several years but was not commercially successful. (However, Florida grows truly great cigar wrapper tobacco in the Panhandle west of Tallahassee.)

With their jobs saved by Plant's steamship run, the cigar workers continued their donations of their wages. The amount of

money they raised was astonishing, probably running close to \$1 million, even though their pay seems a pittance by today's standards.

However, as wages went in the 90's, the Cubans were doing pretty well. Their individual pay averaged from \$15 to \$18 for a six-day week. They started work at 7 in the morning and quit at 5 in the afternoon but it wasn't a solid ten-hour day, for they all knocked off to go home for lunch and virtually all of them took at least two or three coffee breaks each day. Of course, it was sweatshop work, literally, for air-conditioning was yet to be invented and the big factory rooms were hot and humid. On

The S.S. Mascotte helped save Ybor City's cigar industry when Henry Plant dispatched it on a forced draft run to carry tobacco from Cuba. During the Spanish American war it was a hospital ship.



It may be hard to believe, but this picture immortalizes not only the place but the time of some of the most raucous doings of the Jazz Age. The place is 8th Avenue and 14th Street and the time was 1925.

The top two stories were a bachelor's hotel for cigarworkers. The sheets drying on the balcony symbolized the cleanliness of the upstairs quarters. Down below, however, a different world moved and had its being. This was the notorious El Dorado Cafe, a speakeasy. The United States in those days was in the throes of Prohibition, a word for which there is no purely Spanish equivalent and which was, in any case, generally ignored in Ybor City.

In the back rooms of El Dorado were some of the most elegant gambling paraphernalia in Florida — roulette wheels, baccarat tables, faro layouts and, most important, bolita cages. This was the heart of the bolita racket which spread its tentacles throughout the state and which survives even today, although without the elegance of El Dorado.

Through that door on the corner passed some of the cream of American mobsters and cafe society. There were men in top hats, white tie and tails and women in silver fox jackets — mink wasn't nearly showy enough.

Titular owner of El Dorado was Serafin Reina, scion of a cigar family. His silent partner and believed by everyone to be the mastermind, was Charlie Wall, Tampa's chief racketeer.





Tampa was, in its way, rather proud of Charlie Wall. While many in those viable days were rising from humble beginnings to make good, Charlie succeeded in just the opposite direction. He was the son of one of Florida's truly great men, the famous Dr. John P. Wall who, 50 years earlier, had developed the theory that yellow fever and malaria were carried by mosquitoes.

Dr. Wall had been derided by his peers who were satisfied that "bad air" alone was responsible for those diseases. Dr. Wall died while presenting his theories to the Florida Medical Association at a meeting in Gainesville in 1896, leaving Charlie a good name and enough capital to get started in the bootlegging and gambling business.

Charlie made bad in a big way. He not only ruled underworld operations in Tampa, but branched out to take over the sin rackets of Miami and the rest of Dade County when that area started to outdraw Tampa.

In 1955, laden with ill-gotten gains and 75 years of life, Wall withdrew from business. He made a unilateral reduction in armaments, dismissed his two-man bodyguard and retired to the tranquility of his wide-veranded, tree-shaded home on 17th Avenue in Ybor City.

He was in bed there, on the night of April 18, when a person or persons unknown — in the words of the coroner's jury — beat him savagely and cut his throat.

the other hand, no one stood over the workers to drive them toward meeting quotas. They were paid by the number of cigars they turned out daily—a piece work arrangement—and the workers, who considered themselves artists, could come and go as they chose.

Although the vast majority of the workers were men, there was a smattering of women in all the plants. They were treated the same as the men, received equal pay and had the same voting rights—a most unusual arrangement in Latin society.

The cigarmakers are proud to this day that they have always taken care of their own needs without calling for government assistance.

Among the contributions which each worker extracted from his weekly pay envelope was one that was just as important

to him as his daily coffee. That was his weekly 25 cents to assure the services of the official reader, the most important representative of culture in the average worker's experience.

The reader spent the whole day in a loft above the heads of the cigarmakers, reading in a loud, clear voice from newspapers, Spanish poets and, without fail, the works of Cervantes each day. The reader had to be a good actor, too, for when he told the age-old story of Don Quixote, he had to wait while the ripples of laughter flowed through the otherwise quiet workroom. Most of the workers in the old days could neither read nor write, but the reader kept them better informed through 10 hours a day than were most Americans in the cities.

The readers averaged around \$80 a week—a truly good pay in the days when civil

engineers in the North were lucky to get as much as \$30 a week.

Ybor City had its own newspaper from 1887 to 1898. Called simply *Cuba* it actually was a running manifesto of the Cuban Revolutionary Party, and appeared spasmodically. Its editor was Ramon Rivero y Rivero, a close friend of Marti, and his collaborator in drafting *Las Resoluciones*—the Revolutionary Party's program.

The newspaper went out of existence with the outbreak of the Spanish American War which eliminated the need for the journal.

Across 14th Street from Ybor Square was one of the main gathering places for Cuban plotters. It was the Chinese Little Bird Restaurant—El Chino-Pajarito—operated by a Cuban Chinese named Antonio Menendez, a most unlikely name for his race.

Prosperous and open handed, Menendez gave free meals, machetes and knives to freedom fighters on their way to Cuba. Marti was one of El Chino's best customers.

Another rendezvous which knew Marti well was the Cherokee Club which occupied the beautiful brick building now known as El Pasaje at 9th Avenue and 14th Street, also across from Ybor Square. Its colonnades and cornices make it an outstanding example of the accommodation of Spanish and American architecture.

When Marti first visited Ybor City on

One of Ybor City's landmarks is the Columbia Restaurant which fills the block on Seventh Avenue between 21st and 22 Streets.



November 25, 1891, he was put up at the Cherokee Club. He told his hosts: "I feel happy among warriors."

After Marti's time, notables from many lands were entertained there, among them President Grover Cleveland, Sir Winston Churchill, General Leonard Wood and Frederick Remington. Every governor of Florida from 1890 to 1935 was a guest of the Cherokee Club and, later, of El Pasaje Restaurant.

The cigarworkers themselves undertook to

raise their literacy rate by establishing their own night school in 1889. Called *La Liga Patriótica de Instrucción*, it was built at 8th Avenue and 14th Street. The instructor was Don Jose Guadalupe Rivero. The instruction, of course, was wholly in Spanish and did not particularly assist the learners in accustoming themselves to life in America, but it was excellent training for revolutionaries, and that was the whole purpose of the school. When Marti visited *La Liga Patriótica*, he said: "I thought I

was coming to do something, but I find everything has been done."

One of the greatest of the revolutionaries in Ybor City was not a Cuban. He was Orestes Ferrara, a young Italian disciple of



It was from the iron steps of the V. M. Ybor Factory (now Ybor Square) that Jose Marti (arrow) made one of his most famous speeches to supporters of the Cuban Revolutionary movement. The group was captured at that moment in history by this famous time exposure photograph. Over a half century later a monument to that event (above) was dedicated by the Ybor City Rotary Club. Tony Pizzo, club president, stands directly behind the monument.

the great Garibaldi, who had been driven from his native land.

Aristocratic, wearing a Garibaldi red shirt, noted as one of the great fencers of Europe and a deadly duelist, he was one of the most popular men in Tampa. In 1895 he was a frequent speaker at the street meetings on 17th Avenue and 17th Street. And he did more than speak, he was one of the leaders of the revolutionary troop which sailed from Tampa to fight on Cuban soil, under the rebel General Maximo Gomez.

When Cuba won its independence, Ferrara, risen to the rank of colonel, was made a citizen. He subsequently became a lawyer in Havana and famed as an author and authority on Machiavelli. He was elected a senator, became president of the Cuban senate, was appointed Secretary of State and finally served as Ambassador to the United States. He was known to Washington newspapermen in the late 20's as one of the three most powerful diplomats in the United States. Tragically, Ferrara was almost killed by the people to whom he had devoted a lifetime of service. When Fulgencio Batista seized control of Cuba in 1934, his men machine-gunned the civilian passenger plane in which Ferrara fled Havana for sanctuary in the United States.

When the Battleship *Maine* blew up in Havana Harbor on Feb. 15, 1898, all the plotting, speech making and fund raising in

Ybor City reached its smashing climax. The American public believed the tragedy to be an act of Spanish treachery. Led by the Hearst newspapers, the country called for a war to free the Cuban people. Sympathy for them had been building for a long time, and the *Maine* sparked the outburst of public demands.

The War Department chose Tampa with its remarkable rail, harbor and steamship facilities—all built by Henry Plant—as the site for the launching of the expeditionary force to attack the Spanish Army in Cuba.

In the tradition of the Civil War, volunteer military units were formed all over the nation to join the regular troops which quickly established three tent cities around Ybor City.

The most famous of these volunteer units was the Rough Riders Regiment, made up of cowboys and university students. Their lieutenant colonel was Theodore Roosevelt who was not only a very able politician but a very able fighting man as well. His charge with the Rough Riders to take San Juan Hill in Cuba, ably covered by every newspaperman who could get to the scene, helped make him the 26th President of the United States.

Before his tenure in the White House ended in 1909, Roosevelt had: supported the creation of the Republic of Panama in order to build a canal across the Isthmus; sent a

naval detachment to force British and German warships out of Venezuela; warned European nations not to try to collect debts by force from the Dominican Republic; settled the Russo-Japanese War by his personal intervention, thereby winning the Nobel Prize; sent a fleet of American battleships and cruisers painted white—to prove their peaceful intentions—around the world as a demonstration of American power. The United States definitely had become one of the major nations of the world.

When the war was won, many of the Cuban emigres went back to their homeland, some to renew the making of cigars in Havana once more and others to take back to their homeland some of the new skills they had learned in the United States.

But most of the emigres stayed on in Ybor City. Their families had been born there and their children were speaking English as well as Spanish. They liked the American way of life and Ybor City had become their home.

It is the descendants of these old revolutionaries who populate much of Tampa today. Few of them live in Ybor City now, for the old neighborhood is being completely reconstructed around the nucleus of the monumental buildings which have been preserved from the days of greatness. But Spanish still is spoken in the clubs, stores and restaurants and there is a flavor of old Cuba everywhere.



This photograph made around the turn of the century at 14th Street and 9th Avenue shows three historic buildings still standing in Ybor City. They are, El Pasaje Hotel, far right, V. M. Ybor Cigar Factory, and Gonzalez Clinic, formerly El Bien Publico, left. Notice the gas street lights.

